

**STAGING POLITICAL SCANDALS:
TWO BRAZILIAN ADAPTATIONS OF WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE'S *RICHARD III***

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Abstract: Foregrounding the Brazilian sociopolitical context from 2003-2006, this essay analyses two productions of Shakespeare's *Richard III: Ricardo III*, directed and adapted by Jô Soares, and *Ricardo III*, directed by Roberto Lage and adapted by Celso Frateschi. Both productions were staged in São Paulo in 2006. From 2003 to 2006, Brazil went through rough times in terms of politics. Several scandals happened during President Lula's government. The so-called *Escândalo do Mensalão*, *Escândalo*

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lo dos Bingos, and *Escândalo dos Correios* popped out in 2005 and 2006, drawing much attention from the press and the public at large. Starting from the premise that a theatrical production is inextricably connected with its context, and taking into account that two different stagings of one of Shakespeare's most political plays were simultaneously performed in Brazil during a time of political scandals, the analysis aims at verifying whether and how each production constructed certain passages of the play-text to highlight the current Brazilian context, especially 3.2., in which citizens discuss the political condition of their country. The analysis of the scene appears to demonstrate that Soares' *Ricardo III* makes explicit references to the current political context, whereas Frateschi and Lage's *Ricardo III* seems to address broader social problems in Brazilian society, such as urban violence and the negative effects of capitalism.

Keywords: Shakespeare. *Richard III*. *Ricardo III*. Performance

ENCENANDO ESCÂNDALOS POLÍTICOS: DUAS ADAPTAÇÕES BRASILEIRAS DE *RICARDO III*, DE WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Resumo: Evidenciando o contexto-sócio político do Brasil nos anos de 2003 a 2006, este artigo analisa duas produções de *Ricardo III* de Shakespeare: *Ricardo III*, dirigida e adaptada por Jô Soares e *Ricardo III*, dirigida por Roberto Lage e adaptada por Celso Frateschi. Ambas encenadas em São Paulo, em 2006. De 2003 a 2006, o Brasil passou por um momento difícil no âmbito político. Vários escândalos aconteceram durante o governo do presidente Lula. Os chamados: Escândalo do Mensalão, Escândalo dos Bingos, e Escândalo dos Correios vieram à tona em 2005 e em 2006, atraindo de modo decisivo a atenção da imprensa e do público em geral. Partindo da premissa que uma produção teatral está intrinsecamente ligada ao seu contexto e, levando em consideração o fato de que duas produções de uma das peças mais políticas de Shakespeare foram simultaneamente encenadas no Brasil em um período de escândalos políticos, a análise busca verificar como e se cada produção construiu certas passagens do texto para evidenciar o atual contexto político, especialmente em 3.2, na qual os cidadãos discutem a condição de seu país. A análise da cena parece demonstrar que o *Ricardo III* de Soares faz referências explícitas acerca do contexto político atual, enquanto que o *Ricardo III* de Frateschi e de Lage parece abordar outros problemas da sociedade brasileira, tais como violência urbana e os efeitos negativos do capitalismo.

Palavras-chave: Shakespeare. *Richard III*. *Ricardo III*. Performance.

Introduction

*“I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days”¹
(Richard III 1.1.30-1)*

Along with *Coriolanus*, *Richard III* is among the most political of Shakespeare’s historical and Roman plays. The play is the epitome of the constant search for power that characterises the political world. Victor Kiernan observes this by pointing out that “in *Richard III* the whole play may be called a warning against the irremediable acts of violence that unfettered power seems doomed to give way to” (78). Shakespeare’s Richard’s ambition and hypocrisy fuel the manipulation that turns him into a scheming politician who does not measure his actions when it comes to conquering the crown. José Renato Silveira submits that:

In *Richard III*, the political power presents itself without disguises. The English bard creates political dramatisation by expressing tensions and paradoxes that go through the sphere of power: the potential with which politics can contribute or prevent improvements on the human condition”². (4)

Certainly, Richard is a typical example of a scheming, corrupt politician. With his undeniable intelligence, the character is able to seduce the audience, dominate the other characters and conquer the crown by putting into practice his conniving plans and ploys.

Throughout the play, Richard commits crimes, lies, dissimulates, provokes quarrels in the family, plans bloody schemes--all to occupy the English throne--and when he is finally on the way to being made king, Richard “refuses” the crown. It may be argued that in refusing the crown, he reaches the limits of hypocrisy and

demagogy to be found in a dramatic character. “Refusing” the crown is, of course, another of Richard’s strategies. And, hoping to secure the support of the people, corrupt politicians often resort to hypocritical and demagogical moves—just as Richard does. Such politicians will do whatever they can to occupy a position, and when officially nominated, they sometimes dissimulate a nonchalant attitude, concealing their ambition and struggle for power.

And Shakespeare’s Richard’s views on politics can be seen as rather crass. In fact, as a politician, he does not seem interested in serving the people. He wants to sit on the English throne and keep the crown. Richard is egocentric and is mainly concerned about his own interests and social status. Alexander Leggatt argues that “it is appropriate for an intriguer to be a solitary, but a King, whatever final privacy he maintains, must be the centre of a whole network of social and political relationships, and Richard simply cannot function in that way” (36).

Drawing on the rich thematic possibilities of relating *Richard III* to the sociopolitical context of a given time, the purpose of this essay is to discuss two 2006 Brazilian productions of the play in the light of the political context of Brazil from 2003 to 2006: *Ricardo III*, translated, directed and adapted by Jô Soares and *Ricardo III*, directed by Roberto Lage and adapted by Celso Frateschi. During the years herein spanned, Brazilian politics was going through one of its most delicate moments since President Fernando Collor de Mello’s government³ in 1992. This political instability happened mainly due to several scandals that surrounded President Lula’s government.

In an attempt to develop such issues and assess the two Brazilian productions, this essay is divided into two parts: the first part addresses the sociopolitical context of Brazil in the aforementioned years. Part two discusses remarkable characteristics of the productions in the light of the Brazilian political context.

1. Brazilian sociopolitical context: 2003-2006

The year-span 2003-2006 encapsulated a troubled scenario in Brazilian politics. Ruled by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, from the left-wing, *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (labour party, PT), the country lived a touchy, unstable political moment. The reason for this instability had to do mainly with scandals in Lula's own administration, namely, *Escândalo dos Bingos*, *Escândalo dos Correios*, and *Escândalo do Mensalão*. These scandals produced a negative impact in Lula's government, harming his image as President and the image of PT.

The first scandal--*dos Bingos*--foregrounded in February 2004 had to do with alleged bribes in the Brazilian congress to protect gambling interests. On December 6th, 2006, the important São Paulo newspaper *Folha Online* published an article, "Entenda a CPI dos Bingos" [understand the Bingos enquiry], explaining how *Escândalo dos Bingos* had been discovered: "*Escândalo dos Bingos* resulted from illegal acts committed by Waldomiro Diniz, a former member of the presidential staff, who was caught on video trading illegal money with a gambling tycoon"⁴ (par.1). Due to the impact caused by the discovery of this scandal, an official parliamentary commission was instituted in June 2005.

The commission did not investigate *Escândalo dos Bingos* only, however, but went on to investigate PT as a whole. Later in 2005 the investigation elicited the exposure of *Escândalo dos Correios*, alleged frauds in the Brazilian national postal service committed by Maurício Marinho, a board member of ECT--*Empresa de Correios e Telégrafos* [Brazilian Mail]. Policarpo Júnior, a journalist from the weekly magazine *Veja*, brought to public attention video footage of Marinho receiving money and narrating in detail the workings of an illegal scheme for money collection and laundering.

And the succession of scandals in Lula's government did not stop with *Escândalo dos Correios*. On June 6th, 2005, the house representative Roberto Jefferson, leader of PTB (another labour

orientated party), confessed in an interview to *Folha de S. Paulo* the existence of a monthly “allowance” of R\$ 30.000 (about 10,000 pounds sterling at the time) paid for representatives of PP (Progressive Party) and PL (Liberal Party) to vote in favour of Lula’s projects in congress. This bribe begot a new lexical item in the Brazilian social and political vocabulary—*Mensalão*--translated in English as “big-monthly allowance”, to be more precise, “vote-buying”, and in Spanish as “*Mensalón*”.

If the scandals of *Bingos* and *Correios* caused political instability, *Mensalão* was far more damaging. Diego Escostesguy, from the previously mentioned *Veja* weekly, concludes, facetiously, that the “national record” of scandals was broken in Lula’s government. To the journalist, “the current crop of house representatives and senators, trying hard to dish out perks to guarantee their re-election in October, have broken the record for scandals and have gone beyond the worst expectations”⁵ (54). The journalist goes on to refer to the forty politicians involved in the scandal of *Mensalão*. And according to Jorge Almeida, as a consequence of the scandals, main PT members working for the government were forced to step down.

The scandals served as an argument for the opposition (right-wing parties) to try to remove Lula from the presidency. In fact, every time Lula was a candidate, the opposition tried to prevent him from being elected. In the elections of 1989, the opposition tried to convince the population that there would be another dictatorship in Brazil if Lula became president. The same happened in the elections of 1994, 1998, and 2002.⁶

While the opposition was thinking of an impeachment for the President, left-wing parties were fighting the accusations of political manipulation and corruption. The media attempted to expose and highlight the unfortunate incidents that happened in the government, and, again according to Almeida, the media’s action contributed to weaken Lula’s government and the public image of his staff (132). In the political, televised debate that preceded the presidential elections of 2006, Lula chose to be absent, arguably

lest the recent scandals jeopardize his comfortable position in public opinion polls at the time. *Rede Globo*, which broadcast the debate, took advantage of the President's absence to promote the candidate of the opposition.

In any event, the problematic political scenario and the media's pressure were not sufficient to remove Lula from the Presidency, and he was re-elected in 2006. The opposition expected the population to rise against the political manipulations and corruption in Lula's government, just like they had done in 1992 under President Collor, but voters apparently did not take the scandals into consideration in the elections of 2006. According to Almeida, only 26% of the population believed Lula's attitudes in relation to the scandals were negligent or at fault (132). Almeida concludes that no matter how manipulative and corruptive Lula's government was in its first years, the population still considered his mandate better than Fernando Henrique Cardoso's, i.e., the previous President's, government.

The scenario of political ambition and manipulation briefly sketched here prevailed in Brazilian politics for about four years, and it was against such backdrop that these two Brazilian productions of *Richard III* were simultaneously staged in the same Brazilian city, São Paulo, in 2006. Now, starting from the premise that a theatrical production is inextricably connected with its context, the question is how did the political environment influence the conception of the two productions of *Ricardo III*?

2. Jô Soares's *Ricardo III*

However markedly contrasted, both productions dialogued with the Brazilian current sociopolitical moment. Jô Soares's *Ricardo III* was a sizeable spectacle staged in Teatro FAAP, a

five-hundred-seat venue, counting on a mainstream cast of TV soap opera stars; Frateschi and Lage's *Ricardo III*, on the other hand, was a relatively simple production, staged in Teatro Ágora, a smaller, one-hundred-seat venue, with a cast that was not well-known and not mainstream, except for Frateschi himself in the title role. In spite of their differences, however, each production drew on Shakespeare's *Richard III* to convey important messages to the audience at that delicate political moment in Brazil.

As a mainstream show, Soares's famous cast included Marco Ricca, as Ricardo, Glória Menezes, as Duquesa de York, and Denise Fraga, as Rainha Elisabete. The text was translated and adapted by Soares himself, who also directed the staging; the set was designed by Aby Cohen and Lee Dawkings. The sparse, nondescript set, according to Soares, was "to help the spectator join the action, imagining the locations where the schemings took place"⁷ (D5). Costumes were designed by Cássio Brasil and Veronica Julian. According to Brasil, the material used to produce the costumes was taken from stores that sold equestrian goods, Ricardo's crown, for instance, being made out of spurs. Music and lighting, predictably enough, were used to signal changes of time, space, and scene. The music, created exclusively for the show, was composed by Eduardo Queiroz, and the lighting was designed by Telma Fernandez.

Analyzing certain passages of the playtext, it is possible to argue that in an attempt to draw the audience's attention to the contemporary political context, Soares invokes a critique of scheming politicians who work for the government, as well as of the president's attitudes in relation to the aforementioned scandals. In scene 6, which corresponds to 2.3 in Shakespeare's playtext, Soares not only translates but also introduces interpolations that are relevant to the sociopolitical moment. The scene refers to the citizens' comments on the uncertain future of their country because of King Edward's sudden death. The citizens' concern lies on the fact that the King's eldest son and heir, Prince Edward, is only 12

years old, and due to his underage, depends on his royal uncles' protection.

Soares's citizens' comments, especially in the beginning and at the end of the scene, seem to refer to manipulative politicians and the problematic scenario of contemporary Brazilian politics. Soares omits the Third Citizen, and consequently the conversation in his *Ricardo III* happens between the First and the Second Citizen. The first words that seem to refer to the Brazilian sociopolitical context are the Second Citizen's comment on the King's death:

Má notícia. Quando um rei morre, o próximo quase sempre é pior (5).

[Bad news. When one king dies, the next one is often worse].***

These words correspond to the Second Citizen's lines in *Richard III*:

Ill news, by'r lady- seldom comes the better.
I fear, I fear 'twill prove a giddy world. (2.3.4-5)

The citizen in *Richard III* does not say that the next ruler is often worse than the previous, which is clear in Soares's adaptation. Thus, given the place and time of the staging, it is possible to submit that the Second Citizen's words in Soares's *Ricardo III* express a criticism, as the political crisis in President Lula's government contributed to cause disappointment in the population, who expected Lula to be a better ruler than his predecessors. It seems that Soares wants to show that Lula's government, involved as it was in a succession of political scandals, was worse than previous administrations.

Further criticism of the government is expressed in Soares's translation of subsequent lines. The First Citizen's words

Quando a chuva começa, os homens espertos já se cobrem

(7)

[When the rain starts, clever men cover themselves up]

might refer to the attitude of politicians who attempt to cover up scandals that surround their administration. And the First Citizen's answer

É verdade que tá todo mundo assustado, mas sempre acontece isso quando muda o governo (9)

[It's true that everybody is scared, but this always happens when the government changes]

seems to refer to the population's insecurity in relation to the upcoming 2006 elections and the prospect of a new government. Furthermore, considering the fact that Soares's production was conceived in a moment of a series of political scandals, the citizen's words "*é verdade que tá todo mundo assustado*" imply the population's feeling in relation to the current political crisis.⁸

At the end of the same scene, Soares created another interpolation that seems to reinforce the criticism on Brazilian politicians. The First Citizen says

Antigamente tinha políticos honestos, com vontade de trabalhar. Agora os tempos são outros (17-19).

[Formerly, there were honest politicians, who wanted to work. These are now different times].

These words seem not only to criticize current politicians, but also to compare Lula's PT with previous governments, possibly implying that Lula's administration outdid all in terms of political manipulation and scandals. Moreover, this line is not found in *Richard III*, which seems to confirm the hypothesis that Soares adds the line in his textual adaptation with a topical intention, to reinforce the criticism on Lula's government.

The Second Citizen's answer

Pode ser. Mas eu tenho esperança que as coisas vão melhorar. Vai ter mais comida na mesa. (20-1)

[Maybe. But I hope things will get better. There will be more food on the table]

seems ironic, referring to the naive belief that politicians will always keep promises of providing better life conditions for the population. Besides, "*esperança*" (hope) was *the* key-word in PT's political campaign in 2002, and the sentence "*vai ter mais comida na mesa*" ironically refers to the project *Fome Zero* (zero hunger) developed by Lula in the first year of his government.

The First Citizen's reply is also relevant:

É, toda vez que muda o governo falam isso, mas pra nós sempre acaba em sopa (22-3).

[Yeah, every time the government changes, they say this, but for us the end is always soup].

This passage can be seen as referring to the fact that promises made by some politicians are almost invariably identical and almost invariably unkept. Moreover, the expression "*sempre acaba em sopa*" alludes to the Brazilian expression "*acabar em pizza*,"⁹ which translates the idea of impunity, as some congress enquiries

have remained inconclusive. In relation to Lula's government, this sentence sounds especially provocative, since the opposition claimed that Lula was too bashful in promoting the investigation of the government's political crisis. The expression also implies that, although the three mentioned scandals were extremely polemic in the moment they happened, they might end up neglected.

Hence, the interpolations reinforce Soares's criticism of the attitudes of scheming politicians, and his two citizens are a metonymy for the Brazilian population at large, who felt insecure about and disappointed with the country's delicate political scenario. The actors' performances and the visual signs used in the staging of this scene reiterate this hypothesis. Dressed in bleak, dark clothes, the citizens stood downstage right, close to each other and to the audience, suggesting at once intimacy and seditious complicity.

Another revealing passage is the end of scene 3, which corresponds to 1.3 in *Richard III*. The scene refers to the moment that Richard calls the murderers to execute Clarence in the tower. In Shakespeare's play:

But soft, here come my executioners.
How now, my hardy, stout, resolved mates,
Are you now going to dispatch this thing? (1.3.338-9).

Ricardo's words in Soares's adaptation:

Ah, meus carrascos! Amo vocês. Então, companheiros, estão prontos para resolver logo esse assunto? (181-3).
[Ah, my executioners! I Love you. So, comrades, are you ready to take care of this business?]

By calling the murderers "*companheiros*", Soares establishes a telling connection with President Lula, a connection that would not go unnoticed to Brazilian ears at the time, since one of the

criticisms about the president's allegedly populist diction was the all-too-frequent use of the word "*companheiros*" in his speeches. The right-wing opposition simply hated this word, perhaps because it reminded them of the word "comrades". Shakespeare's Richard uses the word "mates", which could be translated in Portuguese as "*amigos, parceiros, colegas*". However, Soares chooses "*companheiros*", an option loaded with political resonance in the Brazilian contemporary context. Moreover, the fact that about forty politicians were involved in the scandal of *Mensalão* and about eight (or more) were involved in *Escândalo dos Correios* suggests the option for "*companheiros*" as a travesty of "all the president's men".

Based on the analysis of such passages, it is possible to surmise that Soares's production criticizes scheming politicians, arguably attempting to provoke thoughts and shake our passive attitude as Brazilian citizens in relation to scandals and wrongdoings that happened in the first years of President Lula's government.

3. Frateschi and Lage's *Ricardo III*

As regards Frateschi and Lage's *Ricardo III*, the idea of producing and staging the play came expressly from the desire to raise a reflection in Brazilian society at the time. To Frateschi, Brazilian capitalist society had surrendered the collective to the individual. According to his conception, in staging *Ricardo III* "we are concerned about understanding contemporary human being's interests, and Shakespeare is probably the author who raises, in a profound way, a reflection upon human relations in a capitalist society in which individualism has become its main characteristic"¹⁰ ("program folder" par.3).

In an interview with Marcela Besson, from *Veja*, Frateschi observes that his *Ricardo III* illustrates the violence committed by the members of PCC (*Primeiro Comando da Capital*) in May 2006

(par.6). PCC is a criminal faction organized by eight prisoners from Casa de Custódia de Taubaté, known as Piranhão, one of the roughest penitentiaries in the country. At the time, PCC was one of the strongest criminal organizations in Brazil. *Folha de S. Paulo* published an article denouncing PCC's *modus operandi*: to raise funds, PCC inmates were obliged to pay a monthly fee of R\$ 50,00 (roughly 18 pounds sterling), and members who were free had to pay R\$ 500,00 (roughly 180 pounds sterling). The money was used to buy drugs, guns, and to assist in the defence of prisoners affiliated with the organisation ("*Facção Criminosa PCC*", par.1). The parallels between the PCC and his staging of *Ricardo III*, as Frateschi points out, are the cruelty, corruption, and illegalities committed against constituted authorities to conquer what one wants--ends justifying whatever means.

To director Lage, *Ricardo III* has to do with the competition that has always existed in the political world. The director sums up his conception by pointing out that their intention was to talk about the struggle for power at any price, the underhanded and devious ways in which some politicians or political parties struggle to gain and retain power (Néspoli D4). However, Lage warns that they did not want to criticise a particular political party or politician, but to address, in general terms, the cut-throat competition that has become natural among power-hungry politicians. By establishing a connection between the production and the political world, Lage would seem to agree with Alexander Leggatt, who observes that "politics for [Shakespeare] is not a search for solutions to social and economic problems but a search for power and authority by the politicians themselves" (238).

Lage and Frateschi's production included fourteen actors (males and females), with set and costumes designed by Sylvia Moreira. The stage had three levels. On the top level, a large dark window opened and closed by the actors themselves at key moments throughout. Beth Néspoli, writing for *O Estado de São Paulo*, submits that when closed, this window became a dark

dungeon installed at the top of the tower where Ricardo's victims were imprisoned. When opened, this window revealed a red throne installed literally *at the top* (D4). The presence of this dark window on stage, closing and opening, concealing and revealing, not only imparted dynamism to the action but reiterated the theme of cover-ups and disclosures. Costumes evoked Elizabethan times, but in darkish colours and with a gothic feel. Lighting, designed by Wagner Freire, and music, composed by Aline Meyer, were used mainly to mark the passage from scene to scene.

In this show Act 2, Scene 2, which corresponds to scene 6 in Soares's production, Frateschi adapted the citizens' conversation in order to comprise not only a political discussion but a social one as well. To be sure, the citizens talk about the life of the kingdom, the political aspects of the country in general and the violent society they inhabit. The citizens' conversation in Frateschi's production, however, is longer than in Soares's and counts on no less than seven citizens, a small crowd, if compared with Shakespeare's *Richard III* and with Soares's adaptation, in which the scene includes respectively three and two citizens only.

The seven citizens are divided into groups of three or two, spread at three different street corners. Citizens 4 and 5 are at the first corner. Citizens 1, 2, and 3 are at the second corner. Citizens 6 and 7 are at the third corner. Although all seven citizens comment on the troubled moment the country is going through due to the death of the king, the conversation rings different tones at each corner. At the first corner, citizens 4 and 5 simply let the audience know the latest happenings in the kingdom, informing the spectators about the death of the king and referring to consequences, such as the precarious situation of the royal women; they also speak of Prince Edward's coronation. At the second corner, citizens 1, 2, and 3 also express their concern about the consequences of the death of the king. The citizens' conversation at the second corner corresponds to the conversation of the three citizens in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and in Soares's scene 6. At the third corner, citizens 6 and 7

also comment on the conditions of the women in the kingdom and on Prince Edward's coronation.

The scene starts with citizen 4, who appears alone at the first corner and announces, in a rather tragic way, the death of the king:

Trágica Violência! O Rei está morto! (1).
[Tragic violence! The King is dead!].

It can be argued that with these words citizen 4 attempts to shock the spectators and to foreshadow the conversation about the consequences of the death that has just been announced. Besides, the expression "*trágica violência*" is quite powerful and hints that the consequences of the king's death will be tragic for the kingdom, the country, and the people. Surely, the shocking announcement of King Edward's death in the beginning of this scene is an interpolation used by Frateschi to reinforce its tragic impact.

After the fourth citizen's announcement, the focus turns to the conversation among citizens 1, 2, and 3 at the second street corner. In Frateschi's playtext, the conversation here is similar to the scene in *Richard III*. Like the corresponding scene in the original playtext, here the citizens feel insecure in relation to their country's current and future political situation. Then, the focus changes to the first corner. Here, citizens 4 and 5 tell the spectators about the women in the kingdom: Queen Elisabeth cries the loss of her husband, King Edward, and laments that Ricardo is the only royal uncle left to be the protector of her eldest child, Prince Edward. Besides informing the audience about the condition of Queen Elizabeth, the citizen also refers to the Queen's feelings in relation to power. In other words, the citizen assumes that Elizabeth does not cry only because of the death of the king, but also because she has lost her place in the kingdom as queen.

The fifth citizen's comments are related to the Duchess of York:

A Duquesa de York, que ainda chorava a perda de seu próprio marido e de seu filho Clarence, assassinado na Torre, soma agora a dor da perda de seu filho Eduardo, nosso rei (9-10).

[The Duchess of York, who still cried the loss of her own husband and of her son Clarence, murdered in the Tower, now cries the loss of her son Edward, our king].

In answer to the fifth citizen's comment, citizen 4 assumes that besides the death of her children, the Duchess's sorrow has to do with the fact that she is the mother of the evil Ricardo:

Resta-lhe apenas Ricardo de Gloucester, a quem se envergonha de ter parido (11).

[All that is left her is Richard Gloucester, whom she is ashamed of having given birth].

The subsequent conversation, another interpolation, happens at the third corner, between citizens 6 and 7, who also talk about Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York. Whereas citizen 6 mentions the suffering of the Queen and the Duchess, citizen 7 seems optimistic in relation to the royal women, because of the coronation of Prince Edward:

Por estes a rainha não chora. Ela é ainda mãe do jovem Príncipe Eduardo, nele reside seu consolo. Ele será coroado (15-16).

[For these the Queen does not cry. She is still the mother of young Prince Edward, on whom lies her consolation. He will be crowned].

And at the second corner, the comments on the death of the king end with citizen 3 saying

Não, pela graça de Deus, o seu filho será Rei (21).
[No, with the grace of God, her son will be King].

The conversation then goes back to the second corner, among the three citizens, who comment on the insecurity they feel in relation to the king's underage. Considering the words said by citizen 3 in Frateschi's adaptation

Enquanto ele for criança, o país será governado por um conselho. Quando crescer, sem dúvida reinará bem por ele mesmo (25).
[While he is a child, the country will be ruled by a council. When he grows up, undoubtedly, he will rule well and by himself].

and the corresponding lines in Soares's adaptation

É um conselho de ministros que governa enquanto o rei for menino. Além disso, ele conta com a proteção dos tios: pelo lado da mãe e pelo lado do pai (11-12)
[It is a council of ministers that rules while the king is a boy. Besides, he counts on the protection of his uncles: on the mother's and on the father's side]

there is an interesting difference. Soares's citizen mentions that ministers will help the young king reign the country. The expression "*conselho de ministros*" can be seen as a reference to Brazilian politics, since the President counts on a staff of ministers to rule the country. Frateschi's citizen, however, omits the word "*ministros*". Moreover, the citizen in Frateschi's adaptation seems more optimistic in relation to the Prince's reign, since he hopes that the Prince will reign well—and by himself—in the future.

The answer to the second citizen's comment is given by the first citizen:

Foi assim quando Henrique VI foi coroado em Paris aos nove meses de idade (26).

[It was like this when Henry VI was crowned in Paris at the age of nine months].

The answer to this comment is offered by citizen 3:

A diferença é que, naquela época, a Inglaterra contava com políticos e conselheiros sérios. O rei contava com tios virtuosos para proteger a sua pessoa (27-8).

[The difference is that at that time England counted on serious politicians and councillors. The King counted on virtuous uncles to protect him].

Evidently, by referring explicitly to England, Frateschi's citizen obliterates the Brazilian political context. Soares's citizen, conversely, does not mention England here, but says, as we have seen,

Antigamente tinha políticos honestos, com vontade de trabalhar.

[Formerly, there were honest politicians, who wanted to work],

which to a Brazilian audience might invoke Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government, which ruled the country before PT.

As already mentioned, due to the king's underage, the kingdom is ruled by the royal uncles. The third citizen's comment

Aí é que está o problema. Seria melhor que tivesse um único tio. A disputa entre aqueles que estão mais próximos do futuro rei irá atingir a todos nós (29-30)

[There lies the problem. It would be better if there were only one uncle. The fight among those who are closest to the future king will affect us all]

speaks of the fight among the royal uncles and among politicians to rule any given country. In 2006, although PT was in power, members from the opposition were also ruling [and still rule] important states in the country. Since 2006 was the year of presidential elections, the political struggle became even tougher and did affect the people and the country as a whole.

In Soares's text, the corresponding lines are said by citizen 2:

Era melhor que os tios fossem todos do mesmo lado. Imagina só a briga que vai haver entre eles pra controlar o menino (14-15).

[It would be better if the uncles were all on the same side. Imagine the fight among them to control the boy].

These words suggest that the royal uncles will rule the boy, not necessarily the country. Since the boy seems to represent the Brazilian President as well as a young and inexperienced government, the citizen's words suggest that the royal uncles, that is, "*conselho de ministros*," will rule the president, not necessarily the country. In Frateschi's text, on the other hand, the citizen's lines avoid a critical stance in relation to PT and to President Lula and refer, in more general terms, to the fight among political parties to rule a country—any country.

Yet another interesting difference between Frateschi's and Soares's approach is when the citizens refer to the fear and insecurity of the population as regards the country's political future. In Frateschi's text, citizen 3 comments:

Assim são as coisas em período de grandes mudanças (44).
[That's how things are in times of great change].

Thus, he indirectly addresses the fear of “*grandes mudanças*”, which might refer to change in society in general rather than change in government. Soares's citizen, on the other hand, attributes the people's fear exclusively to the change in government by saying,

Sempre acontece isso quando muda o governo (9).
[That always happens when the government changes].

Therefore, by comparing the citizens' comments, it is possible to infer that Frateschi's citizens do not refer directly or exclusively to the Brazilian government, since they invoke the insecurity of the people at large as regards change. Hence, the presence of seven citizens in this remarkable adaptation reinforces the importance of the people as agents in the social and political life of a country. Different from Soares's, Frateschi's citizens are depicted as less parochial. In Soares's adaptation, conversely, the citizens seem to address their remarks to the political conditions of the parish, as it were.

4. Final Remarks

The analysis of passages from Soares's *Ricardo III* and Frateschi and Lage's *Ricardo III* shows two different stances in relation to the delicate, contemporary political moment in Brazil. Soares's *Ricardo III* seems more topical, i.e., more critical of and explicit about the political crises of the time and place. His citizens' conversation seems to allude critically to President Lula, his government and his projects. Besides, Soares's interpolations seem to be a “call to arms”, as it were, so that Brazilians might try to change the country's political situation by voting for an opposition candidate

in the presidential elections of 2006.

Frateschi and Lage's production seems less critical of contemporary, topical political crises and attempts to expose, in general terms, other aspects of Brazilian society, such as prison violence, the negative effects of capitalism, and the struggle for power among politicians in general. The conversation among Frateschi and Lage's entails not only political matters, but social problems as well. Besides, Frateschi and Lage's citizens convey the importance of the people as active participants in the social and political life of a country. It was surely not a coincidence these two productions of one of Shakespeare's most political playtexts were staged in the same Brazilian city, in 2006, amidst the turmoil of a political crisis. If Shakespeare's timelessness is to a great extent a function of the fact that his plays can be continually rewritten and rescripted, 2006 was a choice moment in Brazil for these two adaptations of his *Richard III*.

Notes

*** All translations are ours

1. The text of *Richard III* referred to throughout this essay is the *Riverside Shakespeare*. Second Edition (1997) fully listed under References.

2. *Em Ricardo III, poder político se apresenta sem disfarces. O bardo inglês realiza a teatralização da política expressando as tensões e paradoxos que atravessam a esfera do poder: o potencial com que a política pode contribuir ou impedir a melhoria da condição humana* (in this essay, all quotations originally in Portuguese are translated into English by the authors).

3. Fernando Collor's administration has been considered one of the most corrupt of all times. Due to corruption scandals that happened in his government, the population, especially the youngsters, took to the streets in favor of the President's impeachment. Under intense pressure by the population, congress voted the process that opened Collor's possible impeachment. On December 28th, 1992, President Collor renounced his mandate before the congress decided to approve his impeachment. Thus, the President lost his political rights and was replaced by his vice-president, Itamar Franco. Without the commotion raised by the population, the impeachment process might not have been instituted and Collor would have finished his mandate.

4. *Escândalo dos Bingos teve como característica principal a atuação do ex-assessor da casa civil, Waldomiro Diniz, flagrado em vídeo negociando dinheiro ilegal com um empresário do ramo de jogos.*

5. *A atual safra de deputados e senadores que partem agora para tentar se reeleger (ou não) nas eleições de outubro próximo bateu todos os recordes e superou as piores expectativas.*

6. One typical example was the TV commercial starred by the actress Regina Duarte in 2002. In the commercial, Duarte pronounced the sentence: "*Eu tenho medo*" (I am afraid), strongly implying fear of another dictatorship in Brazil should Lula be elected. Certainly, this commercial, produced by the opposition and broadcast to the whole nation by *Rede Globo*, was part of a political campaign against Lula.

7. *Faz com que o espectador interaja com a peça, imaginando os lugares onde as intrigas aconteciam.*

8. See note 6.

9. Thaís Nicoleti de Camargo, from *Folha Online*, claims that the expression "*acabar em pizza*" has been mostly used in the 1990s by the Brazilian population to refer to the scandals and corruptions that have been occurring in the Brazilian politics and that often remain impune.

10. "Interessa-nos compreender o homem contemporâneo e suas relações e talvez

Shakespeare seja o autor que nos proporciona, com maior clareza e profundidade, um questionamento das relações humanas na sociedade capitalista, onde a ideia do individualismo se fundou, se desenvolveu e se hipertrofiou. ”

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