

Artur Azevedo's Last Dramatic Writings: The "Teatro a Vapor" Vignettes (1906-1908)

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Of all Brazilian theatre critics, chroniclers and authors, none worked more diligently to make a dream come true: the creation of a national theatre, with its own building, its own company, and its own repertoire. Although he is now overshadowed by his younger brother Aluísio, the novelist, Artur Azevedo had been very popular in his lifetime as a newspaper columnist, a short story writer, and an author of numerous light plays. He had rapidly established his reputation after 1873 when he arrived in Rio de Janeiro at the tender age of eighteen. From then on he devoted to his first love, the stage, countless pages of light poetry, of translations and adaptations of foreign plays, musical reviews or comedies, as well as hundreds of his columns in the daily press, including several weekly sections that dealt exclusively with the theatre. However, it would have taken a genius to perform the miracle of solidly establishing a national theatre, and such a miracle was not brought about anywhere in the Americas until very recent times.

When the Rio newspaper *A Notícia* celebrated its fourteenth anniversary in 1908, Artur Azevedo, who had written its theatre section for all those years, could rightly declare that he had been the first and foremost historian of the Brazilian stage: "Fourteen years! . . . It means that once a week for the past fourteen years I have been telling the readers of *A Notícia* what is going on in the theatres of our capital; it means that I have published some seven hundred columns which possess at least one virtue: they encompass our entire dramatic production of the final years of the nineteenth century and of the first years of the twentieth. (. . .) If only there had been someone before 1894 when *A Notícia* was founded, who had dedicated himself to the identical task! And once I am gone from this column, may another *A.A.* continue my labor; though neither brilliant nor revealing a special talent, it has at least been useful and profitable."¹

The chronicler doubled as a practitioner of the theatre. His plays appeared on the scene when the period of greatest dramatic activity in Brazil, between 1855

and 1879, was drawing to a close, during which the Romantics had attempted poetic tragedies and comedies for a patriotic public that demanded a national theatre.² French operettas, forerunners of the "musical," were to commercialize and spice the dramatic fare, luring the paying public away from the serious stage already by 1859 when the Alcázar opened its doors in Rio. Adaptations, even parodies in Portuguese followed, amounting to a nationalization of sorts.³ Artur Azevedo, more than any other writer, lent his abundant talent to this "nationalization" of the light musical theatre. Many years later, in 1904, when his strength began to wane, he was to be savagely attacked for his part in "corrupting the stage," perhaps because he had aroused so many high hopes. A certain Cardoso da Mota took him to task in the press for having perpetrated *A Filha de Maria Angu*, "a graceless parody of *La Fille de Madame Angot*, the starting point, so to speak, of a long series of absurdities."⁴ The attack was to be echoed a decade later by a much better known historian, José Veríssimo, in his *História de Literatura Brasileira*: Veríssimo pronounced Artur Azevedo and his contemporaries incapable of raising the literary level of the theatre. By implication, Veríssimo blamed him also for the public's loss of any interest it might have had "in what is called *national theatre*."⁵

The attack was unfair. Veríssimo failed to consider, let alone mention, Azevedo's arguments in self-defense, set forth in reply to Cardoso da Mota's condemnation. In the first place, as Azevedo pointed out in 1904, the stage had been "corrupted" with parodies long before him, and secondly, he had, as a matter of fact, written more ambitious, literary plays, only to see them scorned by the theatre managers and the public. He therefore had been driven to write lighter fare against his will: "I, too, was young once," he wrote ruefully, "and I also had an artistic ideal when I was trying out my pen; but one fine day, by the force of circumstances, I wrote to earn a living, and from then on it was goodbye to the ideal!"⁶

Had Artur Azevedo really sold his "unquestionable dramatic genius"?⁷ Although the playwright felt powerless to stem the tide in spite of all his popularity, he did not give up the old dream of a more substantial, more genuinely Brazilian theatre. Multiplying and thus no doubt dispersing his efforts when his health was broken, he took two more initiatives on top of his multiple journalistic commitments during the last months of his life. Both were in the best tradition of the Brazilian comedy of manners, begun by Martins Pena and briefly revived by França Júnior: he created a national theatre in Rio for the duration of the centennial exposition of 1908, selecting its repertoire and directing its performances of fifteen different plays, including two by Martins Pena and two of his own.⁸ At the same time he had been carrying out an experiment of whetting the public's appetite, if possible, for the comedy of contemporary urban manners, by reducing that comedy to rapidly sketched scenes, to be read in the daily newspaper: the vignettes of the *Teatro a Vapor*.

Artur Azevedo seemed to embody the genius of light literature. He was seen as the sociable, always good-humored, generally liked, roly-poly man about town, who gave the impression of being an inveterate bohemian. That was merely a mask; the real man was revealed at the moment of his sudden death. Having to support a large family, he literally killed himself with work, neglecting his

health, which deteriorated with increasing obesity and rheumatism. Early in October 1908, *A Notícia* published his last weekly theatre column under its usual caption "O Teatro."⁹ On October 17 appeared his last "Palestra," an almost daily column he had conducted in *O País*.¹⁰ On October 21, *O Século* printed his final humorous dialogue of the "Teatro a Vapor" series. On October 23, *O Século* was still able to publish the tale "Pequetita," the last of his weekly "Contos Ligeiros." On the very day of his death one day earlier, on October 22, *O Século*, an evening paper, already carried his obituary. It conveys an idea of the fame Artur Azevedo enjoyed:

"With Artur Azevedo disappears the most popular Brazilian writer of all, (. . .) the chronicler of each passing day. Avoiding controversial subjects, he offered us a daily fare of articles, *crônicas*, stories, verse, and *folhetins* that added considerably to the reader appeal of the papers to which he contributed. All of us used to read him; it was a habit that had slowly been growing on us. (. . .) When it seemed as if he had lost his former vigor, some of his rivals—the only people ever to dislike him—publicly proclaimed Artur Azevedo decrepit. At that very moment he published the play *O Dote*, which was the equal of any written by the celebrated foreign authors. He also began to write the *Contos Ligeiros*, and in this newspaper launched the witty section *Teatro a Vapor*, which became so popular that it was being reprinted by practically the entire press in the interior. And when he lay dying he was still producing with his usual verve and wit."¹¹

Under the caption "Teatro a Vapor," ("Theatre Under Steam"), A.A., known well enough to sign with his initials, published 105 humorous vignettes—dramas in a nutshell—between 1906 and 1908. The first of these sketches, "Panamericano," appeared on August 22, 1906. In it, Manuel, a Portuguese tavernkeeper (*vendeiro*) and his *carioca* customer Chico Facada were arguing about the meaning of the word "panamericano," which they kept reading in the newspapers on the occasion of the Third Pan American Congress, then being held in Rio de Janeiro.¹² Having looked up "Pan" in an encyclopedia providentially picked up at a sale, the tavernkeeper found that the pagan god had invented the pan flute. They concluded that "panamericano" must be a sort of "flauteação" or "freeloading." "That's the sort of thing," Manuel added, "they cook up to spend our money. As if we were rolling in it! (*Confidentially.*) Listen, just between you and me, while no one else is around, Callisto's son Pan must be that guy *Rute*, the one who made all those speeches and stuffed his belly full. . . ."¹³

The gently satirical tone had been set in which to comment on events, whether of a public or private nature. It remained constant to the end when the author made fun of himself in the final sketch of the series, "A Despedida" ("Farewell"). Without the readers' being aware of it, he hinted at sudden death, being gravely ill at the time. It was one of the many dialogues in the setting of a humble city household. The mother and the children had begun to wonder what had become of father, locked up in his study. Could he be contemplating suicide? Their anxiety reached its peak when he burst forth at last, to announce that he had just made out his will. Why? Simply because he was about to take his first ride on one of those new electric conveyances called *bondes* (streetcars).¹⁴

The dramatic form of these little sketches or vignettes represented an innovation in the history of the Brazilian *crônica*, that protean genre of the light com-

mentary, written for the daily press and born with it.¹⁵ To show how Artur Azevedo dramatized it will require a look at the contents and style of his "Teatro a Vapor" vignettes.

The file of *O Século* which I consulted in the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro in 1970 lacked the issue of September 26, 1906, which probably contained a "Teatro a Vapor" vignette. Consequently, the collection of vignettes I was able to gather consists of 104 instead of 105 of these minidramas, published almost weekly in that newspaper for over two years. Two related reasons could explain the choice of a dramatic form. For one, Artur Azevedo was kept so busy with the preparations for the National Exposition of 1908 that he had no leisure to write many long plays as in the past. Finding it difficult to repress his dramatic urge entirely, he channeled it into the rapid "Teatro a Vapor." The other reason could be that the vignette served as a means to bring the joys and sorrows of the Brazilian stage to the general readers' attention, without lecturing or pleading. He could entertain his large and devoted following with dialogues about plays that were then being performed, such as the *vaudeville* "A Casa da Susana" (No. 5 in the appended list of "Teatro a Vapor" sketches) or the melodramas "Os Ladrões do Mar" (No. 12) and "Fé em Deus, ou, Os Estranguladores do Rio" (No. 22), adding to the latter a bloody last scene, in which the heroine mortally stabbed herself while the villains exclaim: "Oh! Heavens! Horrors!" He could tease the people for going to see the comedy "As Pílulas de Hércules," played by an Italian company (No. 40), or for letting themselves be taken in by the intriguing title of another play, "Sorte de . . ." (No. 47) He could picture the embarrassment of would-be theatre goers looking in vain for a play to which they might take their young daughters at night:

Wife—What's playing at the Recreio?

Husband—Two plays, one at the matinee, the other at night.

W—I told you, no matinees for me.

H—Nor would I take the girls to see a play that's called "The Man with Teats."

W—And what's the play at night?

H—You guess.

W—Tell me.

H—"The Count of Monte Cristo."

W—No kidding! Still the same we saw two years ago!

H—That's the only suitable play there is. We might as well postpone our great theatre party. . . . What the Rio stage has come to!

W—What do you expect? If everybody goes to a theatre as little as we do!¹⁶

Azevedo's couple had not set foot inside a playhouse for two years to see a decent play: he knew his public. . . .

In another vignette, under the title "Pobres Artistas!" (No. 86), he pitied the Brazilian actors for being unable to compete against the foreign companies that came from France, Italy, Portugal, and God knows where, to tour South America:

Senhor Santos, a Hotel Guest—How do they make a living then?

The Manager—I don't know. They tell me that the Government is think-

ing of adding an annex to the Poorhouse to tide them over until the Golden Eagle Palace, commonly known as the Municipal Theatre, is ready.

On the other hand, our columnist would also give free reign to his admiration for certain foreign actresses who came to Rio, such as Tina di Lorenzo (No. 89), Mercedes Blasco (No. 90), or the famous *La Duse*, who appeared in 1907 in "Mona Vanna" (No. 46). He defended the theatre against its eternal enemies, those people who accused it of spreading immorality, when real life was so much more immoral (No. 5). He called attention to his own plays, such as *O Dote* of 1907, writing a continuation in one of the vignettes (No. 27) or using a scene from one of his *revistas* in another (No. 15). At times, he teased friends and colleagues, such as João do Rio when one of the latter's plays had flopped miserably in 1906 (No. 20), and Coelho Neto, as the author of "Quebranto" (No. 99).

While theatrical topics were frequent and provide striking evidence of the purpose of the "Teatro a Vapor," Artur Azevedo offered a much broader spectrum of themes. Public events figured prominently: the census taken in 1906 (No. 4), the state visit by the President of the Argentine Republic (No. 30), the projected voyage to Brazil of Dom Carlos, King of Portugal (No. 37 and others), which never materialized because of the King's assassination in 1908 (No. 74), the visit of an American flotilla in the same year (Nos. 71 and 72), and the triumphant return of Rui Barbosa, the eloquent Bahian politician, from the Peace Conference in The Hague (No. 69).

Other events treated in the vignettes had a purely local significance: the razing of one-story dwellings to make room for high rise buildings (No. 42), the founding of a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals (No. 61), the discovery of unsanitary conditions in the city's breweries (No. 33), the introduction of vaccination against smallpox (No. 97), or the inauguration of a covered market (No. 76).

Still other vignettes touched lightly on Brazilian politics: on unsuccessful candidates for elective office (No. 32), on the passionate politicking of the Bahians (No. 34)—whose regional pride provided Artur Azevedo with an easy mark for jokes in other situations as well (Nos. 69 and 100)—, or on contemporary political types such as the diehard royalist (Nos. 38 and 93) and the socialist agitator (No. 96).

Although the "Teatro a Vapor" made fun of sensationalism in a general way (Nos. 10 and 11), it did not always disdain sensational news, especially of notorious murders. The Murder of the Rua da Carioca in 1906, whose victim had been a jeweler, yielded subject matter for no less than six vignettes (Nos. 9 to 12, 22, and 60).

Recurring events had been a standard feature of *crônicas*, and our *cronista* used the appearance of a comet (No. 52), Mardi Gras (Nos. 26, 77, 78), or the days of St. John (No. 92) and St. Peter (No. 93) that were traditionally celebrated in the city. Christmas, however, was only mentioned in connection with the theme of the annoying tips that had to be given to mailmen, delivery boys and the like (Nos. 19 and 70), annoying to men with small resources and large families—a majority of the *cariocas* seen in the "Teatro a Vapor." Artur Azevedo, who was himself usually short of funds, could empathize with them.

The new era of rapid communication furnished him various topics: a balloon ascent in a public square of Rio (No. 50), a ride in one of those new self-propelled carriages called automobiles (No. 17), or the exciting motion pictures that some people went to watch daily in the many newly opened theatres (No. 60).

In a pinch, the columnist could always fall back on wellworn themes: the passion of playing the lottery (No. 68) or its less expensive and perhaps more thrilling rival (since it was illegal), the *jogo do(s) bicho(s)* (No. 25). Even the typically Brazilian *jeitinho*—a neat way to circumvent a difficulty—appeared in one of the vignettes (No. 103).

Frequently, the *cronista* made use of his experience as a playwright to lampoon common human foibles: hypocrisy, especially on the part of parents (No. 2) and priests (No. 81), excessive caution, as well as imprudence (No. 94), jealousy and conjugal infidelity (Nos. 66, 93, and others), credulity (No. 88), curiosity and gossiping (No. 10), petty opposition to any change (No. 104), ignorance (No. 1), bragging and cowardice (Nos. 9, 13, 63), and daydreaming (Nos. 14, 26, 51, 68). Language was another preoccupation with Artur Azevedo, which was to be expected from an author of comedies. He loved to invent hare-brained explanations of foreign words (Nos. 1 and 103) or show up the pretentious talk of virtual illiterates (Nos. 4, 5, 30, 31). The perennial topic of spelling reforms was also good for a laugh (No. 49). The moralist in Artur became quite obvious at times, as when dissuading the desperate from committing suicide—an effort that he pursued throughout life (No. 82), or when castigating the dogmatism of the still numerous positivists (No. 97) and the jingoism of superpatriots, incensed at any supposed slight by Spanish Americans (Nos. 63 and 67).

In one instance Artur Azevedo dramatized an anecdote about a famous writer. The man who figured in this vignette was no other than Machado de Assis, his colleague in the government service. He showed the polite Machado shaking off an impertinent visitor who had come to the office to beg for a *jeitinho* (No. 103). The vignette appeared shortly after Machado de Assis' death and constituted an homage rendered with gentle humor. No doubt many who read it then were acquainted with Machado's voice and could still hear it in their minds.

The most personal note is struck in the only monologue of the series, in which the embarrassed author speaks to the editor in his own behalf, to explain why he had failed to deliver the customary dramatic vignette for a particular week (No. 43). In the style of a letter or a diary, he told of all the goings-on that had distracted him during a journey to the port city of Santos. At least, he made the deadline!

While the topics changed with the concerns that prevailed in successive weeks, the situations tended uniformly to reflect middle class or lower middle class manners. Obviously, conversations about current events were common between husbands and wives or between acquaintances in the "Teatro a Vapor." A related situation would show the head of the family reading his daily newspaper at home, either in bed or comfortably installed in an easychair (Nos. 2, 9, 44, 53, 65, 101). In other sketches, the wife and sometimes also the daughter were seen sewing to pass the time while waiting for the man to come home for the family meal (Nos. 25, 47, 63, 66, 70, 79), but the situation might be comically reversed, with the husband waiting patiently for long hours (Nos. 59, 100). Then again,

the family might be conversing during their meal (e.g., No. 65). Some couples were engaged in talk while getting ready to go out (e.g., No. 56) or on the point of leaving after the meal (e.g., No. 40). Or else they would be caught discussing a spectacle after returning home from it, perhaps while having tea with toast before retiring (Nos. 5, 12, 46, 60, 89, 98, 100). Of course, the discussion could degenerate into a quarrel (e.g., No. 89). And such couples might be overheard exchanging their first words in bed upon awakening in the morning (Nos. 68, 94). It was to be understood that some husbands deceived their wives (e.g., No. 66), but it seemed much funnier to show women who were taking revenge by having lovers (Nos. 5, 11, 71, 78, 99).

Other situations, while normal enough, provided more original scenarios, peculiar to Rio de Janeiro. Among the scenes of this category was one that was supposed to take place on the ferry that plies Guanabara Bay between downtown Rio and Niterói (No. 57). Another unfolded inside a streetcar (No. 78), and several centered around a desk at which a harried wife or husband were going over the monthly budget of the household (Nos. 27, 48, 53).

Most settings reflect the intimacy of an ordinary family: 83 of the 104 vignettes take place inside a home, usually in the dining room (in 22 vignettes), less frequently in a parlor (14), a bedroom (10), and rarely in the husband's study (5) or the inner yard of the house (3). The terrace is chosen only once, and so is the street window by which a woman could sit and watch the world pass by. Additional vignettes are situated "at home," without further specification (18). The author showed families gathering at mealtimes, receiving their visitors, or secluding themselves in bedrooms.

Three sketches were laid in a boarding house or a hotel, and one might add them to those set in the home. The only public places where Artur Azevedo took his readers were bars and the like—*botequins*, *casas de iscas*, *tavernas*, *vendas*—where his men of the working class congregated, usually to have a glass of *parati rum* (seven times), unless they, like other characters, were shown meeting in a street or on a park bench, in short, "in the open air" (ten times). That leaves only a handful of scenes located each in a different and therefore exceptional setting: a store (No. 46), a barbershop (No. 49), the ferry (No. 57), a market (No. 76), a theatre (No. 90), the stratosphere (No. 84), or a government office (No. 103).

Practically all of the settings expressly or implicitly were part of the city of Rio de Janeiro. The exceptions are very few—imaginary scenes, such as a mythical Paris during a workers' strike that could have occurred in Rio (No. 18), a never-never land where animals do the talking (No. 28), or some place up in the air, where the Old Year gives advice to the New (No. 20). It follows that by and large the characters are *cariocas*, typical inhabitants of the various districts of the town that was rapidly becoming a bustling metropolis, serving as the capital of a vast republican federation of states, an important seaport, and an entry point for thousands of immigrants. Artur Azevedo's hundreds of characters nevertheless fail to mirror the complexity of that urban society, perhaps because of limitations inherent in his position as an intellectual living modestly among the lower middle class of shopkeepers, government clerks and other employees with fixed working hours, who furnished the bulk of his stage popula-

tion in the "Teatro a Vapor." Even the three journalists, two poets and one nondescript "writer" who appeared there belong to that class.

Most of the middle class played the roles of married couples (35 instances) or parents and children (24). The upper class (29) consisted of people whom one addressed as "senhor doutor," who bore the title "comendador," or who were referred to as "proprietários." In one sketch we meet a New World count and countess—whose titles had been bought from the Vatican (No. 85). Even this upper class is more numerous in Artur's world than the poor, who were shown in 19 sketches and included some fourteen Mulattos and Blacks—*cabras, mucamas, moleques, quitadeiras*—, playing the roles of workers, housewives, concubines, errand boys, waiters, jobless loafers, and criminal elements—*malandros*, all of whom could come straight out of the typed perspective of the contemporary comedy of manners.

Another stock comic character is also in evidence, the European immigrant with his thick accent and his unassimilated ways. Generally, he is pictured as a Portuguese or a *galego* (in seven instances), and frequently as a tavernkeeper. The Italian element appeared in only one vignette (No. 22), although Italians had been flocking to Brazil since the 1880s. A special case, bordering on comedy, was that of the two priests among the characters, who were unflatteringly portrayed in the anticlerical tradition, one being a hypocrite, the other a thoroughly immoral fellow, and both violating their vow of celibacy.

The engaging humor of the vignettes is heightened by their style of writing, which fits the normalcy of settings, situations and characters. It is a marvel of naturalness: direct, rapid, indicating the characteristics of diverse social classes with the few sure strokes of the experienced dramatist's pen. The dialogues run their brief course smoothly; their language is the Portuguese that must have been current about 1900 in the streets and households of Rio de Janeiro. A few passages from different vignettes will give a sufficient idea of their colloquial flavor, even in English translation.

Here are some upper class characters talking:

Dr. Chiquinho (appearing at the door)—May I, Ladies?

Dona Leopoldina and her four charming daughters (rising, all aflutter)—

Look who's here! Dr. Chiquinho! Come in, come in, dear Dr. Chiquinho! How have you been? You haven't shown your face for such a long time! Hand us your hat! Hand us your cane! Do sit down!
(*Everybody sits down.*)

Dona L.—What lucky wind has blown you into our house? I'll have the church bells rung! . . .

Dr. C.—I'll tell you, my dear. I have been out of my wits for days!

All the ladies.—Out of your wits?

Dr. C.—Yes, out of my wits, that's the right word. At home, at lunch, at my office, at the courthouse, in Ovidor Street, on Central Avenue, at my tailor's, at my barber's, at the Café Castelões, in the streetcar, at supper, in short, everywhere I turn, all I hear is people talking about the Carioca Street Murder!

Dona L.—How dreadful, isn't it, Dr. Chiquinho?

Dr. C.—Then I thought of your house, my excellent friends. . . . There,

I said to myself, there I surely won't hear another word about Carletto and Rossi. . . . These ladies, I said, like to converse only of fashions, balls, plays, outings, and the like. There I shall be safe from this confounded topic that is driving me mad!

First Daughter.—Do you know if Carletto has been arrested yet?¹⁷

Now listen to the lower middle class, represented by Dona Joaquina, sitting by her window and chatting with her good friend old Mr. Andrade, who had been strolling in the street:

Andrade.—Let people call me an old fogey, an enemy of progress, or what have you, but that's the way I am! The *Jornal do Commercio* was the *Jornal do Commercio* in the good old days when Leonardo was editor in chief, when its offices were full of cobwebs, and when it did not occupy this palatial mansion!

Dona Joaquina.—But, what's one thing got to do with the other?

A.—Everything under the sun. I, too, used to leave my cobwebs in the store when I had one. And when those doctors of the Bureau of Health came around to snoop, turning everything topsy-turvy—that pack of bums and crooks!—all I wanted to do was to sell out. That so-called Republic had to come and tell people they didn't have the right to keep a place as dirty as they well pleased! . . .

Dona J.—But dirt. . . .

A.—In a clean place you can never make any money, Mrs. Joaquina! Mark my words, all those newfangled shops on the avenues with their electrical light fixtures won't be heard from when it's time to pay taxes. Look here, I wouldn't lend them a nickell . . .¹⁸

Finally, listen to a couple of women in a poor neighborhood discussing the news:

Dona Maria is opening the door to Dona Joaquina's home. Dona Joaquina is mending stockings.

Dona Maria.—May I, neighbor?

Dona Joaquina.—Come right in, Maria. Today you're arriving a little early for our chat. Anything wrong?

Dona M.—My head is swimming, neighbor! . . .

Dona J.—May Our Lady help us! Why's that?

Dona M.—Because of that foundling boy and the eyeless officer!

Dona J.—What are you talking about?

Dona M.—Why, don't you know? It's all over the papers! . . . Marshall Floriano Peixoto's soul . . . or Juventino's—that's the poor young man who went up in a balloon—and they can't make out for sure yet which, he appeared to a boy in the Pedregulho Home! . . .

Dona J.—By the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost! May they protect us from the Evil One! . . . But how come they don't know which of the two it was?¹⁹

Week after week, with few interruptions, the unpretentious, often facile

"Teatro a Vapor" entertained its readers. And while no one could be expected to display a sparkling wit in every single dialogue, especially a writer as hard pressed to produce copy for his daily living, Artur Azevedo was able to achieve comic effects within a minimum of lines and to paint genre pictures of *carioca* life as it used to be when electric lights, motion pictures and automobiles were novelties. In his fashion, he revived and updated the traditional comedy of manners singlehanded and unnoticed, leaving a legacy for the Brazilian theatre of the future, shortly before his death in October 1908.

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Notes

1. *A Notícia*, No. 225 (Sept. 21, 1908), p. 3.
 2. The dates 1855 and 1879 are given by José Veríssimo in a chapter on the theatre in his *História da Literatura Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, 1916), p. 384. A later historian, J. Galante de Sousa in *O Teatro no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1960), extends the period to 1884, the year when the successful *revista* by Artur Azevedo and Sampaio Moreira, *O Mandarim*, established this genre of musical satire of manners and politics.
 3. See J. Galante de Sousa, one-vol. reedition (Rio de Janeiro: Edições de Ouro, 1968), p. 266.
 4. Quoted in J. Galante de Sousa, p. 276.
 5. See José Veríssimo, *História da Literatura Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Francisco Alves, 1916), p. 386.
 6. Artur Azevedo, "Espécie de profissão de fé," *O País* (Rio de Janeiro, January 1905), as quoted by R. Magalhães Júnior, in *Arthur Azevedo e Sua Época*, 3d ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1966), p. 154. In "Em defesa," an article published on May 16, 1904, in the same newspaper, Artur Azevedo had listed his unsuccessful attempts at writing plays on a higher literary level. Both Magalhães Júnior and J. Galante de Sousa reproduced passages from the 1904 article.
- Moreover, we have the text of a pathetic letter of March 31, 1904, which was published for the first time in Francisco de Assis Barbosa, *Retratos de Família*, 2d ed. (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio 1968), pp. 182-186. In it, Artur Azevedo wrote to his adopted daughter Cotinha Freire da Silva: "A play of mine is being rehearsed. Pray to God, my daughter, that it will be well received because—and this is a settled matter—I shall divide its eventual proceeds with you. The stage has not provided me with any income for a long time. To keep up with expenses, I am writing for *O País*, *O Correio da Manhã*, *A Notícia*, *A Folha Nova* of São Paulo, *O Kosmos* and one more little sheet that I have never seen myself but which pays me something. (. . .) You can't imagine how weary I am!" (*Ibid.*, p. 184).
7. José Veríssimo, p. 385.
 8. Artur Azevedo's playhouse at the Exposition, named Teatro João Caetano after the best known Brazilian actor of the 19th century, functioned from August 12 to October 5, 1908. During this short time, Artur Azevedo staged the following fifteen Brazilian plays:
 - O Noviço*, by Martins Pena; *Não Consultes Médico*, by Machado de Assis; *Vida e Morte*, by Artur Azevedo, written for this theatre; *As Doutoradas*, by França Júnior; *Quebranto*, by Coelho Neto; *A Nuvem*, by Coelho Neto; *O Defunto*, by Filinto de Almeida; *A Herança*, by Júlia Lopes de Almeida; *O Irmão das Almas*, by Martins Pena; *As Asas de um Anjo*, by José de Alencar; *Deus e a Natureza*, by Artur Rocha; *História de uma Moça Rica*, by Pinheiro Guimarães; *A Sonata ao Luar*, by Goulart de Andrade; *Um Duelo no Leme*, by José Piza; *O Dote*, by Artur Azevedo (the final production).
 The list is given in R. Magalhães Júnior, p. 355.
 9. It could have been "Machado de Assis, como Autor de Teatro," the article published in No. 239 (October 5/6, 1908). Machado, Artur Azevedo's friend, had just died. Perhaps another column still appeared in the week of October 13. At any rate, on October 20, there was no "O Teatro" because, as the editor explained, Artur Azevedo had fallen very ill.
 10. Its title was "O Ponto de Parada dos Bonds. . ."
 11. From the anonymous obituary in *O Século* (October 22, 1908). Probably it had been written by the editor in chief himself, the republican politician Brício Filho.
 12. The Third Pan American Congress will be remembered because of the scornful poem written about it by Rubén Darío, who participated as a delegate from Nicaragua, rather than for the leadership of the then Secretary of State Elihu Root, the *Rute* of Artur Azevedo's vignette.
 13. *O Século* (August 22, 1906).

14. The *bondes* became a fixture of the city. The last of Rio de Janeiro's streetcar lines, from Santo Antônio via the Aqueduct to Santa Teresa, disappeared only three or four years ago.

15. Artur Azevedo had composed many other kinds of *crônicas* under a variety of pen names and for at least fifteen different periodicals; yet none were written in the dramatic style of the "Teatro a Vapor." Simultaneously with his columns for *O Século*, he was contributing regularly to at least four other dailies between 1906 and 1908: *Século XX* (1906), *Correio da Manhã* (1906), *A Notícia* (1908), and *O País* (1907-1908).

16. No. 27, "A Escolha de um Espetáculo."

17. No. 10, "Um Desesperado."

18. No. 104, "Bons Tempos."

19. No. 88, "Sugestão."

Appendix

List of the "Teatro a Vapor" series of humorous dramatic vignettes by A.A. (Artur Azevedo), as published in the evening newspaper *O Século*, Rio de Janeiro.

Date	Title	Main Topic(s)
1906		
1. 22 Aug	Panamericano	Pan American Congress in Rio de Janeiro.
2. 30 Aug	A Verdade	Telling lies.
3. 5 Sept	O Homem e o Leão	Twisting the lion's tail.
4. 12 Sept	A Lista	Census taking in Rio.
5. 19 Sept	A Casa da Susana	Supposed immorality of the stage.
6. 26 Sept	(Issue 33 of <i>O Século</i> , missing in the files of the Biblioteca Nacional de Rio de Janeiro in 1970, probably contained a "Teatro a Vapor" vignette.)	
7. 3 Oct	Um Pequeno Prodígio	The eleven-year-old boy pianist Miécio Horszowski.
8. 10 Oct	Cohabitar	Misuses of the Portuguese language.
9. 17 Oct	Um como Há Tantos!	The Carioca Street Murder.
10. 24 Oct	Um Desesperado	The Carioca Street Murder.
11. 31 Oct	Um dos Carlettos	The Carioca Street Murder.
12. 7 Nov	Depois do Espetáculo	The Carioca Street Murder; The melodrama <i>Fé em Deus ou, Os estranguladores do Rio</i> , based on the Carioca Street Murder.
13. 14 Nov	Tu p'ra lá, Tu p'ra cá	Reception for Afonso Pena, President-Elect of Brazil.
14. 21 Nov	Um Cancro	The numbers game known as "jogo do(s) bicho(s)."
15. 28 Nov	As Opiniões (Cena de Revista)	Salute to Pereira Passos, Mayor of Rio, upon his departure for Europe.
16. 5 Dec	Projetos	Proposed increases in government employees' salaries.
17. 12 Dec	O Mealheiro	Saving money to hire an automobile for an excursion.
18. 19 Dec	Um Grevista	A teamster's strike in Paris.
19. 26 Dec	Festas	Christmas gratifications.
1907		
20. 2 Jan	1906 e 1907	Review of the events of 1906 (in verse).
21. 9 Jan	Senhorita	Usage: how to address young girls.
22. 16 Jan	Fé em Deus ou Os Estranguladores do Rio (Epílogo)	Epilogue to the melodrama of the same title, based on the Carioca Street Murder.
23. 23 Jan	O Caso do Dr. Urbino	Threatened expulsion of a Portuguese doctor for medical malpractice.
24. 30 Jan	Quero Ser Freiral	Paternal opposition to a girl's fiancé.
25. 6 Feb	A Domicílio	Popularity of the numbers' game, the "jogo do(s) bicho(s)."
26. 13 Feb	Sonho de Moça	Mardi Gras: street Carnival in Rio de Janeiro.
27. 20 Feb	A Escolha de um Espetáculo (No "Teatro a Vapor" column in the week of February 27.)	Poor theatre fare in Rio.
28. 6 Mar	Assambliéa dos Bichos. Cena Fantástica	Foundation of a Society for the Protection of Animals in Rio.
29. 13 Mar	Sem Dote (Em Seguimento à Comédia "O Dote")	Continuation of the author's own comedy "O Dote."
30. 20 Mar	Confraternização	State visit of Argentine President Julio Roca.

Date	Title	Main Topic(s)
31. 27 Mar	O Raid (misprinted as "O Raio")	Horse show of the Brazilian cavalry.
32. 3 Apr	Depois das Eleições	Municipal elections in the State of Rio de Janeiro.
33. 10 Apr	Sulfites	Discovery of impurities in beer brewed in Rio.
34. 18 Apr	Política Baiana	Falling out of two Bahian politicians, Severino and José Marcelino.
35. 24 Apr	A Cerveja	Brahma beer absolved of malfeasance by a jury.
36. 1 May	Higiene	DiETING to death.
37. 8 May	A Vinda de D. Carlos	Projected visit of the King of Portugal to Brazil; projected return of the remains of Emperor Don Pedro II.
38. 15 May	Um Luís	Visit of Prince Luís de Orléans, member of the imperial family; Brazilian monarchists.
39. 22 May	O Casa das Xifópagas	Separation of two Siamese twins, an unsuccessful operation by Dr. Chapot Prévost, Artur Azevedo's friend, in Rio.
40. 30 May	As "Pílulas de Hércules"	Masculinity pills; a vaudeville performed by an Italian company.
41. 5 June	Entre Proprietários	Neri Pinheiro's project of tearing down one-story houses in Rio.
42. 12 June	Um Apaixonado	Guest performances of Eleanora Duse in Rio.
43. 20 June	O Meu Embarço. Monólogo	The author's visit to Santos.
44. 26 June	Dois Espertos	Republican agitation in Portugal.
45. 3 July	Liquidação	Businessmen committing arson to collect insurance.
46. 10 July	"Monna Vanna"	Italian play, with Eleanora Duse in the title role.
47. 17 July	As Reticências	The play "Sorte de . . ."; taboo words on the stage.
48. 25 July	Modos de Ver	The Vila Isabel Murder.
49. 1 Aug	Reforma Ortográfica	Reform of Portuguese spelling.
50. 7 Aug	Foi Melhor assim!	Balloon ascent in the Praça de República, Rio.
51. 15 Aug	O Velásquez do Romualdo	Master paintings that turn out to be worthless.
52. 21 Aug	O cometa	Looking for a comet.
53. 29 Aug	Economia de Genro	Mother-in-law and son-in-law.
54. 4 Sept	Os Credores	Public lectures by writers to pay their debts.
55. 11 Sept	Os Fósforos	Priests engaging in peddling to maintain a family.
56. 18 Sept	Um Ensaio	After-dinner speech for an illustrious French visitor.
57. 25 Sept	Opinião Prudente	State politics in Niterói: a dispute between two candidates for the presidency, Backer and Nilo.
58. 2 Oct	Objetos do Japão	Imported Japanese knickknacks.
59. 9 Oct	De Volta da Conferência (No "Teatro a Vapor" column in the week of October 16.)	A lecture by Guglielmo Ferrero in Rio.
60. 24 Oct	Cinematógrafos	The novelty of motion pictures in Rio.
61. 1 Nov	Pobres Animais!	The new Society for the Protection of Animals in Rio.
62. 6 Nov	Cinco Horas	Projected visit of Dom Carlos, King of Portugal, to Brazil.
63. 13 Nov	Um Bravo	Peruvian raid on Tabatinga.
64. 20 Nov	Um Moço Bonito	"Nice young men" who are petty thieves.
65. 27 Nov	Insubstituível!	Heitor de Melo's resignation from the commission that was preparing the National Exposition of 1908.
66. 4 Dec	O Jurado (No "Teatro a Vapor" column in the week of December 11.)	The Carioca Street Murder case reaches the jury.
67. 18 Dec	Cadeiras ao Mar!	An Argentinian's provocative behavior towards Brazilian fellow passengers on a British ship.
68. 25 Dec	Os Quinhentos	Daydreaming of winning the big prize in the Christmas drawing of the Lottery.
<i>1908</i>		
69. 2 Jan	Como se Escreve a História	Ruy Barbosa's triumphant return from the Peace Conference in The Hague.
70. 8 Jan	Cena Íntima	Writing New Year's cards; Christmas gratifications.
71. 15 Jan	Que Perseguição!	Visit of an American fleet to Rio during Carnival.
72. 22 Jan	Um Homem que Fala Inglês	Visit of an American fleet to Rio during Carnival; need for interpreters.

Date	Title	Main Topic(s)
73. 29 Jan	Quem Pergunta Quer Saber	Centenary of the opening of the Brazilian ports to foreign shipping.
74. 5 Feb	Modos de Ver	Assassination of Dom Carlos, King of Portugal, in Lisbon.
75. 12 Feb	Silêncio! . . .	High society turns its back on republicans in Rio.
76. 20 Feb	O Novo Mercado	Inauguration of a covered market at the Praia de Dom Manuel, Rio.
77. 27 Feb	A Discussão	Carnival in Rio.
78. 5 Mar	Uma Máscara de Espírito	Carnival in Rio.
79. 11 Mar	Um Ensejo	Foreclosure of the Banco União do Comércio.
80. 18 Mar	A Mi-Carême	Painful ignorance of the French language.
81. 25 Mar	Padre-Mestre	The clergy's hostility against writers; the clergy's immorality.
82. 8 Apr	Um Susto	Suicide.
83. 16 Apr	O Poeta e a Lua	Strike against the gas company.
84. 22 Apr	Entre Sombras	Transfer of the remains of two admirals, Saldanha da Gama and Barroso, for burial in Rio.
85. 29 Apr	O Conde	Papal counts in Brazil.
86. 6 May	Pobres Artistas!	Lack of work for Brazilian actors in Rio.
87. 13 May	Cena Íntima (No "Teatro a Vapor" column in the week of May 20.)	The <i>corso</i> on the Avenida Beira-Mar.
88. 27 May	Sugestão	Spiritualism.
89. 3 June	Por Causa da Tina	The actress Tina di Lorenzo.
90. 10 June	Confusão	The actresses Mercedes Blasco (in the role of Pimpinella in "O Menino Ambrósio") and Acácia Reis.
91. 17 June	A Ladroeira	Increase in thefts in Rio.
92. 24 June	Viva S. João!	Celebrating St. John's Day (Midsummer Night).
93. 1 July	Uma Explicação	Disregard for municipal edict prohibiting the launching of lighted balloons; increased popularity of St. Peter's Day in Rio.
94. 8 July	Foi por Engano	Crime of passion.
95. 15 July	A Família Neves	Repeated postponements of the opening of the National Exposition in Rio.
96. 22 July	Socialismo de Venda	Expulsion of an Italian journalist for fomenting strikes in São Paulo.
97. 29 July	A Vacina (No "Teatro a Vapor" column in the week of August 5.)	Vaccination again smallpox and the Positivists' opposition to it.
98. 12 Aug	O Fogueteiro (No "Teatro a Vapor" column in the week of August 17.)	The National Exposition and its fireworks.
99. 26 Aug	Quebradeira (Epílogo ao <i>Quebranto</i> , de Coelho Neto)	Coelho Neto's play <i>Quebranto</i> .
100. 2 Sept	Bahia e Sergipe	The Bahian pavilion at the National Exposition.
101. 9 Sept	A Mala	The case of the trunk containing the body of a "Turk," murdered in São Paulo.
102. 17 Sept	Lendo <i>A Notícia</i> (No "Teatro a Vapor" column in the weeks of September 24 and October 1.)	The murder of a newly-wed couple on their wedding night.
103. 7 Oct	Três Pedidos. Cena Histórica	Anecdote about Machado de Assis.
104. 15 Oct	Bons Tempos	Move of the editorial offices of the <i>Jornal do Comércio</i> to a mansion on the Avenida Central.
105. 21 Oct	A Despedida	Suicide; the new electrical streetcars.