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Chico Buarque's *Gota d'água, uma tragédia carioca*: Theater as Metaphor in Brazil during the Military Dictatorship, 1964–1985

The piece titled *Gota d'água, uma tragédia carioca* by Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes, created in 1975, marks a pivotal chapter in the rich history of the reception of the Medea myth by authors since Euripides' first elaboration of the plot. This play uses Euripides' *Medea* as a model with regard to both content and form. *Gota d'água* is particularly concerned with the status of theater as a performance medium and with the complex interrelation between art and life that is reflected in the onstage activity. The intention of this article is not to provide a (new) interpretation of the play, for which purpose we may refer to the existing research, which has investigated these questions in an impressive manner.¹ Rather, this paper argues that Chico Buarque's 1975 play is mainly interested in indicating the limits of "theater as metaphor"; for that reason, it is especially relevant for the discussions conducted in this volume.

¹ See for example G. R. Lind, "Uma nova versão brasileira do mito de Medéia: *Gota d'água* de Chico Buarque de Holanda e Paulo Pontes", in: *Cadernos de Lit.*, vol. 15, 1983, pp. 26–38, and M. I. Guimarães, "A *Gota d'água* de Chico Buarque e Paulo Pontes: Palavra poética como ação dramática e denúncia", in: *Estudos Brasileiros*, vol. 8, 1982, pp. 40–82, but also more recently L. C. Barros, "Tragédia social em *Gota d'água*, de Chico Buarque e Paulo Pontes: Aspectos hipertextuais e intermediais", in: *Espéculo: Revista de Estudos Literários*, vol. 31, 2005, s.p.; D. J. M. Toneto, "Jasão e a eterna busca do velocino de ouro: Uma leitura a partir do estabelecimento de contratos Fiduciários/Jasão and the everlasting search for the golden velocin: A reading based on the establishment of fiduciary contracts", in: *Estudos Lingüísticos*, vol. 32, 2003, s.p.; D. J. M. Toneto, "Breves considerações sobre figurativização em *Gota d'água*: Ideologia e lugar social", in: *Itinerários: Revista de Literatura*, vol. 20, pp. 23–32; F. Marques, "O banquete da meia dúzia: Fontes e estruturas de *Gota d'água*", in: *Estudos de Literatura Brasileira Contemporânea*, vol. 8, 2000, pp. 3–14; E. S. Rocha, "A arte de narrar e de resistir em *Gota d'água*", in: *Itinerários: Revista de Literatura*, vol. 10, 1996, pp. 193–201; M. H. M. Neves, "*Medéia* (uma tragédia grega) e *Gota d'água*", in: *Rev. de Letras: Sér. Lit.*, vol. 25, 1985, pp. 97–101; R. Roux, "*Gota d'água*: Une tragédie brésilienne? ou, l'ambigüité de la 'classe moyenne'", in: *Cahiers d'études romanes*, vol. 10, pp. 251–254; D. Mimoso-Ruiz, "*La Médée* d'Euripide et *Gota d'água* de Paulo Pontes et Chico Buarque", in: *Théâtre et société*, ed. E. Konigson and R. Marienstras, Paris 1980, pp. 97–110.

First, I will recall the historical context, as Chico Buarque's 1975 play can only be understood against the backdrop of the political realities of the period of military dictatorship in Brazil. As a second step, there will be a close reading of the play's programmatic preface in order to develop the argument; finally, this preface will be considered synoptically, comparing it to a paradigmatic passage from the drama proper.

I

When, in 1964, the elected government of Brazil was overthrown in a *coup d'état*, an authoritarian regime was established that was controlled by the armed forces; the period of dictatorial rule lasted until 1985.² In a global context, the coup may be regarded in light of the major impact of the Cold War on Brazilian politics and society, as the military justified their action as a rescue and protection of the Brazilian nation from the "communist threat".³ The move towards authoritarian rule, however, had a long pre-history; as M. Napolitano put it, "domestically, the coup was the result of an authoritarian, exclusionary, and conservative political culture disseminated among the civilian and military elite since the establishment of the republic in 1889".⁴ The Brazilian armed forces sought to control the state and civil society.⁵ Any political leaders were required to submit to the national objectives that the military defined.⁶

2 For a concise analysis of the coup in a global context, see the brilliant article by M. Napolitano, "The Brazilian Military Regime, 1964–1985" (2018), in the online version of the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, to be found here: <http://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-413>, accessed 15 January 2019.

3 See H. S. Klein and F. Vidal Luna, *Brazil, 1964–1985: The Military Regimes of Latin America in the Cold War*, New Haven, CT 2017. The book offers an analysis of the politics of the military dictatorship in Brazil against the backdrop of the Cold War and the history of Latin America in its entirety.

4 Napolitano, "The Brazilian Military Regime". Klein and Vidal Luna make a strong case for the assumption that Getúlio Vargas's regime laid the ground for the military regimes of Brazil.

5 See F. D. McCann, *Soldiers of the Pátria: A History of the Brazilian Army, 1889–1937*, Stanford, CA 2003.

6 F. D. McCann has pointed out that after playing the decisive role in overthrowing the Brazilian Empire (1822–1889), "the army was the strong-arm of the Republic defending and extending its authority. [...] The army, indeed the three armed services, historically has been largely autonomous [...]" ("Brasil: Acima de Tudo!! The Brazilian Armed Forces: Remodeling for a New Era", in: *Diálogos: Revista do Departamento de História e do Programa de Pós-Graduação em História*, vol. 21, 2017, pp. 57–95, p. 59).

From the end of 1968 onward, that is, starting in the third year of rule, censorship of the press and of all artistic activities became more rigorously enforced.⁷ The reason was that the authoritarian regime, although well-established, did not remain uncontested; as Napolitano formulated:

One of the distinctive elements in the history of the Brazilian military regime was the formation of a vigorous social, cultural, and, to a lesser extent, partisan opposition, which took shape [...] shortly after the military seized power. Although it had considerable support, particularly among conservative sectors of the middle class, the regime ultimately lacked a durable social base of support.⁸

Very soon after the *coup d'état*, even the conservatives who had initially supported the regime became conscious of the fact that the military had its own agenda. An essential point within this agenda was a drastic restriction of freedom of speech and artistic expression. Students and workers formed opposition movements, and some sections of the left joined the armed struggle. The attempt to bring this resistance movement against the regime into the public sphere was prevented by a legislative reform. Napolitano characterized the new law concerning freedom of speech as follows:

Amid the turmoil, the relative freedom of expression that remained in Brazil was buried by Institutional Act No. 5, the hallmark of an era of intense repression that would last until the end of 1978. Institutional Act No. 5 further strengthened the president's power over the other branches of government and suspended *habeas corpus* for political prisoners, among other harsh measures. [...] It is important to stress that the Institutional Acts were not merely a "legalistic façade" for the regime, as if its actual power emanated solely from arms and violence. The Institutional Acts were essential for the strategy of avoiding the personalization of political power and guaranteeing some normative rules for political life.⁹

The legal framework of the "institutional acts" enabled the most violent and extra-legal period of political repression, in which every form of opposition was fought with utter brutality. By combining restrictive domestic measures

7 See O. Fernandez, "Censorship and the Brazilian Theatre", in: *Educational Theatre Journal*, vol. 25, 1973, pp. 285–298; see also L. Souza Pinto, "Cinema brasileiro e censura durante a ditadura militar/Cinéma brésilien et censure pendant la dictature militaire", in: *Cinémas d'Amérique Latine*, vol. 9, 2001, pp. 157–164.

8 Napolitano, "The Brazilian Military Regime". T. J. Power differentiates three factions of opposition to the military rule: firstly, the intellectual wing, then the social movement wing, and, finally, the armed resistance (cf. "The Brazilian Military Regime of 1964–1985: Legacies for Contemporary Democracy", in: *Iberoamericana*, vol. 16, 2016, pp. 13–26, p. 14).

9 Napolitano, "The Brazilian Military Regime".

suggesting relative political stability and a promotion of industrial development, the Brazilian economy began to prosper, also as a result of international capital investment. It was primarily the military and the elites of the authoritarian regime rather than the general population that benefited from this boom. Yet the economic upswing calmed many sections of society and made it difficult for the opposition to gain support. In the cultural and artistic fields, however, the opposition to the military regime was constantly growing. In fact, many conservatives also reacted negatively to reports of torture and censorship. The result of the emergence of a quantitatively restricted but multifaceted opposition allowed for the creation of a limited sphere where a critical culture that sought to articulate dissident content in an encrypted form of expression was able to unfold.

Chico Buarque's artistic work is closely linked to this specific political and cultural configuration. Chico Buarque is the pen name of Francisco Buarque de Hollanda, who was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1944. To this day, Chico Buarque is rightfully regarded as one of Brazil's most renowned contemporary artists. His socio-critical songs, which have indeed become veritable classics of contemporary Brazilian pop music, are also well known beyond Brazil. In fact, these songs constitute the major part of his artistic work. But Chico Buarque also wrote narrative, essayistic, and dramatic texts or was involved in the stage performance of the latter. His song texts are poems that have become a sort of lyrical conscience of an entire nation.

In the period of dictatorship, Chico Buarque's oeuvre was consistently subject to censorship, especially with regard to his songs, but also with regard to his involvement in dramatic productions. Frequently, there was a link between these two strands of his activities; the songs were often composed for plays that became more or less rigorously censored.

When, in 1975, Chico Buarque decided to write, together with Paulo Pontes, *Gota d'água, uma tragédia carioca*, they elaborated on the concept of a versified recreation of Euripides' tragedy *Medea*, accompanied by music, that was set in the context of the contemporaneous suburbs of Rio de Janeiro.

Before dealing with the text proper, I would like to briefly analyze the preface to the dramatic work, in which the authors outline the three "fundamental preoccupations" that their play is trying to reflect. The first preoccupation reads as follows:

Gota d'água, a tragédia, é uma reflexão [...] insuficiente, simplificadora, ainda perplexa, não tão substantiva quanto é necessário, pois o quadro é muito complexo e só agora emerge das sombras do processo social para se constituir no traço dominante do perfil da vida brasileira atual. De tão significativo, o quadro está a exigir a atenção das melhores energias da cultura brasileira; necessita não de uma peça, mas de uma dramaturgia

inteira. Procuramos, pelo menos, diante de todas as limitações, olhar a tragédia de frente, enfrentar a sua concretude, não escamotear a complexidade da situação com a adjetivação raivosa e vã.¹⁰

This first “fundamental preoccupation” that the preface formulates has been read in research as a reference to the consolidation of the prevalent socio-economic model in Brazil during the “last few years” (i.e. those of the military dictatorship). But when we focus on the semantic horizon of the concepts of “tragedy”, “theater”, and “play” in this quote, a slightly different interpretation seems to suggest itself. Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes establish in this preface a substantial differentiation that is played out in the course of the entire tragedy; this differentiation focuses on the idea that the degree of responsibility for our behavior offstage is fundamentally different from any behavior onstage. In the sphere of art, the quality of the artistic activity is to be judged only by the quality of the art-product produced—meaning, in the case of theater, by the actual performance. The ethical quality of everyday activity is determined only by the quality of that activity itself, i.e., it should be judged on the basis of the state of mind of the individual, in particular according to the question of whether he or she intended to do good just for the sake of goodness. Ethical judgment means to posit that everybody is responsible for her or his behavior, the consequences and parameters of which cannot be confined. From my point of view, Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes’ preface to *Gota d’água* makes evident that the tragedy contained in the play stands for the tragedy of Brazil as a nation; at the same time, the preface highlights the differences between the two poles of this relation—a relation that the authors explicitly do not want to understand as metaphoric only.

The authors’ second concern as referred to in the preface relates the question of an adequate representation of Brazil’s cultural reality through art to another argument:

10 Edition qtd.: Rio de Janeiro 1977, pp. XI – XX. – *Drop of Water*, the tragedy, is a reflection that is [...] insufficient, simplistic, still perplexed, not as substantive as necessary, because the situation is very complex, and it only now emerges from the shadows of the social dynamics to constitute itself in the dominant trait of the profile of Brazilian contemporary life. The situation is so momentous that it is demanding the attention of the best energies of Brazilian culture; it needs not only a play, but a whole dramaturgy. Considering all limitations, we attempt to at least look at the tragedy directly and face its concreteness, not concealing the situation’s complexity with angry and vain adjectives. [My translation.]

A segunda preocupação do nosso trabalho é com um problema cultural, cuja formulação ajuda a compreender o que foi dito acima: o povo sumiu da cultura produzida no Brasil—dos jornais, dos filmes, das peças, da TV, da literatura, etc. Isolado, seccionado, sem ter onde nem como exprimir seus interesses, desaparecido da vida política, o povo brasileiro deixou de ser o centro da cultura brasileira. Ficou reduzido às estatísticas e às manchetes dos jornais de crime. Povo, só como exótico, pitoresco ou marginal. Chegou uma hora em que até a palavra povo saiu de circulação. Nossa produção cultural, claro, não ganhou com o sumiço. [...] Esta deve ser uma luta, de modo particular, do teatro brasileiro. É preciso, de todas as maneiras, tentar fazer voltar o nosso povo ao nosso palco. Do jeito que estiver ao alcance de cada criador: com o *show*, a comédia de costumes, o esquete, a revista, com a dramaturgia mais ambiciosa, como se puder. O fundamental é que a vida brasileira possa, novamente, ser devolvida, nos palcos, ao público brasileiro. Esta é a segunda preocupação de *Gota d'água*. Nossa tragédia é uma tragédia da vida brasileira.¹¹

Stating that the *Brazilian people* disappeared from the national cultural production seems, at first sight, to be a nod to a Marxist conception of history: The people who do not own the means of production will always struggle against those who do own them. However, there is another aspect implied in the quote referred to above which seems to be much more important and which is marked by the concept of the people. Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes refer very insistently to the idea of a supposed Brazilian “national identity”. The passage problematizes the relationship that has developed between left-wing artists, the media, and the state in Brazil under the military dictatorship. The preface not only criticizes the fact that the military regime contributed to the emergence of the idea of an “authentic Brazilian identity”—it also cautions other artists against contributing to this ideology by “folklorizing” their artworks. The culture industry, and above all television in Brazil under the military dictatorship, succeeded in trivializing the works of even the most critical artists by putting

¹¹ The second concern of our work is with a cultural problem whose formulation helps to understand the above-mentioned: the people have disappeared from the cultural production of Brazil—from newspapers, films, plays, TV, literature, etc. Isolated, cut off, without having either a place or a means to express their interests, they disappeared from political life; the Brazilian people is no longer the center of Brazilian culture. It has been reduced to statistics and crime headlines in the newspapers. Depicted just as exotic, picturesque, or marginal. Eventually even the word people went out of circulation. Our cultural production, of course, did not gain with the disappearance. [...] The Brazilian theater must in a specific way embrace this struggle. It is by all means necessary to try to bring our people back to our stage. Any way within the reach of each creator: with the musical performance, the comedy of manners, the skit, the magazine, with the more ambitious playwright, in any possible way. The key to a solution of the problem is how to manage to give back, on the stage, Brazilian life to the Brazilian public. This is the second concern of *Drop of Water*. Our tragedy is a tragedy of Brazilian life. [My translation.]

them in the context of samba, football, and telenovelas. The military had a clear agenda to promote a new national culture that would create an artificially harmonized, folkloric image of Brazilian art beyond class and cultural struggles. In such precarious times, art is not a luxury. Either it is part of the codes, symbols, and signs of the ruling system—or it is not. The piece by Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes distinctly exploits the autonomy of classical tragedy in order to distance itself from the concept of artistic production as being explicitly linked to political movements: in a period when the “official” discourse propagated economic progress in a euphoric manner, *Gota d’água* succeeds in artistically depicting the existential experience of a young woman, determined by violence, indifference, and oppression, in a way that eludes in a most sophisticated manner being sanctioned negatively by censorship. From my perspective, the piece is an example of what aesthetic resistance can mean in contemporary literature. The final sentence “Nossa tragédia é uma tragédia da vida brasileira” is aimed at these cultural realities imposed by the military.

The third issue Pontes and Buarque raise, relating form to content, is the need to emphasize communication over spectacle in the theater. They aim to promote a critical spirit of inquiry through theater:

A nossa terceira e última grande preocupação está refletida na forma da peça. [...] A palavra, portanto, tem que ser trazida de volta, tem que voltar a ser nossa aliada. Nós escrevemos a peça em versos, intensificando poeticamente um diálogo que podia ser realista, um pouco porque a poesia exprime melhor a densidade de sentimentos que move os personagens, mas quisemos, sobretudo, com os versos, tentar revalorizar a palavra. Porque um teatro que ambiciona readquirir sua capacidade de compreender, tem que entregar, novamente, à múltipla eloquência da palavra, o centro do fenômeno dramático.¹²

In my opinion, this focus on the importance of language is crucial for understanding the whole play. Buarque and Pontes demonstrate that the term “the people” has lost its meaning—through the appropriation of the term by the military as well as the depoliticization of art on the part of the cultural left through folklorization. Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes wish to re-value poetry as a form that draws the recipients’ attention to the multifaceted meaning of the

¹² Our third and last major concern is reflected in the form of the play. [...] The word, therefore, must be brought back, it must become our ally again. We wrote the play in verses, thus poetically intensifying dialogues that could be understood as realist; we did that because poetic language better expresses the density of the emotions that moves the characters, but above all because we tried to re-value the word by the device of versification. A theater that strives to regain its ability to understand [i.e. the world], must, once again, give expression to the multiple eloquence of the word which is at the center of the phenomenon of drama. [My translation.]

words—and to the fact that the latter can easily be ideologized and abused. In this respect, the hybridization of music and versification on the one hand and of colloquial language and dialect on the other should be understood as an objection to the concept of art as expressing a homogeneous national identity; the hybridity of registers of expression creates effects of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*). What Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes say in their preface—in fact, this is an analysis of contemporaneous Brazilian culture in one of the toughest periods of the military dictatorship—amounts to the claim that the regime's cultural policy of the time had the intention of temporarily comforting the underprivileged with folklore.

Gota d'água was awarded the Premio Molière for best drama of the year. Pontes and Buarque deserve distinction for not having accepted the prize; they rather took advantage of the honor offered to them with a view to the opportunity to repeat their positions, as expressed in the foreword, in public.

In order to round off the remarks concerning the preface with a (selective) reading of the drama proper, the plot may be briefly summarized: The protagonist, Jason/Jasão by name, is a young composer of samba songs who has already had some success—particularly with a song titled “Gota d'água”. In the wake of this success, Jasão forsakes his wife Joana and his two children to marry the daughter of the rich Creon/Creonte, whom he expects to support him in his further social advancement. Creonte owns the house where Joana lives and exploits the tenants with excessive rent demands.

Jason is presented as a personage who embodies the conflicts and the weaknesses of an artist under the given political circumstances. He actually belongs to the camp of the cultural left, but tries to ascend. To justify his actions, Jason argues that he will be able to help his people better by working in the camp whose main figure is Creonte. But when Creonte physically and emotionally maneuvers him into a position of power, Jason helps Creonte to drive Joana out of her apartment. The fact that Jason agrees to Creonte's corresponding request is a clear sign of his fundamental weakness, and it is the reason why Joana, abandoned by Jason, tries to take revenge. The central question is how Joana will achieve her revenge.

The second part of *Gota d'água* is more closely based on the model of tragedy. Creonte summons Joana to demand her to immediately move out of the apartment he owns. The scene is composed as an echo of the storyline known from Euripides, in particular when Creonte admits his fear of Joana and bends to her plea for an extra day of mercy with regard to her small children. The plot's culminating scene consists in Joana's decision to use her children for her revenge. She enumerates all the injustices that have befallen her—and realizes that all this has happened without any reason. She has done nothing

to deserve such a fate. She then gives her ignorant children poisoned cakes to eat with the remark that it is better to die than to experience a daily tragedy for which neither the children nor herself are responsible. Joana finally also takes the poison and dies with her children (whereas in Euripides, Medea is able to flee to Athens and to ask for asylum at the court of King Aegeus).

Regarding the transformations to which Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes subjected the tragedy of Euripides, one might hypothesize that there is an implicit problematization in the play of the tendency to understand theater and art in general as metaphors for social and political criticism. In his article on the political allegory *La muerte no entrará en palacio* by the Puerto Rican playwright René Marqués, D. L. Shaw has pointed out the difficulties of integrating social protest into the form of tragedy. He observes that

tragedy and straight social or political protest are intrinsically incompatible, for tragedy, in so far as it is a protest at all, is a protest against the human condition and not against specific social or political conditions. Though it is possible to envisage a tragedy which includes social or political criticism, this can only be indirect and balanced against some other force which is not in itself morally superior.¹³

Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes' play can be interpreted as conveying that tragedy—and maybe art as a whole—has its primary role in portraying fundamental human conditions and conflicts. Especially regarding the preface discussed previously, the play can be understood as a plea for autonomous literary creation, since in systems of oppression only the latter can unfold a critical potential. Politically engaged art requires an independent subject that can act freely. But from Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes' point of view, this freedom is non-existent, at least at the time of the composition of their play. The dilemma of politically engaged literature is that, intentionally or not, it still conveys meaningfulness even in the most extreme situations. But this meaning was forfeited in Brazil after 1964. The piece is thus reminiscent of Theodor W. Adorno's critique of culture, arguing that the inner contradiction of culture is that it contains a promise of humanity on the basis of an inhuman, repressive social system—and ultimately denies itself when, by becoming what he calls a cultural industry, it is completely subject to the rules of the mass production of commodities.

The reference to the tragedy of Euripides can also be understood as a piercing critique of the fact that art often remains part of the system that it superficially seeks to criticize, thus supporting the system instead of helping to overthrow it.

¹³ D. L. Shaw, "René Marqués' *La muerte no entrará en palacio*: An Analysis", in: *Latin American Theatre Review*, vol. 2, 1968, pp. 31–38, p. 33.

Nevertheless, Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes are not trying to abandon art. They are concerned with a genuine aesthetic resistance that may only emerge from artistic autonomy.

With their play, Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes figuratively convey a concept that is contained in Adorno's idea of autonomous art: It is only through autonomy that literature can refuse its economic exploitability and resist becoming a part of the existing system.¹⁴

The versified form of the play itself becomes the strongest marker of artistic autonomy.¹⁵ In their focus on the limits of "theater as metaphor", Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes draw attention to the pitfalls of the concept of committed literature, theater, and art.¹⁶

With the fate of the character of Jason, the successful Samba composer who becomes part of the oppressive system, Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes remind their audience that metaphoric representations of political reality run the risk of being exploited by politics for its own purposes. Their play rejects the notion of art as an a priori commitment to a particular political ideal. The form of tragedy and the poetic diction shift the play's focus from a sentimental, *telenovela*-like story to develop a different confrontation with Brazilian realities. Jason is a character representing the danger that an artist can become part of the oppressive system, and he may be seen as a reminder of the view that art and literature have to develop their own, specific devices for making a meaningful contribution to political discussions. The military dictatorship had managed to lure more and more creative people into a cultural system that made the artist an integral part of the system itself. Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes were committed to freeing art, theater, Samba, and literature from this logic.

¹⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, "Engagement", in: Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften 11: Noten zur Literatur*, Frankfurt/Main 1974, pp. 409–430.

¹⁵ In his lecture on poetry and society, Adorno highlighted the fact that poetry is already in its form a mode of resistance that refuses the rules of speaking obtaining in capitalist societies ("Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft", in: *ibid.*, pp. 49–68).

¹⁶ Yet, their insights on commitment and autonomy have moved a long way from Jean-Paul Sartre's defense of committed literature in his famous essay of 1948, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* When replying to Sartre, and even more urgently to Brecht, in his 1962 article "Commitment" Adorno reworked the central argument of his 1958 essay "Trying to Understand *Endgame*", in which Beckett's negativity was seen as offering the only acceptable consolation in the face of general disintegration.

II

As previously stated, this paper is not intended as a new comprehensive analysis of the piece *Gota d'água*. However, I would like to illustrate the thesis developed on the basis of a reading of the preface by examining an extract from the play itself. This excerpt is taken from the central dialogue between Joana and Jason in the second act of the drama that is followed by an altercation between Creonte and Joana leading to the final scene:¹⁷

JOANA — Pára, Jasão, pára!	JOANA— Stop, Jason, stop!
Assim já é demais... Você tem cara	That's enough. You got the nerve
pra vir aqui e me botar pra fora?	to come here and kick me out?
JASÃO — Não é assim, Joana...	JASON — It's not like that, Joana...
JOANA — Nossa Senhora!	JOANA— Mother of God!
JASÃO — Vim aqui na melhor das intenções	JASON — I came here with the best of intentions
pra cumprir com minhas obrigações de pai...	to fulfill my duty as a father...
JOANA — Pai? Porra, que pai!... Essa não!	JOANA— Father? Damn, father!... Come on!
JASÃO — Não grita!... Eu vim buscar a	JASON — Don't yell!... I came looking for the
solução ideal, acredite se quiser, um jeito	ideal solution, believe it or not, a way in which
pra que nem você, mulher,	neither you, woman,
nem os meninos passem privação	nor the kids have to endure hardship
Pode mudar, sem preocupação	You can move, no worries
Hoje mesmo, pode ir se mudando	Today already, you can start moving
que eu te garanto, eu fico te pagando	that I guarantee you, I'll keep on paying you
todo mês uma pensão... Bem, seria uma	a pension every month... Well, it would be a
espécie de aposentadoria	kind of retirement payment
JOANA — Eu não quero dinheiro de Creonte	JOANA— I don't want money from Creon
JASÃO — O dinheiro é meu!...	JASON — The money is mine!...
JOANA — É? Qual é a fonte de renda?	JOANA— Really? What's the source of the
Violão?...	income? Guitar?...
JASÃO — Isso não importa	JASON — It doesn't matter
[...]	[...]

¹⁷ Pp. 119 – 168.

(continued)

JOANA — Será verdade o que eu estou ouvindo?	JOANA— Is it true what I am hearing?
Que cinismo! Meu Deus, mas que cinismo!...	How cynical! My God, how cynical!...
Jasão, menino, você está agindo não sei como, só sendo hipnotismo	Jason, boy, the way you're acting I don't know how, you must be under hypnosis
Ou você é coisa de pau e corda que Creonte vem e toca. Jasão, acorda, menino, Jasão, acorda	Or you're a wood-and-string thing that Creon comes and plays. Jason, wake up boy, Jason, wake up
Sou eu que estou aqui, limpa a visão	I'm the one who's here, clear up your eyes
Sou a Joana, te conheci criança, lembra? Mas qual, você não lembra nada	It's me Joana, I've known you as a child, remember? Surely not, you don't remember anything
Me deixou com frio, sem esperança, dois filhos sem pai, toda esculhambada, vem um velho safado e me escorraça	You left me cold, hopeless, two children without a father, all screwed up, then comes an outrageous old man and kicks me out
e o Jasão, essa criança que eu fiz homem, não me protege, pior, passa pro lado de lá? Que força infeliz tem o mundo de Creonte, meu Deus, que fez com que Jasão virasse isso?	and you Jason, the child whom I made a man, doesn't protect me, worse, goes over to the other side? What a disgraceful force has the world of Creon, my God, that made Jason turn into this?
JASÃO — Agora você vai ouvir os meus argumentos sem fazer rebuliço	JASON — Now you're going to listen to my arguments without making a fuss
Falo calmo e o mais claro que puder	I speak calmly and as clear as I can
Tudo o que eu fiz ou vou fazer da vida devo a mim mesmo, ao meu modo de ser	Everything I've done or will do with my life is thanks to myself, to my character
Talento não se faz sob medida	Talent is not tailor-made
De barro ruim não sai boa panela	Out of bad clay one cannot make a good pot
[...]	[...]
JASÃO — Essa é a verdade, esse é o motivo da separação, só quero sossego e tranquilidade	JASON — That's the truth, that's the reason for the breakup, I just want peace and tranquility
JOANA — [...]	JOANA— [...]

(continued)

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Mas, Jasão,
já lhe digo o que vai acontecer:
tem u'a coisa que você vai perder,
é a ligação que você tem com sua
gente, o cheiro dela, o cheiro da rua,
você pode dar banquetes, Jasão,
mas samba é que você não faz mais não,
não faz e aí é que você se atocha

Porque vai tentar e sai samba brocha,

samba escroto, essa é a minha maldição
"Gota d'água", nunca mais, seu Jasão
Samba, aqui, ó...

JASÃO — Tá bem. Tem razão, Joana

JOANA — Nunca...

JASÃO — Muito bem...

JOANA — Você não engana
ninguém...

[...]

JOANA — Creonte... Por que um homem
onipotente

assim, poderoso assim, precisa jogar
toda a sua força em cima duma mulher
sozinha... por quê?...

CREONTE — Você quer saber?...

JOANA — Por quê?

CREONTE — Por medo...

JOANA — Medo de mim?...

CREONTE — Medo de você

sim, porque você pode investir a qualquer
hora. Tá calibrada de ódio, a arma na mão
E a vida te botou em posição de tiro

But Jason,

I'll tell you what's going to happen.
there's something you're going to lose,
it's the connection you have with your
people, their smell, the smell of the street,
you can have banquets, Jason,
but you won't be making any more samba,
you won't, and that's where you're fooling
yourself

Because you're going to try and make only limp-
dick samba,

screwed-up samba, that's my curse
"Drop of water" never again, mister Jason
Samba, here, oh...

JASON — All right. You're right, Joana

JOANA— Never...

JASON — Very well...

JOANA— You can't fool
anybody...

[...]

JOANA— Creon... Why would an all-mighty man

like you, powerful like that, need to use
all his strength against a single woman
... why?...

CREON — You want to know?...

JOANA— Why?

CREON — Out of fear...

JOANA— Fear of me?...

CREON — Fear of you

yes, because you can charge at any
time. You're calibrated by hate, gun in hand
And life has put you in a firing position

(continued)

Só falta a vítima, mais nada. Então prefiro	The only thing left is the victim, that's all. So I'd rather
virar pr'um outro lado a boca do canhão	turn the cannon's mouth elsewhere
Não gosto de guerra nem vou facilitar	I don't like war and I won't be incautious
diante de quem está se achando injustiçada	facing someone who is feeling wronged
[...]	[...]
<i>Joana come um bolo; agarra-se aos filhos; cai com eles no chão; a luz desce em seu set; sobem, brilhantes, luz e orquestra da festa onde todos, com a maior alegria, cantam</i>	<i>Joana eats cake; clings to her children; falls with them to the ground; the light descends on their set; brightly turn up both light and orchestra of the party where everyone enthusiastically sings</i>
<i>Gota d'água; vai subindo de intensidade até o clímax, quando se ouve um grito lancinante... É Corina que grita; ao mesmo tempo Creonte bate palmas e a música para.</i>	<i>Drop of water; the intensity goes up until the climax, when a piercing shriek can be heard... It's Corinna screaming; at the same time Creon claps his hands and the music stops.</i>
CREONTE — Atenção, pessoal, vou falar rapidamente	CREON — Listen up everyone, I will speak quickly
Jasão... vem cá... Meus caros amigos, agora, aproveitando a ocasião e aqui na frente de todo mundo, quero anunciar que de ora em diante a casa tem novo dono. A cadeira que foi de meu pai e foi minha vai passar	Jason... come over here... My dear friends, now, taking advantage of the occasion, in front of everyone, I want to announce that from now on the house has a new owner. The chair that belonged to my father and used to be mine will pass on
pra quem tem condições, e que é de minha inteira	to whom is capable, and has my complete
confiança, para poder continuar	confidence, to be able to continue
a minha obra, acrescentando sangue novo	my work, adding fresh blood
Portanto, sentando Jasão aí eu provo:	Therefore, sitting Jason there I confirm:
não uso preconceitos ou discriminação	I do not have recourse to prejudices or discrimination
Quem vem de baixo, tem valor e quer vencer	Who comes from below, is worthy, and wants to win
tem condições de colaborar pra fazer	can collaborate to make
nossa sociedade melhor... Senta, Jasão.	our society better... Sit down Jason.

(continued)

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Jasão senta; um tempo; ouve-se um burburinho de vozes; entra Egeu carregando o corpo de Joana no colo e Corina carregando os corpos dos filhos; põem os corpos na frente de Creonte e Jasão; um tempo; imobilidade geral; uma a uma, as vozes começam a cantar Gota d'água; reversão de luz; os atores que fazem Joana e os filhos levantam-se e passam a cantar também; ao fundo, projeção de uma manchete sensacionalista noticiando uma tragédia.

Joana justifies her refusal to accept a monthly pension from Jason by saying that she does not want to accept Creon's money. She does not believe that the money comes from Jason's art, but is convinced that it is the money with which he has been manipulated to become part of Creon's system, as the colloquial expression "Você é coisa de pau e corda que Creonte vem e toca"—"You're a wood-and-string thing that Creon came and played with"—conveys.

The most important passage of this dialogue is Joana's comment on Jason's hit song, his samba "Gota d'água": Jason's explanation that he is only joining Creon's camp to help his people with his political songs from a position within the system is countered by Joana's sharp remark that when, for the sake of overt political commitment, political reality is trivialized, any political effect vanishes and what remains is "samba brocha, samba escroto".

This final altercation between Joana and Jason renders the limits of an understanding of "theater as metaphor" in Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes' play explicit: the distinction between the moral and the representative dimension of action might be difficult, yet it is always real. The theatrical metaphor weakens as the distance between the two dimensions broadens. As Joana points out: Jason is aestheticizing his behavior as a committed artist who claims that he needs to become part of the system in order to criticize the system from within.

Chico Buarque's 1975 play does not radically oppose morality to theater; it does not intend to enclose theatrical activity within a static structure. Nowhere in Chico Buarque's text can a hint about the restriction of the social scope of theater be found. On the contrary: precisely because Chico Buarque was so keenly aware of the great influence it can exercise on social life, he insisted on the differentiation between theater and reality.