

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Politics, Censorship, and Film Form: Brazilian Cinema of the Military Regime 1964-1979

by

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## Abstract

This thesis concerns filmmaking in Brazil in regards to three different movements that happened during the first fifteen years while the country was under the military regime (1964-1979): *Cinema Novo*, *Cinema Marginal* and *Boca do Lixo* productions, namely parodies and *pornochanchadas*. My thesis analyzes how filmmakers from these movements were influenced by dictatorship in struggling to propose a Brazilian national cinema that connected its films to their people. The main films examined are part of the three cycles mentioned above, and they differed in style, form, and content: *O Desafio* (*The Dare*, 1965, Paulo Cesar Saraceni), *A Margem* (*The Margin*, 1967, Ozualdo Candeias), *Como e Boa Nossa Empregada* (*How Good Our Maid Is*, 1973, Victor di Mello and Ismar Porto), and *Bacalhau* (*Codfish*, 1976, Adriano Stuart). Nonetheless, despite those differences, political commentary is a common theme that linked them all, as well as restrictions imposed by censorship at the time. I argue that filmmakers from this period found different ways of dealing with harsh conditions that strictly banned cultural forms of expression through censorship, while trying to communicate with their audience through filmmaking. My thesis offers an overview of Brazilian Cinema during the time period analyzed, with background information on the foundation of Embrafilme in 1969, and the operation of censorship throughout the military regime.

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Finally, I want to express how fortunate I feel to be able to write freely about one of the darkest periods in the history of Brazil. Here is to hoping that the atrocities from those years stay in the past despite the disastrous current leadership in power. Ditadura nunca mais!

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
Methodology.....	2
Chapter 1: Brazilian National Cinema .....	4
Chapter 2: The Military Regime, Film Industry, and the Birth of <i>Cinema Novo</i> .....	7
Chapter 3: Embrafilme and Censorship .....	10
Censorship and Cultural Expression .....	15
The Fostering and Censoring of a National Cinema: the Complicated Relationship between Embrafilme and Censorship .....	19
Chapter 4: <i>Cinema Novo</i> .....	21
Chapter 5: <i>Cinema Marginal</i> .....	29
Chapter 6: <i>Boca do Lixo</i> and the <i>pornochanchadas</i> .....	38
Conclusion.....	50
References .....	53
Filmography .....	59

## Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to provide an understanding of how the historical and social contexts generated three different movements or forms of response from filmmakers during the first fifteen years of the dictatorship period in Brazil (1964-1979). The first one is called *Cinema Novo* (Brazilian New Wave), followed by *Cinema Marginal* (Outcast Cinema), and then the *pornochanchadas* productions of a region known as *Boca do Lixo* (freely translated as 'garbage mouth'). I argue that the military regime directly impacted how filmmakers addressed the country's problems at the time through the medium of film, creating three forms of political cinema that differed from each other in style and conventions. To address this problem, I trace how these three distinct movements were created, focusing on how their films were shaped by but also reflected the political context of the country at the time. Another important aspect for the creation of a film industry in Brazil was the formation of an important governmental organ, Embrafilme (Empresa Brasileira de Filmes S.A.), subsidized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. I have included a brief background on the creation of this important organ since it was responsible for the majority of releases in the period of time I have chosen to study and also to broaden the understanding of how the film industry worked during the period of time I have researched. I also mention the existence of screen or exhibition quotas that were in place at the time. This topic is quickly explained for the purposes of understanding how the film industry operated however it will not be explored in depth given the scope of this Honours thesis. It is also worth mentioning that due to the strict nature of censorship that operated during dictatorship years, I have dedicated part of my project to understand how censors worked, as well as describing the different types of censorship within the time period of my research. With analyses of key films for each period of time, I was able to get a better

understanding on the cinematic culture of the time period mentioned above, as well as gain an insight of how productions were developed in the early 1960s to the late 1970s in Brazil.

It is necessary to mention that during my research, I have encountered a variety of different books and articles written only in Portuguese and for that reason I have opted for translating it directly to English instead of including the original quote in Portuguese. Also, the majority of films I will be covering do not have English subtitles, so I deem important to supply a translation of any pieces of dialogue that might be of interest when analyzing such films. I have also translated censorship documents that were available only in Portuguese. Last but not least, I have come across a few articles that were originally written in Portuguese but have then been translated to English. In some cases I found that the original idea was not successfully conveyed when translated, or even missed some important information in terms of expressing the author's original idea. I figure that in these situations, I find it useful to have the original quote cited and translated as per my understanding instead of using the 'poorly' translated version.

## **Methodology**

I start this paper by offering varied perspectives on the discussion of national and transnational cinema, as well as how filmmakers at the time were constructing their own film theories and manifestos. Then, following a fairly chronological order, I provide historical background on the beginning of the military government in Brazil, so that readers are able to familiarize themselves with the political context, and also offer insights on the development of the film industry in Brazil since the 1940s, leading to the beginning of *Cinema Novo* (Brazilian New Wave). Afterwards, I provide a chapter on the creation of Embrafilme followed by censorship rulings and the relationship between them. Because many of these facts sometimes

overlap in history, I then go back to *Cinema Novo* with a discussion on an important film, *O Desafio* (*The Dare*, 1965, Paulo Cesar Saraceni).

In each following chapter, I explore key films that belong to their movements or cycles in Brazilian cinema, with emphasis on: *A Margem* (*The Margin*, 1967, Ozualdo Candeias) part of *Cinema Marginal* (Outcast Cinema); *Bacalhau* (*Codfish*, 1976, Adriano Stuart) is a parody of the classic Steven Spielberg blockbuster *Jaws* (1975), and belongs to the *Boca do Lixo* cycle of productions. Included in the variety of genres produced by the *Boca do Lixo* filmmakers, the *pornochanchadas* were successful cheap films that worked as a distraction in harsh times of cultural censorship and control. One film of that genre that I have included in my investigation is *Como e Boa Nossa Empregada* (*How Good Our Maid Is*, 1973, Victor di Mello and Ismar Porto), an erotic comedy that offers three different storylines for similar situations. I have chosen to write about these titles because of their distinctive characteristics; some of them are now considered classics of Brazilian Cinema but at the time were only seen as another production or not even recognized as a cultural product. In my analyses I examine film structure and style (is the narrative linear or non-linear; does it make use of flashbacks, what formal qualities are used to enhance the political message) and also provide background context on the production of each title.

Another important part of each film analysis will be examining the different types of censorship each movie faced and the historical and social conditions that permitted its exhibition, whether or not it was banned from public screenings and if so, the reasons for that. I dedicate one chapter for each of the film movements/cycles I will be discussing, a brief summary of each film, followed by a discussion regarding censorship. Throughout the chapters I have cited and

included discussions about other important films of the time judging they help in the broad understanding of issues regarding the political situation and film industry in Brazil.

## **Chapter 1: Brazilian National Cinema**

Thinking about a Brazilian national cinema is complicated not only because of the size of the country but because each region seems to operate like a different country in its traditions and rituals. Even when narrowing the focus to the first fifteen years of dictatorship, there are a variety of approaches that can be adopted to talk about how Brazilian filmmaking operated during those years. Andrew Higson identifies four different main approaches when discussing national cinemas: economic terms (who owns the production companies?); text-based approach (do the films share a common style or world view?); consumption-based (what films are audiences watching?); and finally criticism-led approach, which negatively reduces national cinema to mere ‘quality art cinema’.<sup>1</sup> I have opted for discussing the idea of a Brazilian cinema following the transnational concept posited by Ian Christie, recognizing that similar ideas and forms of filmmaking were being developed all around the world (with an attempt to break the monopoly and/or dominance of Hollywood over small national markets). Stam and Xavier recognize that the question of ‘national’ is hardly unproblematic.<sup>2</sup> The idea of a national cinema to the filmmakers of *Cinema Novo*, for example, represented writing and showing films that portrayed the Brazilian people and their social relations to the political context. Glauber Rocha, writer and filmmaker, questions how it would be possible to create a national film industry without making use of Hollywood strategies and narratives, when the Brazilian audience, in this

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema”, *Screen* 30, no. 4 (1989): 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Stam and Ismail Xavier, “Transformation of National Allegory: Brazilian Cinema from Dictatorship to Redemocratization” in *New Latin American Cinema v.2 Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 297.



case, refuses to take on new forms of filmmaking, but at the same time wants original ideas<sup>3</sup>. It is a paradox that *Cinema Novo* has tried to resolve and despite not being successful, created a huge impact for the image of Brazil as ‘world cinema’ overseas, for it “reflected and created a continuous and coherent audio-visual image of the absolute majority of the Brazilian people.”<sup>4</sup> Dudley Andrew, when proposing an atlas of world cinema argues that “films make palpable collective habits and a collective sensibility ... films project cognitive maps by which citizens understand both their bordered worlds and the world at large.”<sup>5</sup> Andrew in this sense differentiates national cinemas by positing that they came into existence exactly by trying to differ from a well-established mainstream Hollywood cinema. Take for example the French New Wave in the late 1950s or Italian Neorealism that influenced world cinema in the UK, Cuba, Brazil, among others.

Crofts, Getino and Solanas have theorized about these new waves rolling around the world calling it “Third Cinema”, as it goes against imperialism and colonization of not only third world countries, but also European countries fighting for their own national cinemas.<sup>6</sup> Getino and Solanas, in their manifesto “Towards a Third Cinema” (1971) claim that ‘pure art’ cannot be subject to capitalism, as it should not be developed for commercialization purposes, but thus to bring a revolution in filmmaking in Latin America. As they write about how to revolutionize and create the so-called ‘cinema of liberation’, the authors also posit that they are interested in practicing filmmaking rather than theorizing it: “our time is one of hypothesis rather than of thesis, a time of works in progress – unfinished, unordered, violent works made with the camera

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<sup>3</sup> Glauber Rocha, “History of Cinema Novo” in *New Latin American Cinema v.2 Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 279.

<sup>4</sup> Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes, “Cinema: A Trajectory within Underdevelopment”, in *New Latin American Cinema v.2 Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 268.

<sup>5</sup> Dudley Andrew, “An Atlas of World Cinema”, *Framework* 45, no. 2 (2004): 17.

<sup>6</sup> Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Towards a Third Cinema” in *New Latin American Cinema v.1 Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 33-58.

in one hand and a rock in the other. Such works cannot be assessed according to the traditional theoretical and critical canons. The ideas for *our* film theory and criticism will come to life through inhibition-removing practice and experimentation.”<sup>7</sup> This same way of thinking can be found in Glauber Rocha’s 1965 article ‘Esthetic of Hunger’, when he is writing about the newborn term *Cinema Novo*, (was he predicting Getino and Solanas’ manifesto ideas?) Rocha calls for a complete break with the commercial film industry, and claims that as *Cinema Novo* was developing in Brazil, other *Cinemas Novos* (New Waves) were growing in other Latin American countries, also affected by dictatorships or harsh systems imposed by a military government: Pinochet in Chile, Castro in Cuba, Rojas in Colombia, and so on. “*Cinema Novo* is a phenomenon of new people everywhere and not a privilege of Brazil. Wherever one finds filmmakers prepared to film the truth and oppose the hypocrisy and repression of intellectual censorship there is the living spirit of *Cinema Novo* ... *Cinema Novo* is not one film but an evolving complex of films that will ultimately make the public aware of its own misery.”<sup>8</sup>

So, the case of Brazilian ‘revolutionary’ filmmaking starting in the early 1960s is not unique; it transposes the idea of ‘national’ and becomes transnational, as argued by Ian Christie.<sup>9</sup> However, for the purposes of this Honours thesis I will not delve into the background socio-political contexts of Latin American countries, but rather, will focus on Brazil, keeping in mind that similar conflicts were happening at other nations roughly around the same time period. Crofts tends to use the term ‘indigenous cinema’ rather than national cinema at times. He describes Third Cinema as being a reconceptualization of national cinema, since the majority of countries had very unstable economies, competed at some level with Hollywood for their

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<sup>7</sup> Getino and Solanas, 49.

<sup>8</sup> Glauber Rocha, “An Esthetic of Hunger”, in *New Latin American Cinema v.1 Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 60-61

<sup>9</sup> Ian Christie, “Where is National Cinema Today (and Do We Still Need It)?”, *Film History* 25, no.1-2 (2013): 19-30.

domestic markets, and were at some point vulnerable to military dictatorships, with no or little support to their own indigenous cinemas.<sup>10</sup> In the case of Brazil, even with the creation and operation of Embrafilme it was not easy to obtain support to create a film, since the bureaucracy to get funding approved was a feature that invited the independent filmmakers of *Cinema Novo* to seek for alternative forms of funding, resulting in low-budget productions (by lowering the technical level of films), in conjunction with freedom of creation and treatment, leading to the emergence of *Cinema Novo*.

## **Chapter 2: The military regime, film industry and the birth of *Cinema Novo***

During the 1950s, the increasing industrialization of Brazilian cities and big urban centers, with an escalating exodus from rural to urban areas had changed the social conditions in which citizens lived.<sup>11</sup> Besides the growing industrialization and reliance on urban centers, other factors created conditions for the surging of *Cinema Novo* during the late 1950s: filmmakers wanted a different kind of cinema, that would not be mere a imitation of Hollywood like the most popular genre at the time, *chanchada*; they desired for a rupture that “sought to transform society by applying a new, critical and modernist vision of the nation, and to find a new cinematic language that better reflected Brazilian reality.”<sup>12</sup> The *chanchada* appeared in the 1930s and were initially low-budget music comedy films that focused on spreading the carnival marches from the Rio de Janeiro Carnival, a great interest among Brazilian filmmakers at the time. Given these films’ success in the box office, Rio filmmakers founded the Atlantida Studio

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Crofts, “Reconceptualising National Cinema/s” in *Theorising National Cinema*, ed. Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (London: BFI, 2006), 49.

<sup>11</sup> Andressa Saraiva Ternes, “Aspectos Permissivos e Restritivos da Relacao da Ditadura Civil-Militar com a Insercao Internacional do Cinema Brasileiro: a Criacao da Embrafilme e a Atuacao da Censura de 1964 ao Pra Frente Brasil” (master’s thesis, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, 2012), 42.

<sup>12</sup> Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison, *Brazilian National Cinema* (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 82.

in the 1940s, producing more than 70 films between 1941 and 1962.<sup>13</sup> As a result of the Atlantida Studio success, a group of investors in Sao Paulo reacted by founding the Vera Cruz film company, decided to create a studio system, employing stars and names such as Alberto Cavalcanti to enhance the production value and technical quality of their films. In light of not having any sound economic infrastructure, not surprisingly, the Vera Cruz studio was forced into bankruptcy in 1954. I should note here that there has always been great rivalry in many aspects between Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Thus, it is not surprising that filmmakers that were not involved with the two major studios wanted to conceive a true Brazilian cinema.

According to Altmann, other historical factors that led to the beginning of *Cinema Novo* as a movement were: a feeling of anti-Americanism; the founding in 1955 of the Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB – Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies) that aimed to formulate a national ideology concerned with questions of nationalism and populism; the creation of the Brazilian National Union of Students (UNE) and the belief that the younger generation could change the country through a revolution.<sup>14</sup> Another sign was the filming and release of Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Rio, 40 Graus/Rio, 40 degrees* (1954), considered to be the first film to break with classical Hollywood conventions and sparking the establishment of independent art cinema, and arguably marking what is considered by some authors the debut of Cinema Novo.

With the turn to the 1960s the working class had not only been put in new social conditions but also were dealing with a different social context that resulted from the gap between employed versus unemployed parts of population, causing the government to strive for

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<sup>13</sup> Shaw and Dennison, 72.

<sup>14</sup> Eliska Altmann, "Cinema Novo" in *Directory of World Cinema: Brazil*, ed. Louis Bayman and Natalia Pinazza (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 58-81.

nationalism and the strengthening of the bourgeoisie, while at the same time investing in education and freedom of cultural production.<sup>15</sup> The political picture was complicated and while some authors argue that the military coup happened because of an economic crisis in the country, others claim that the military intervention happened due to a radical polarization by the left and right leaderships.<sup>16</sup> It is not my intent, however, in this paper to argue about the origins of the military regime in Brazil, but rather provide the dates in which it happened for the purposes of understanding how it affected the film industry and intellectual freedom. In March 31 1964, the Armed Forces in Brazil deposed then President of the Republic Joao Goulart. By April 1<sup>st</sup> 1964 the military regime was installed and it lasted for almost another 21 years, when in March 15 1985 a new president was elected, reinstating democracy in Brazil. While it was a period that lead to an ‘economic miracle’ during the 1970s, it was a dark period for the history of the country and those who went against its ideals would be tortured, exiled and even killed.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the artists and filmmakers at the time found themselves also looking for freedom of expression and wishing for the development of a national identity in the field of Arts (theatre, music, and cinema). The youth population were themselves looking for their own identities while contributing to a national formation of what would be the first draft of a Brazilian Cinema, more specifically. In 1963, Nelson Pereira dos Santos released *Vidas Secas* (*Barren Lives*), another important mark in the history of what would constitute *Cinema Novo*, a popular-national cinema focused strictly on enhancing the value of Brazilian themes and the regional languages and dialects, “ a cinema that claimed to be for their peoples and inspired by them.”<sup>17</sup> With this bold statement, the filmmakers at the time were hoping to attract not the

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<sup>15</sup> Ternes, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Youssef Cohen, “Democracy from Above: The Political Origins of Military Dictatorship in Brazil,” *World Politics* 40, no. 1 (1987), 51.

<sup>17</sup> Ternes, 46.

‘public’ (concrete concept), but the people of the country (abstract concept) – they wanted to reflect the people’s image on the big screens creating thus an intimate relationship of the people with their own image.

Pedro Simonard claimed that the Cinema Novo movement started in the early 1950s with a group of youth filmmakers that wanted to create a political and cultural identity for Brazilian cinema.<sup>18</sup> According to Simonard, this group of people popularly called *cinemanovistas* were not the first ones to perceive the importance of fighting for a strong Brazilian Cinema, which had its own language and identity. These filmmakers would question not only the importation of big and successful Hollywood films at the time, but also the reliance of the Brazilian Film market on imported films, and the ‘submission’ of filmmakers in Brazil to the guidelines imposed by Hollywood (Classical Hollywood narrative features as one example) and other more developed cinemas around the world.<sup>19</sup> According to the author, *cinemanovistas* also pursued to define the characteristics and specificities of this ‘new cinema’ (hence the name *Cinema Novo*); they were interested in taking this task to a level never before imagined by previous activists, and wanted to dive into the social-political-cultural reality in Brazil, with a strong anti-imperialist component, fighting for national freedom (from the foreign markets) and the construction of a solid cultural basis in which the *Cinema Novo* would be built.

### **Chapter 3: Embrafilme and Censorship**

It is well known that there is a strict relationship between the films released in a period of history and their conditions of production and historical context. The creation of Embrafilme in 1969, a governmental organ subsidized by the Ministry of Education and Culture represented one

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<sup>18</sup> Pedro Simonard, “Origens do Cinema Novo: a Cultura Política dos Anos 50 Até 1964”, *Achegas*, no. 9 (2003): 1-18.

<sup>19</sup> Simonard, 3.

of the most important developments in the history of Brazilian Cinema, in terms of State regulation, creation, distribution and financing of the cinematographic industry in the country. The organ was created with the premise of exporting and spreading Brazilian filmmaking worldwide, in an effort to build the image of a ‘good country’. This last statement is precisely important because the films being exported did not receive such strict censoring guidelines, and most of them were released almost ‘uncut,’ helping to create a better impression that the country was operating under democracy rather than a strict military government – it is now known (thanks to digital access to censorship archives at the Memoir website) that the majority of Brazilian films released worldwide barely made it to the national screens or were banned from public exhibition at all, with few exceptions. Despite this fact, the creation of Embrafilme allowed other countries, and especially in Europe, to realize the ‘aesthetic maturity’ and creativity never before recognized in Brazilian filmmakers.<sup>20</sup>

The fight of Brazilian filmmakers for a renewed national cinema does not seem much different than those from other New Waves that happened worldwide – they all wanted to showcase the country from a different perspective than the regular media would cover it. According to Amancio, since the 1950s, committees were found in Brazil with the purpose of disciplining and controlling the cinematic production, and consequently tax evasion from foreign companies that had their films exhibited in the country.<sup>21</sup> However, it was only in 1966 that an effective measure took place, with the creation of Instituto Nacional de Cinema (INC/*National Institute of Cinema*). In this period, films were financed with capital originated from compulsory taxes applied to foreign distributors.<sup>22</sup> Important films, such as *Macunaíma* (1968, Joaquim

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<sup>20</sup> Ternes, 92.

<sup>21</sup> Tunico Amancio, “Pacto Cinema-Estado: Os Anos Embrafilme”, *Alceu* 8, no. 15 (2007): 174.

<sup>22</sup> Amancio, 174.

Pedro de Andrade) were made possible thanks to this model of funding. The *National Institute of Cinema* was responsible for legislating, fostering, and controlling of national film production, as well as regulation of foreign investors. The organ judged the scripts that would receive funding based on the producers' abilities, and also technical and financial aspects of the production. This model of financing would be the first stepping-stone to what later became Embrafilme.

Under the most strict censorship guidelines, Embrafilme was created in 1969 by the military government, with the mission of fostering the promotion and distribution of Brazilian films worldwide. According to Amancio, about 70% of the capital at Embrafilme originated from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), and the other 30% came from public and private companies.<sup>23</sup> A percentage of the capital originated from the exhibition of foreign films in national territory was also applied towards the production and release of Brazilian films. The filmmakers, with special remark to the *cinemanovistas*, found themselves outraged by the difficulty in obtaining Embrafilme funding for their films, with the allegations that Brazilian people (and the world) were not interested in watching political films, but preferred light-hearted romantic-comedies to unconventional art cinema. Amancio also explains that the main goal of Embrafilme was to export Brazilian films, what would eventually lead to an expansion of the national market overseas and within national territory.

It did not take long for Embrafilme to end up financing lavish and technically excellent films, finding what appeared to be the solution for a lack of audience for Brazilian cinema. Productions such as *Xica da Silva* (*Xica*, 1975, Carlos Diegues), and *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (*Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*, 1976, Bruno Barreto), are the best-known and celebrated features of the time. The latter, according to Peter Rist, is “clearly the most

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<sup>23</sup> Amancio, 175.



commercially successful Brazilian film of all time.”<sup>24</sup> According to Rist, *Dona Flor* was extremely popular in terms of audience. The box office grossed \$5 million (U.S.) in its first five weeks of release in Brazil, and Rist attributes the success of the picture to a “market shift away from *Cinema Novo*’s seriousness to soft-core pornographic entertainment.”<sup>25</sup> However, he was writing in the early 1990s, before other commercial blockbusters hit success worldwide, such as *Cidade de Deus* (*City of God*, 2002, Fernando Meirelles & Katia Lund), and the two *Tropa de Elite* releases (*Elite Squad 1* and *2*, 2007/2010, Jose Padilha). The regulations for deciding whether or not a movie would be financed under Embrafilme were decided by Embrafilme’s director, appointed by the military government, and thus changed accordingly. Amancio writes that from its birth in 1969 until around 1972, financing was conceded in the same form as bank loans, where producers were the ones actually being financed and the ‘customers’ were the production companies. The decision was based on a points system, according to the producer’s professional and cinematographic experience; at this point, the emphasis was on exploring the commercial aspect of films, so qualitative judgement as well as presentation of current ideologies was left on the background.<sup>26</sup> After 1972, Embrafilme went through several changes and became involved in the co-production of the films it financed, also owning part of the picture’s rights. By the time *Xica da Silva* was released, Embrafilme’s system had evolved to a point where they had a percentage of ticket sales infused back in the company. The *cinemanovistas* that felt betrayed in the early years of Embrafilme’s development also had a surprising twist on how business was conducted in the early 1970s. The realization of the I Cinematographic Industry Congress in October 1972 was an important mark for the strengthening of the relationship between

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Rist, “Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos”, in *South American Cinema: A Critical Filmography 1915-1994*, ed. Timothy Barnard and Peter Rist (New York/London: Garland Publishing, 1996), 175.

<sup>25</sup> Rist, 175.

<sup>26</sup> Amancio, 175.

filmmakers, producers and the ones in charge of Embrafilme. Through the creation of their own Union, producers claimed they wanted Embrafilme to be completely public, leading to financial and administrative autonomy.<sup>27</sup> By 1974, despite a strict change in the military government, a filmmaker/producer was indicated to direct Embrafilme, supported by *cinemanovistas* such as Glauber Rocha and Nelson Pereira dos Santos, that had previously criticised the action and the very creation of Embrafilme. Roberto Farias, the new director of Embrafilme, would connect the nationalist values that the State wanted portrayed in films with the aesthetic proposed by filmmakers of *Cinema Novo*. That did not mean, however and unfortunately, that any production would be accepted and/or supported by Embrafilme. The organ's mission however, then involved also the distribution and exhibition of national films in the national territory, and not only worldwide anymore.

The constant growing of Embrafilme also led the company to have capital to subsidize renting and buying of film equipment, such as film reels and cameras.<sup>28</sup> By 1975, with the extinction of the *Instituto Nacional de Cinema*, Embrafilme became responsible for even more steps in film production, and amplified its responsibilities towards the promotion of a Brazilian cinema for its people. Capital gains were now coming from taxes applied to the cinematographic industry itself, leading almost to full economic autonomy and a bright pathway in the future and consolidation of a strong national cinema. In this same period of time, Peter Rist argues that Embrafilme enforced a quota system, in which cinemas had to screen Brazilian films for a certain number of days per year: it started with 63 days and by 1980 it was raised to 140 days.<sup>29</sup> The peak of national film production was in 1980, with 102 films released, “the highest number

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<sup>27</sup> Amancio, 176.

<sup>28</sup> Amancio, 177.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Rist, “A Brief Introduction to Brazilian Cinema”, *Offscreen* 9, no. 6 (2005): 8.

of feature films ever produced in Brazil in a single year.”<sup>30</sup> This positivity did not last long, unfortunately, since Embrafilme saw its first signs of an end in the early 1980s, due to the country’s economic crisis. In 1990, during the Collor government, Embrafilme was extricated in the urge for the privatization of many State-operated companies. Amancio argues that film production went back to insignificant figures, when it once had reached its peak in the 1970s with almost 100 films being released yearly.<sup>31</sup> In the 1990s, Brazilian cinema saw the extinction of its main financing, production and distributing organ due to a governmental measure that allowed the North American market to take back the Brazilian audience. Not only the extinction of Embrafilme was responsible for that, but also the fact that by the 1990s families started to have access to colour television sets at home, and also access to *homevideo* (VHS tapes), what contributed to a radical change in the audiences for a national cinema.

### **Censorship and cultural expression**

During the dictatorship period in Brazil every manifestation of cultural form needed to be approved of by the government. A film being exported, for example, had to receive an approval seal “Livre para Exportacao” (“Ok to export” translated freely) and also “Boa Qualidade” (“Good Quality”), where the latter would also apply to films released in the country. According to Pinto, before the coup censorship would only classify and rate films according to age-appropriateness and cuts would not be made. In the first years after the coup (1964-1967) censorship in cinema can be classified as “moral censorship,” since its main objective was to preserve and maintain the current conservative moral values, protecting the interests of a society

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<sup>30</sup> Rist, “A Brief Introduction to Brazilian Cinema”, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Amancio, 181.

that supported the coup.<sup>32</sup> During these years, censors would document and demand that cuts be made in order for a picture to be released. The majority of censored content was focused on swearing and sex scenes, but also included infidelity, extreme violence, gay or lesbian interactions, among others. In other cases, such as in Glauber Rocha's *Terra em Transe/Entranced Earth* (sometimes also translated as *Land in Anguish*) (1967) films would at first be completely banned from exhibition in a national level, with all its copies taken by censors, only to be released later because "the ideology presented in the film was too abstract and only highly-educated folks would grasp its meaning and not be impressed by it."<sup>33</sup> At first, censor officers declared that *Terra em Transe* contained too many subliminal and negative messages that went against the interests of national security and the military government. Comments were made regarding scenes featuring class struggle, orgies and sex scenes that in a certain way enriched the script with novelties to the public that was not used to that type of content.

In 1968, more precisely December 13<sup>th</sup>, a day known as "Black Friday" in the Brazilian dictatorship period, with the proclamation of Ato Institucional n.5 (AI-5 – 'Institutional Act Number 5), the most strict of the Acts, censorship reaches a new level, with the closure of National Congress for an undetermined period of time; all cultural productions (now not restricted to theatre and cinema only), including newspapers, television, and any form of cultural manifestation were subject to the guidelines and approval of the military government. An alternative found by filmmakers was to use allegory and metaphors in their works, or even what

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<sup>32</sup> Leonor Souza Pinto, "O Cinema Brasileiro Face a Censura Imposta pelo Regime Militar no Brasil – 1964/1988" in *Classificacao Indicativa no Brasil: Desafios e Perspectivas*, ed. Ministerio da Justica (Brasilia, 2006), 1-18.

<sup>33</sup> Leonor Souza Pinto, "Cinema Brasileiro e Censura Durante a Ditadura Militar", n.d., [http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/textos/cinema\\_brasileiro\\_e\\_censura.pdf](http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/textos/cinema_brasileiro_e_censura.pdf), 157-164.

came to be known as ‘the aesthetic of silence.’<sup>34</sup> It is during this period that *Macunaima* (Joaquim Pedro, 1969) is controversially released. *Macunaima* is a story based on the literary work of Mario de Andrade, published originally in 1928. The film tells the audience about Macunaima, an ugly black aboriginal-like son of an old white lady, that is born fully developed from his mother’s womb. Somehow, Macunaima is the anti-hero that the Brazilian people needed at the time. According to Janot, *Macunaima* is considered by many critics a highlight in the history of *Cinema Novo*, and has received the title of “Best Brazilian Movie of All Time” many times.<sup>35</sup> As mentioned before, *Cinema Novo* strived for a fight against colonialism in Brazil’s cultural production, as well as a nationalist approach to art. Janot also argues that 1969 was one of the harshest moments in the history of Brazilian dictatorship and the movie is an immediate and almost straight response to the director’s vision of what a future in the hands of a military government would look like, leading to the destruction of Brazil as an independent nation.<sup>36</sup> Pedro’s approach to the story, however, could still be sensed as threatening by censor officers of the government, and it went through a journey of sixteen years before the film was finally released fully to the public.

The director cleverly utilized aesthetic elements such as vibrant colours, popular carnival songs and costumes to show the less-educated people a country that was being destroyed by its own government. Janot describes *Macunaima* as being “not only a critical success, but a big hit at the box office.”<sup>37</sup> At first, fifteen cuts were ‘suggested’ and the director was able to refuse and ask for more leeway on his film. Pinto describes a conversation between director Pedro and the

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<sup>34</sup> Pinto, “Cinema Brasileiro e Censura”, 164.

<sup>35</sup> Marcelo Janot, “Macunaima” in *Directory of World Cinema: Brazil*, ed. Louis Bayman and Natalia Pinazza (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 74.

<sup>36</sup> Janot, 74.

<sup>37</sup> Janot, 74.

High Officer of the Federal Police, a position higher in hierarchy than the highest censor officer. Pedro was surprisingly granted a second chance and the Officer held a private screening for his wife and her friends to judge whether or not it should be released. On that occasion, the author claims that the director had then a deal with the Officer: he would choose only three out of the fifteen suggested cuts and his films would be then released in the cinemas, but still banned from exhibition on television.<sup>38</sup> The cuts made comprised mainly of direct political innuendo, nudity and sex and pieces of dialogue that were confusing or made non-sense in the minds of censor officers. Upon its release in Rio on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1969, *Macunaima* was a record at the box office. It was only eleven years after its initial release that a television screening would be granted with restrictions and thirteen imposed cuts – some of them containing whole sequences, making the film in part unintelligible even by highly educated audiences. In 1985 *Macunaima* was finally able to be released with no cuts for the exhibition on public television however only after 10pm and with no age restrictions.<sup>39</sup> It was a total of sixteen years since its initial release to the moment in which *Macunaima* was fully made available to the public. In light of Crofts varieties of national cinema production, *Macunaima* can be considered the ultimate Brazilian film, the one movie that completely managed to ignore Hollywood, without criticizing it, but also not relying on adapting features of New Wave cinemas happening in Latin America and European countries.

Despite some filmmakers' efforts to avoid censorship through the shift to lighter themes, others still wanted to confront the reality in which they were living. Those who dared and used direct language or themes related to the abhorrent national reality suffered persecution and eventually torture, as it is the case of Olney Sao Paulo, director of *Manha Cinzenta* (*Grey*

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<sup>38</sup> Leonor Souza Pinto, "Macunaima: Dezesesseis Anos de Luta Contra a Censura", 2007, <http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/Textos/Macunaima.pdf> 1-18.

<sup>39</sup> Pinto, "Macunaima", 2.

*Morning*, 1969). After showing his film in Cannes and Germany, the director returned to Brazil and was arrested, tortured, sued by the militaries in power, leading to the aggravating of his physical and mental health, eventually leading to his death nine years later in 1978. As of now, his film has never debuted on the big screens of the country. It was only after 1978, with the revocation of AI-5 that ended the censorship to the popular press, that filmmakers started to be wrongly hopeful about the release of their films. The press indeed did become an enormous ally to producers and filmmakers to have their films screened and distributed throughout the country. However, censors developed a new strategy to avoid scrutiny from the press. Whenever a picture was considered ‘inappropriate’ (which happened quite often), they would be put ‘on hold’ and under re-evaluation, and when inquired by producers, censorship officers would claim the film was under investigation.<sup>40</sup> Sadly, it is now known that no investigation was actually being made, and censors were only postponing the liberation of films to a less risky period in time, which could take years or decades.

### **The fostering and censoring of a national cinema: the complicated relationship between Embrafilme and censorship**

It is known that Brazil was under a dictatorship government when Embrafilme was created, and consequently, some ideas such as a high level of nationalism and appraisal for the country were one of the main characteristics of the military in power. This exacerbated level of nationalism was an important tool for the spread of government’s ideals for the population, which also limited the cinematographic productions of Embrafilme, when looking through an artistic point of view. After the founding of Embrafilme, the military government envisioned the creation of political propaganda through the production and distribution of films within the

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<sup>40</sup> Pinto, “Cinema Brasileiro Face a Censura”, 18.

country, but at the same time wanted to have a sort of open dialogue with people from its society.<sup>41</sup>

Just like the *cinemanovistas* wanted to create an effective and powerful national cinema that focused on its people and was made for the people, Embrafilme wanted to adopt such statement and have it implemented it through the financing of films. However, one of the differences between the artists of *Cinema Novo* and Embrafilme was that the latter did not offer (or permit) freedom of aesthetic expression that the *cinemanovistas* much wanted to achieve. Instead, Embrafilme focused on the achievement of a successful cinema market, by releasing films that would appeal to the popular public.<sup>42</sup> It is interesting to think about Embrafilme as a governmental organ and the relationship it had with censorship. Despite both having a generally good understanding, censorship would still be applied to films produced by Embrafilme. However, the decision on the list of cuts, scenes to be modified and/or complete ban of a film would come from the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Justice. Silveira and Carvalho argue that censorship would act in two different levels: one being on the moral, and political level; the second would originate from Embrafilme itself and the choice for its cast. Usually, according to the authors, if a script did include a renowned star or quite famous actor or actress it would be ‘less considered’ for production and thus receive less funding, or even risk not being funded and produced at all.<sup>43</sup> So how did filmmakers manage to still get their scripts and films to the big screen? The nomination of Roberto Farias, former president of the National Syndicate of Cinematographic Industry, to the position of director of Embrafilme was a smart political move that attended the interests of the government and the filmmakers at the same time.

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<sup>41</sup> Rafael Silveira and Francione Carvalho, “Embrafilme x Boca do Lixo: As Relacoes Entre Financiamento e Liberdade no Cinema Brasileiro nos Anos 70 e 80”, *Aurora* 8, no. 24 (2015): 73-93.

<sup>42</sup> Silveira and Carvalho, 81.

<sup>43</sup> Silveira and Carvalho, 83.



Before being nominated director, Farias was able to contact Antonio Bandeira (a military General, and part of the government at the time), and explain the rationale behind censorship imposed by the State. Farias, according to Silveira and Carvalho, proposed that limiting the expression of artists through Embrafilme productions might cause the public to avoid going to the theatre to watch a film, and that investors and producers would fear investing in new productions if there was a chance their films would be censored. It did not work perfectly, since censorship was still very much active until the late years of dictatorship (1988), but Farias took a step to at least make it less harsh and a little bit more permissive, granting filmmakers more chances to have their scripts into production and their films on the big screen.

#### **Chapter 4: *Cinema Novo***

*O Desafio* (*The Dare*, 1965, Paulo Cesar Saraceni) was a film produced and released shortly after Brazil suffered the coup-d'état. It belongs to *Cinema Novo* as there is direct political commentary: it is a blatant critique (and almost immediate response) to the enforced military regime at the time. The picture does not try to hide its discontentment with the political situation in the country at the time. It shows the ordinary life of Marcelo (Oduvaldo Vianna Filho), who is a frustrated journalist and reporter that has a love affair with Ada (Isabella). It is clear from the first few shots where we see the interaction of both protagonists that they belong to different economic classes and possibly have very different social backgrounds. Ada is unhappily married and has a child; Marcelo is the sort of handsome blue-collar worker who finds peace in his encounters with Ada. Nonetheless, they both have similar political views and are truly suffering with the recent effects of having dictatorship installed in the country. With the political turmoil faced on those times, Marcelo finds himself depressed and in a major life-crisis – so major that

not even Ada's love is enough to give him hope and courage to follow ahead, and he continuously finds himself having to choose between conforming to the new laws or going after political struggle. Throughout the film we see Marcelo ponder whether or not embracing a fight for an uncertain future is ideal given the bleak times he envisions ahead.

According to Melo, Saraceni's *O Desafio* is "a response to its time, to history being stolen from the people [...] it contains the sense of intimacy [...] adding another rupture to the one imposed by the military: that of the relationship between two lovers."<sup>44</sup> Melo also adds that *O Desafio* is an excellent representation of Andrei Tarkovski's concept of the 'photographic image' – "the image becomes true not only when it lives through time, but also when time remains alive inside of it [...] the very photograms."<sup>45</sup> So not only the film is a direct response to the political context in which it was made, but also it represents the abstract idea of time itself – "as the *historical* and *aesthetic* material for building a discourse about passion."<sup>46</sup> With bold political statements thrown in the dialogue between Marcelo and Ada, Saraceni implies that the protagonist, Marcelo, could be any leftist Brazilian citizen that did not support the conservative ideals of the dictator government. The director throws in anecdotes to criticize the system, sewing the stories of the characters on screen with the political context. In the first 5 minutes of the film, we see Ada driving a car while Marcelo is on the passenger seat. For the first 3 minutes and 15 seconds of their driving, the characters are silent. When they finally start talking to each other, it is mainly small talk about how the weather looks and feels, until the moment Ada questions why Marcelo is acting weird, and he says he feels hopeless. Marcelo tells Ada, for example, that one of the employees (unnamed character) at the radio station where he works,

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<sup>44</sup> Luis Alberto Rocha Melo, "The Dare" in *Directory of World Cinema: Brazil*, ed. Louis Bayman and Natalia Pinazza (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 68..

<sup>45</sup> Melo, 68.

<sup>46</sup> Melo, 68.

after fifteen years of service, was put on the street and fired without any right to employment insurance because he asked to be paid on time. When trying to fight against the radio owners and threatening to declare a strike, the employee's colleagues withdrew their support and the employee was left with nothing. Ada, after listening to Marcelo's story exclaims "that's absurd!" The line, said by Marcelo, that follows this story and Ada's reaction, translates to "First we think it's an absurdity, then we think it's normal and it ends up making part of what we think it's natural." Ada counter-reacts saying, "it's not possible," and Marcelo immediately responds, "it's the fear taking over everything, and everyone."

This scene is shot through medium-close-up in a long-take that lasts for a full minute. We watch the conversation as if sitting by Marcelo's passenger window. If not considering the political turmoil of the time, this dialogue might as well be understood as a couple discussing their future together, since Ada would have to leave her husband and child to join Marcelo. It is only when the conversation finally ends with Marcelo stating "I can't be in peace when I'm desperately craving for war" that the full political message and critique can be embraced and understood – yes, it is going to be a romance but heavily permeated with direct political commentary. According to an interview the director gave to the newspaper "O Jornal" in 1966 after the release of his film, most parts of sequences with long political dialogues were improvised because the actors were so heavily impacted by the coup that it was only natural for them to discuss it in the middle of an ordinary conversation. At the 22 minute mark, for example, one of Marcelo's coworkers exclaims that "things are looking ugly, everyday things are looking uglier," and quickly adds "in Vietnam," when the message indeed is of course about their own country. They proceed with their conversation talking about work duties but the piece of dialogue they had before works as a form of subliminal message about Brazil's situation. In other

parts, the main character Marcelo works as an alter ego for Saraceni himself: Marcelo's political discontentment, violent acts, and also the conflicted relationship with Ada, played by Saraceni's wife at the time.

The way the film was shot also reinforces that it was released in a timely manner. The majority of shots are handheld, shaken, designed to be not only watched but also rather viewed as an experience of true chaos and turmoil. When the camera is not following Marcelo or Ada during their secret meet-ups, it is "static" because it does not pan or tilt, however it is always trembling to emphasize the complicated political context. In the last sequence of *O Desafio*, Marcelo goes down a long outdoors stairway. The shots alternate between long and medium-close as he stops and leans against the wall, seeming to be lost in his gaze. The non-diegetic music playing at this point is extremely important and reinforces the message of the film, in case it was not clear before. The lyrics of the song "I know we need to win, I know we need to fight, I know we need to die, I know we need to kill. It's times of war, times without sun" coincide when Marcelo stops at the middle of the stairway and realize there is a little girl sitting by herself. She gets up and stands close to him. The lyrics then continue, and the music at this point is heightened by backing vocals singing "without sun without sun without sun" while the main vocals are "I lived in the times of disorder, in the times of riot, that's how I spent the years I had to live... And you who will outlive myself, will live in a good time on Earth, but remember well these times of war". There is a brief cut to a close-up of Ada staring off-screen followed by a match cut of Marcelo leaning against the wall. In the following long shot of Marcelo, the words "Liberdade" (freedom) are stencilled on the wall as Marcelo continues to walk down the stairs. Finally, when he is completely off-screen, the frame goes completely white and we can hear "essa terra eu nao vou ver" (this Earth I will not see). This sequence deals directly with the

political situation and represents the feelings of Marcelo and also Saraceni: the need for fighting, winning, dying and killing during dark difficult times. The open-endedness of the film can also be interpreted as a sign of political uncertainty with regards to how Saraceni envisioned the military government and their actions. The final shot, a blank screen with an extremely pessimistic message points to a hopeless future, and despite the fact that it is early in the morning and the sun is rising while the music is playing, the long 'darkness' is nowhere close to being over. On the contrary, it was just starting and would follow for another two decades, until the restoration of democracy in 1988.

Regarding censorship, *O Desafio* could be released with only three cuts demanded by censors in 1966. The website *Memoria da Censura no Cinema Brasileiro 1964-1988* (Censorship Memoir of Brazilian Cinema 1964-1988) organized, maintained and researched by Pinto, offers free access to scanned copies of original censoring documents and forms that had to be filled whenever a film was to be released in national or international level.<sup>47</sup> *O Desafio* did not get the *Boa Qualidade* (Good Quality) seal and thus could not be exported; it would also receive an R-Rating for adults only. The list of cuts included the omission of the sentences "now it will be hard to live like this" (direct referral to the coup and military government), "now I truly believe we can never be free," and "before the coup that's how we lived"; and the mentioning of the word "shit" in two different occasions during dialogues in the film; the first referring that Brazilian people were "living in shit" and the second as a form of swearing against a different character. *O Desafio* also did not please the censor responsible for classifying, censoring and deciding whether or not it should be released. The document, which was signed by Censor Guterres in 1966, describes the film as being "worthless, that would lead the country to be

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<sup>47</sup> Available at <http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/filmes.asp>

ridiculed if shown around the world, given that the storyline was dumb, scenes were excessively long and tone was too monotonous to be taken seriously.” *O Desafio*, despite suffering cuts in the national territory, was still legally exported to the Cannes Festival in 1972, after having at first received a denial, and was able to play to the French with no cuts or no restrictions, making its way back to its original country only to suffer a re-censoring before it could be played on television.

Saraceni’s work, like many of other films of *Cinema Novo* unfortunately did not reach the masses the way filmmakers wanted to. This was due in part because first, although being eventually released in established commercial theatres, directors were against the commercialization of their art, and second because the Brazilian audience was conditioned to watching conventional Hollywood films and thus, could not understand the message directors were trying to convey. *Cinema Novo* consequently became a movement that targeted the elite, and not the Brazilian population in general. The *cinemanovistas* were a group of young filmmakers at the time that identified themselves as being part of *Cinema Novo*, and usually called “intellectuals,” produced films for a public that would also be comprised of highly educated people. These filmmakers wanted the government to review the cultural politics and censoring of films that was installed after the coup, however because that never happened the *cinemanovistas* started practising auto criticism for their own films released in this period (most of which containing leftist political messages against the military regime). It is within this context that Glauber Rocha’s *Terra em Transe* was released in 1967. I have constructed my analysis of *Terra em Transe* focusing on how elements such as dialogue, sound (both diegetic and non-diegetic), camera angles and length of shots are constructed to convey the message of a “Brazilian Revolution” much sought after by filmmakers at the time. Some critics consider it to

be the most radical synthesis of what the leftist “intellectuals” urged. The film is a slice in the life of Paulo Martins (Jardel Filho), a poet who narrates his anxiety and goes through a series of misadventures and existential and political crises. Paulo is a poet and left wing politician that realizes unfortunately too late how his years of service benefited traitors and opportunistic politicians. The film references allegory as a way to try and distract the censors at the time; most of the dialogue looks or sounds ‘incomplete’ or at times as if characters did not make sense at all in their speech; another interesting feature that resembles the French New Wave and also Italian Neorealism is the lack of a linear storyline. The events happen back and forth in the future, creating a non-linear and sometimes ‘hard to follow’ plot if not properly paid attention to.

*Terra em Transe* is set in the late 1930s in the fictitious country of Eldorado, located somewhere in Latin America. The film shows the constant struggles of Paulo as he has to deal with two corrupt political candidates that were formerly his friends: Felipe Vieira (Jose Lewgoy), a populist governor, and Porfirio Diaz (Paulo Autran), a conservative candidate supported by revolutionary forces. *Terra em Transe* portrays the political situation of Brazil at the time in a way that is subtle yet aggressive at the same time. Due to censorship restrictions, changes had to be made so that it did not seem the director was criticizing the military government or the forms it used to restrict freedom of expression. Before the release of the film, as happened with any cinematic production at the time, a private screening was run so that censor officers could analyze it and decide whether or not it was appropriate and make proper recommendations in regards to what had to be cut or removed. After being denied its release in April 1967 with the premise that despite being “technically perfect in terms of photography, but lacks good taste in terms of the message it portrays,” *Terra em Transe* was released in May 1967 with the “Good Quality” and also received the “Ok to Export” seal, having also been restricted to an over 18

public only. Upon receiving its permit to be screened, the film also received a 'Censorship Certificate' that required the picture to be re-evaluated usually five years later or anytime at the discretion of censors. So, in 1974, *Terra em Transe* was indeed re-inspected by two officers at the "Public Entertainment Censorship Department." Interestingly, both officers were women as per the signed document available at the website "Memoir of Censorship in Brazilian Cinema 1964-1988."

The new evaluation prompted the film to be banned, with the claim that it

"focused on social-political and religious problems ... where two men fight for the governing seat of Eldorado, an imaginary country, through the use of betrayal and dishonesty. We noticed throughout the film a mixture of real with unreal situations. Through its scenes and dialogues, the director conveys a leftist message, an ideal for social justice, equality, administrative corruption, and participation of the Holy Church in interests of the State. The film is confusing and most times seems lost in non-reality. Considering that the film hurts the interests of the country because it contains leftist message, lesbian sex scenes, orgies, and multiple attempts to ridicule and demoralize the Holy Church, we suggest its interdiction."<sup>48</sup>

*Terra em Transe* is indeed heavily filled with the content as described by the censors above. Most sequences are chaotic and there is a heavy mixture of what seems to be non-diegetic sound only then to be revealed as diegetic, or vice-versa. There is a constant use of sounds of traditional native songs (from indigenous peoples in Brazil), *candomble* music rites, blended with dialogue, classical music, marching band sounds and gunfire shots. In fact, gunshots are

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<sup>48</sup> Translated from Portuguese from the re-evaluation censorship document available at <http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/PDF/0070048C02401.pdf> Accessed April 25, 2019.



used with effect to symbolize the moments in the film in which Paulo is ‘lost’ or hopeless, representing also the years that would come where hundreds of people would be shot to death by having opposing political views or breaking curfews and regulations imposed by the military government. The closing sequence, despite being simple, is one of the most powerful ones as the audience watches Paulo’s agonizing to death in slow motion, holding a rifle, while sounds of ambulance/police, looping gunshots and classical musical take over the final scene and the credits start to roll.

### **Chapter 5: *Cinema Marginal***

Besides *Terra em Transe*, other films were released in the same period of time and became well known for their craftsmanship in regards to directing, photography and breaking with the aesthetics of the conventional narratives. One of the films that is worth being analyzed is *Bandido da Luz Vermelha* (*The Red Light Bandit*, 1968, Rogerio Sganzerla), since it became famous for being very contradictory but also inaugurating a different segment in the history of Brazilian cinema. By 1968 *Cinema Novo*, despite being only almost a decade old, had given Brazilian cinema a worldwide recognition that it never had before. Most films released during the early 1960s played in renowned film festivals such as Cannes and Venice, but filmmakers still could not reach the big masses in their own country. It was by this time that some directors started to radicalize their filmmaking, rejecting technical perfection and going for what became known as the aesthetics of *lixo* (garbage). According to Lopez, that was a turning point for the history of Brazilian cinema, and *Cinema Marginal* (Outcast Cinema) was born.<sup>49</sup> Director Glauber Rocha, would first call it the ‘udigrudi’ cinema (broken English for *underground*) given

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<sup>49</sup> Ana Lopez, “O Bandido da Luz Vermelha”, in *South American Cinema: A Critical Filmography 1915-1994*, ed. Timothy Barnard and Peter Rist (New York/London: Garland Publishing, 1996), 151.

that the films were made independently with very low or no budget, and they portrayed the lowest social classes of the country at the time – if *Cinema Novo* was a cinema crafted for intellectuals and highly-educated people, *Cinema Marginal* was trying to hit the masses.

*Cinema Marginal*, thus was a movement that appeared still within the peak of *Cinema Novo* between 1964-1968. It was a period of extreme radicalism in the arts, with heavy experimentation of new forms of filmmaking, a direct response to the worsening of political repression in the manifestation of culture and arts. Also commonly referred to as Underground Cinema, most filmmakers refused to move to color as that would be a trait of *Cinema Novo* productions by then.<sup>50</sup>

*Bandido da Luz Vermelha*, according to Lopez can be considered the transitional piece between the aesthetics of *Cinema Novo* and *Cinema Marginal*, “while it still has traces of *Cinema Novo*-style allegorical representations of Brazilian history, its focus is on urban consumer society and the general social ‘garbage’ it produces.”<sup>51</sup> The film was inspired by the crimes of an actual burglar in Brazil and is presented from the very first scene as a form of “Western of the Third World,” and an alternating male/female narrator announces that any similarities of events depicted in the film with any persons living or dead is pure coincidence and should not be taken seriously, in reference to the fact that the film was indeed inspired by true real-life crimes. Other relevant titles produced under the umbrella of *Cinema Marginal* are *A Margem* (*The Margin*, 1967, Ozualdo Candeias), and *Matou a Família e foi ao Cinema* (*Killed the Family and Went to the Movies*, 1969, Julio Bressane). In these films pertaining to *Cinema Marginal*, the source of satire was the very political situation in which the country was inserted –

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Stam, “On the Margins: Brazilian Avant-Garde Cinema” in *Brazilian Cinema*, ed. Randal Johnson and Robert Stam (London/Toronto: Associated University Press, 1982), 312.

<sup>51</sup> Lopez, 151.

the filmmakers considered Brazil as a hopeless case, with no cultural or political perspectives, where there could be no exalting heroes or saviours, since they were non-existent. To achieve that impression, directors made use of (dark) humour and grotesque features, violence, sex, where all and any character were victims of an inhuman society that only obeyed the capitalist machine. The only way to get out of such a situation would be to reject the system and be a ‘marginal citizen,’ pariah and/or the artist that transgressed the values and rules of the time.

*Bandido da Luz Vermelha* depicts exactly what the directors wanted to show but were often censored. It is the story of Jorge (Paulo Villaca), an urban worker that lives in Sao Paulo and had just arrived at the *Boca do Lixo* (garbage mouth – free translation) neighbourhood. He is well-known for committing crimes by having “extended conversations with his victims as a sidebar of his unsentimental psychopathology,” most of them people of massive wealth that lived in fancy apartments, while also at times seducing, abusing, and raping his victims.<sup>52</sup> The media has titled Jorge as the ‘red light bandit’ due to the fact that he always carries a red light when committing his crimes, and despite a massive effort from the police force, he remains free and uncaught (also a satire of the military government and its inability to solve simple cases at times). By the end of the film, when the police finally trap the bandit, he decides to kill himself instead of being arrested, breaking up with the traditional classical Hollywood Western that would seek a happy ending for the hero. In fact, it is interesting how *Bandido da Luz Vermelha* despite its early in-film announcements that it is a Western, would broadly fit in the *film noir* category, as it contains the main elements that are usually used to define *film noir* – low-key lighting, flashback narration, the anti-hero as a protagonist, and a tendency to show the world as bleak and hopeless. Lopez also cites Robert Stam’s argument that “a plot summary does not do

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<sup>52</sup> Lopez, 151.

justice to the narrative and cross-generic complexity of this film.”<sup>53</sup> She goes deeper in a film analysis and also notes the use of “self-referential devices – including cameos by Sganzerla himself – within a fragmented episodic narrative that is even further off-centred by its off-screen narration.”<sup>54</sup> She argues, thus, that this style of direction was a first at the time for the country, and that Sganzerla was informed by other New Wave filmmakers such as Godard and even Glauber Rocha (*Terra em Transe*). Zuzana Pick writes about how at that time there is a trend of transnationalism in Latin American filmmaking, since many filmmakers from those countries were facing similar socio-political conditions. At the same time, cinema had a wide range of possibilities following regional traditions and national characteristics: “filmmakers of the New Latin American Cinema looked beyond the predominantly urban paradigms of cinematic representations through a radical critique of imperialism and cultural dependence.”<sup>55</sup> The author also points to Fernando Birri’s claim in 1962 that “the cinema of our countries shares the same general characteristics of this superstructure, of this kind of society, and presents us with a false image of both society and our people.”<sup>56</sup> Birri In this case is critiquing social alienation and defending a popular cinema that works towards presenting a real image of their people. *Cinema Marginal*, thus takes on the perspective of a popular cinema aimed towards the representation of social relations, exposing realities and empowering the imaginary of people.

In an attempt to both enhance and criticise *Cinema Novo*, Sganzerla makes use of the same traditional *candomble* rites heard in *Terra em Transe*, while provoking satirical commentary on the seriousness of *Cinema Novo* in a sequence where “the woman who, while

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<sup>53</sup> Lopez, 152.

<sup>54</sup> Lopez, 152.

<sup>55</sup> Zuzana M. Pick, *The New Latin American Cinema: A Continental Project* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 101.

<sup>56</sup> Pick, 101.

being robbed, protests that she does not ‘talk to strangers.’”<sup>57</sup> It is interesting to note that despite having moments of extreme violence and explicit sexuality, *Bandido da Luz Vermelha* was not censored on the grounds of ‘political reasons’ or for going against conservative government values. In November 1968, *Bandido da Luz Vermelha* was filed for a censorship authorization that granted the film the right to be exhibited for the public over eighteen years old. However, it did not receive the “Ok to Export” or “Good Quality” seals. Interestingly enough, in 1974, when censorship had reached its peak after the prohibition of any form of cultural manifestation and the closure of congress, the picture was re-evaluated since the production company wanted to sell it for television exhibition. The first evaluation happened in February 1974, and censors banned it due to the fact it showed scenes of “streap-tease [sic], police mockery and violence, assassination, robbery, suicide attempts, and police raids. Some characters in the film are degenerate police officers, gangsters, professional killers, homosexuals, prostitutes, pimps, and ‘the leftist press.’”<sup>58</sup> The conclusion for censoring the film read that

it is an inopportune film, narrated in the form of police chronicles, with vulgar commentary that hail the figure of the bandit. The characters are irreverent and irresponsible, and the few pieces of dialogue are also shocking and vulgar, conveying a message of revolution and cruelty. Because of that, we opt for the censoring of the picture for television. No cuts are necessary.<sup>59</sup>

The second censorship certificate was emitted in March 1974, as found in the “Memoirs” website, and reads as follows

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<sup>57</sup> Lopez, 152.

<sup>58</sup> Translated from Portuguese from the February 1974 Censorship Certificate. Available at <http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/PDF/0220144C00401.pdf> Accessed April 25, 2019.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid 59.

It is vetoed the commercial exploration. Contains scenes of robbery, rape, *streeep-tease* [sic], prostitution, crimes and homicides, suicide attempts, mocking political propaganda, and police mocking. The film is set in the current times (1960 decade). Genre is drama. Language is common, vulgar, dirty. Characters in the film are misfits, violent, bandits, and prostitutes. The film has a negative message. No cuts are required since the film is banned from television exhibition.<sup>60</sup>

The document ends with a remark that due to all the factors cited in the first evaluation plus the use of political subversion, the film was censored for public exhibition. Nevertheless, Sganzerla and his production team, like many other directors from the period, managed to hold improvised clandestine screenings in universities and pubs in the *Boca do Lixo* neighbourhood in Sao Paulo. Moreover, these films were also exhibited in other Latin American countries, reinforcing the idea that the film productions at the time belonged to a transnational category rather than being contained to one single country's territory. Zuzana Pick argues that these screenings were empowering experiences that "accommodated rather than restricted national differences."<sup>61</sup> She also claims that despite being slightly different cinemas, filmmakers in Latin America worked on giving expression to popular voices and ordinary people, and thus were able to communicate with the different audiences in each of these countries.

Another important film of this period, *A Margem* (*The Margin*, 1967, Ozualdo Candeias) tells the story about two couples that wander around the margins of the Tiete River in the city of Sao Paulo, and also through its downtown part of the city. The characters are outcasts –a black prostitute and a slum dweller and a vagrant with slight mental health issues and a blond kitchen

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<sup>60</sup> Translated from Portuguese from the March 1974 Censorship Certificate. Available at <http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/PDF/0220144C00901.pdf> Accessed April 25, 2019.

<sup>61</sup> Pick, 103.

maid. The film starts with the arrival of a strange woman in a little boat – everyone looks at her and right from the beginning it is easy to understand why the film would be considered ‘underground.’ The point of view shots in the opening sequence are usually from people looking to the woman in the boat (however we don’t know what is in the boat until around 4 minutes into the film). This woman shows up multiple times throughout the film, only observing the protagonists from far away. In the end, we find out that she was waiting for the four characters to die and then take them back to the world of the dead.

*A Margem* is a film characterized by ambiguity in terms of aesthetics and relationship to the political context the film was created. It is visible that there was no budget for the film, intentionally evoking the aesthetic of ‘hunger’ and garbage, cultural traits of a society that had no perspective and was only in the beginning of the military intervention government. On the other hand, the film’s ambiguity also lies in the fact that while it shows the poor communities and lives of people living in the margins of the Tiete river, it also reflects on the purity of simple gestures of the protagonists, mainly through an exchange of stares and looking at each other, creating a very humanized point of view. Before any dialogue is spoken (at around the fifth minute mark), the four protagonists observe the arrival of the strange woman and are almost blended into the background. The characters have not yet met each other, but the only contact they have is by exchanging looks to the woman in the boat. The rhythm of cutting is important at this point, as it creates almost the idea of an ‘accelerating heartbeat’ as the characters exchange those looks. After all protagonists had their round of ‘looking’ at the woman, the camera movement changes and the characters finally get to stare at each other (first the black prostitute and the slum dweller and then the other couple). The camera moves slowly and the majority of shots are point of view shots, however confusing, as we don’t know for sure who is looking, as there is no linear

narrative. The dialogue is very sparse and composed by mainly one sentence or even one-word lines. The characters communicate fairly well through gestures and inviting the camera to follow and accompany them through their journey in the dirty margins of the river and later the city center. During the whole film the camera feels as if it were floating in a very dream-like motion – even the lighting is softer at certain points and the lens feel like they have been intentionally blurred as to emphasize this quality.

The initial sequence is of utmost importance to the understanding of the message Candeias was trying to perpetrate. The way the characters look at each other in the beginning will dictate how they will continue doing so for the rest of the film. By confusing the viewer, the camera does not follow linearity in who is looking at what, emphasizing the political and cultural confusion of the time. At one point, the camera looks at the black prostitute who is sitting down in a wedding gown, and in the immediate cut after it she drops dead on her back, only to be seen walking in a field again in the very next shot. According to Stam, “the film denounces as a cruel mystification the notion that marginals are somehow ‘outside’ society.”<sup>62</sup> It is indeed rare that a sequence is filmed in an indoor setting, for example, and when it is, the building or room is partially destroyed or left to pieces, denouncing the lack of quality of life the characters had to live in. His political tone is also subtle and subjective, as the director “seems particularly intrigued by the space that separates human faces from the recording lens; time and time again, hands extend themselves into the camera’s field of vision in a gesture of communication that aptly metaphorizes the basic impulse animating the film itself.”<sup>63</sup> It is as if the viewer, through the point of view of the camera, was invited to join the outcasts in their banal wanderings through the garbage dump or even a chaotic cemetery. Candeias also subverts common traits of

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<sup>62</sup> Stam, 313.

<sup>63</sup> Stam, 313.



*Cinema Novo* (for example, the faith that by showing the political problems in the films was part of finding a solution to restore democracy), such as when he shows through a slow pan a sequence of birds taking flight, only to reveal that they are actually vultures flying from the messy garbage dumpster right beside the margins of the river. In this way, the director is implying the dreadful conditions of life for people pertaining to the ‘margins’ of society, and even though they might have the freedom to fly, as with the birds’ example, they cannot overcome their situation given the harsh living conditions of their time.

Interestingly, there is no record about the film in the Memoirs of Censorship website, and the only entry under the director’s name is a co-production for a film with Jose Mojica Marins, considered the ‘godfather of horror films in Brazil.’ Looking at the online version of Enciclopedia Itau Cultural de Arte e Cultura Brasileiras (Itau Encyclopedia of Brazilian Arts and Culture), though, I was able to find that the film did terribly in the box office, and was released for an 18+ public, only to be recognized years later through a review by Rubens Biafora, that called Candeias the “Brazilian Pasolini,” referencing the film as the opening of a new era in a country with so many ongoing modifications, that was screaming for a ‘neorealist’ cinema that showcased purity, honesty and little ‘cinematographic miracles’ by showing a social reality so abstract to much of Brazilian Cinema then.<sup>64</sup> *A Margem* would then win the National Institute of Cinema Best Picture Award in 1967, conceded by the later extinct Instituto Nacional do Cinema (INC), as well as Best Director, Best Supporting Actress, among others. According to Ramos (72), there was also uproar from the Cinema Novo filmmakers since *Terra em Transe* (*Land in Anguish/Entranced Earth*) by Glauber Rocha was considered the favourite to win best film of

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<sup>64</sup> Enciclopedia Itau Cultura de Arte e Cultura Brasileiras, n.d., <http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra67244/a-margem>

1967, but lost because anti-Cinema Novo critics composed most of the jury<sup>65</sup>. Interestingly, the movement or cycle of films that would follow – the *pornochanchadas* – had nothing to do with the innocence and heavy political commentary surrounded by delicate contexts. Those would be almost the exact opposite, forcing the viewer to completely disconnect from the social-political context and find a different form of critique through nudity, sexual innuendo and laughter, still maintaining subtle politicized messages that I have found to be overlooked by authors writing about Brazilian Cinema.

### **Chapter 6: *Boca do Lixo* and the *pornochanchadas***

Meanwhile, another important development for the history of Brazilian cinema was taking place, this time in Sao Paulo and not Rio de Janeiro. I have already mentioned how some films produced during the late 1960s and early 1970s had an ‘aesthetic of garbage’ (*lixo*, in Portuguese). Here I trace a parallel between the cinematographic development in the area in Sao Paulo that became known as *Boca do Lixo* (literally Garbage Mouth), censorship, and the productions of Embrafilme, as I have found during my research that they intersect at some very interesting points.

The aforementioned area was called *Boca do Lixo* (garbage mouth) because it was a place where usually illicit activities happened, day and night, at anytime – prostitution, drug trafficking, and robberies, among others. The same area was also very central in the city of Sao Paulo and thus had quick access to transit, being also ‘home’ to many homeless and marginalized people from the society. It was this area that after 1966 some filmmakers adopted as their main settings for shooting films that did not need much time, usually shot quickly at the area’s pubs

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<sup>65</sup> Fernao Pessoa Ramos, *Nova Historia do Cinema Brasileiro 2* (Sao Paulo: SESC, 2018), 72.

and with a very low budget.<sup>66</sup> It was also in this area that the term *pornochanchadas* was coined. Despite having the word ‘porno’ in its name, the *pornochanchadas* were not sexually explicit films, but usually highly eroticized movies that officers responsible for censorship control erroneously associated to the pornographic genre.

Indeed, in its early years, the *pornochanchadas* had very little relationship to porno films, content wise. The main strategy of films produced under its genre was to use enticing and provocative film titles that had little to do with the actual content of the film, with the purpose to attract the audience to the theatres. So how did censorship worked through these films? According to Cruz, it seems that censorship and the *pornochanchadas* were “‘twin sisters’ that acted in opposite ways, but still sisters.”<sup>67</sup> Through this affirmation, the author means that while censorship attempted to ban any form of cultural manifestation that did not appeal to the government’s interest, the *pornochanchadas* appealed to the public and attracted crowds to the theatre, and with the involvement of Embrafilme (a State organization) in the production of such films, there was little the military could do to prevent the screening of those films, since they were only suggestive in their titles, but contained initially no explicit demonstration of sex or any other forms of manifestation that went against their moral values.

According to Shaw and Dennison, the peak of *pornochanchadas* happened in the 1970s, which coincided with the introduction of screen quotas (or Brazilian quota quickies), and also the rise of *Boca do Lixo* as a cinematographic dominated area.<sup>68</sup> These quotas were created to fill screen time with Brazilian productions, however, according to Johnson, exhibitors would argue against it claiming that they should not be forced to exhibit films that did not draw an audience to their theaters. “Historically, whenever exhibitors were forced to exhibit a large number of

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<sup>66</sup> Silveira and Carvalho, 85.

<sup>67</sup> Livia Cruz, “A Censura na Boca do Lixo: das Pornochanchadas ao Sexo Explicito”, *Argus-ø* 5, no. 19 (2016): 1.

<sup>68</sup> Shaw and Dennison, 90.

national films, they attempted to produce their own” which would then lead to non-filmmakers creating poorly produced movies only to comply with the compulsory exhibition law, “leaving even less room for more culturally serious films.”<sup>69</sup> So unlike *Cinema Novo* films, where the message was at times too intellectual for the common audience to grasp, the *pornochanchada* spoke the people’s language and was on the same level, ideologically speaking. What is usually overlooked in the exiting literature about Brazilian cinema and the *pornochanchadas* is exactly the close relationship this genre was able to build with the Brazilian audience, forging therefore a closer possibility of a national cinema. It is also estimated that during the 1970s and early 1980s around 700 hundred *pornochanchada* films were produced and released. With titles such as *As Secretarias ... Que Fazem De Tudo* (*Secretaries ... Who Do It All*, 1975, Alberto Pieralisi) and *Eu Dou O Que Ela Gosta* (*I Give Her What She Likes*, 1975, Braz Chediak) and *Como e Boa Nossa Empregada* (*How Good Our Mais Is*, 1973, Victor di Mello, Ismar Porto), innuendo was what attracted the audiences, but those films rarely delivered on the promise of sex and nudity, with the occasional breast shot and distant glimpse of women’s bodies in showers. Besides, it was of utmost interest that producers had their films released as quickly as possibly, so they could have access to the money owed them through ticket sales. For that reason, nudity was kept to a minimum and the last thing these producers wanted was to have trouble with censorship.

One of the strategies adopted was thus to include a moral message in the end of *pornochanchadas*. These films also featured and appealed to the conservative moral interests of the military government and the Christian population. Cruz writes that by maintaining and clearly differentiating the classes and races – for example by showing a person of colour in lower social positions, or misogynistic depictions where a girl had to keep herself virgin until she got

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<sup>69</sup> Randal Johnson, “The Rise and Fall of Brazilian Cinema” in *New Latin American Cinema v.2 Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 381.

married – the film would comply with what the government tolerated and did not mind showing on the screens.<sup>70</sup> It was as if politics were a forbidden topic, but sex was liberated. Interestingly, Shaw and Dennison describe that the government used to play short propaganda films before any feature films of the time. According to them, “these advertisements for the dictatorship were shot frequently in soft focus, with smooth, paternalistic voiceovers, echoing messages such as ‘Meu Brasil, eu amo voce’ (My Brazil, I love you), and they dealt with themes like hygiene, health and work, with the objective of improving living conditions and galvanising the work force.”<sup>71</sup> In contrast, what the audience would watch after those messages was completely the opposite – “bad-mannered, sluttish and utterly stupid [films], that promoted individualism and a rejection of the work ethic.”<sup>72</sup> Perhaps this is the reason why the *pornochanchadas* were so popular at this time. The population felt so alienated by being constantly under supervision of the military government, being told what to and what not to do, how to behave and so on, that attending screenings of films that depicted the exact opposite of the social reality they were living in was a form of relief.

Also worthwhile to mention, and going back to Embrafilme, Shaw and Dennison argue that the organ was accused of fully funding only pornographic productions in the 1970s, when in fact it was co-producing some of the *pornochanchadas* (two examples were *Xica da Silva* and *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*), both box-office records for the time. It was also a period when three of the most prolific director and producers of *pornochanchadas* were highly involved with Embrafilme. Shaw and Dennison explain that “while some of the organization’s financial initiatives were ‘quality-driven’, others rewarded popular appeal and volume of production.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Cruz, 4.

<sup>71</sup> Shaw and Dennison, 93.

<sup>72</sup> Shaw and Dennison, 93.

<sup>73</sup> Shaw and Dennison, 94.

That meant that if a film was made quickly and brought people to the theaters, its director would most likely receive more funding from Embrafilme to produce another film, and so on.

Consequently it is not surprising why the organization came under fire by *cinemanovistas* that thought government money could be better spent if used to finance films that actually contributed to the education and fostering of a Brazilian national cinema.

Cruz posits that the *pornochanchada* genre was in fact a by-product of censorship during the dictatorial regime. First because censors would focus more on high-quality productions, giving more freedom to the *Boca do Lixo* features that were eroticized but not highly politicized. Secondly because by partially holding *pornochanchadas* from being released immediately, especially if they were co- or fully produced by Embrafilme, this strategy sparked curiosity and would rise the expectations of the public, attracting a bigger audience and bringing even more money to their very own government funded films.<sup>74</sup> By taking a closer look at one example from the *pornochanchada* genre, I argue that these films offer valuable content in terms of how the dynamics of Brazilian upper-class society worked at the time, and that these films should not be considered apolitical since filmmakers were inspired by the political situation they were living in.

*Como e Boa Nossa Empregada (How Good Our Maid Is)* was released in 1973 and is a film that belongs to the *pornochanchada* cycle, being considered a classic nowadays. Divided into three episodes, each one running for around 30 minutes, they all share the same features and theme – upper class teenage boys that have a strong sexual attraction for their lower class (usually women of colour) maids. Shaw and Dennison explain that the directors of *pornochanchadas* were, for the most part, conscious of censorship strictness and thus made use

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<sup>74</sup> Cruz, 4.

of self-censorship, utilizing euphemisms and double entendres in the film scripts and titles.<sup>75</sup> In the film being analyzed here, for example, the word ‘boa’ (feminine form of the adjective ‘good’) can imply a good-looking woman but also a woman that has sexually attractive features and is usually ‘good in bed.’ This definition is important to understand the thematic that links the three episodes of *Como e Boa Nossa Empregada*. The first episode – *Lula e a Copeira* (*Lula and the kitchen-maid*) – portrays Lula (Pedro Paulo Rangel), an upper class white boy in his late teenage years that lives in a rich neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro. Lula loves astronomy and is seen in the opening scene operating a telescope in the backyard of his luxurious house. There are girls sunbathing by the swimming pool and they make fun of him because of his apparent ‘lack of interest’ in the girls dressed in bikinis. Lula, however, is busy using his telescope to spy on one of his female neighbors that is sunbathing completely nude. The camera at this point becomes the own telescope, as the viewer gets a circle-cropped image seeing exactly what Lula would see through his tool. Later in the film, when Clarinha (Vilma Chagas), the new kitchen-maid is hired, he seeks helps from his best friend to build an awkward contraption made of a chair and a pulley so that he can sneak into the maid’s room during the night. The kitchen-maid is not only Lula’s target, but in different parts of the episode we see Lula’s father and one of his family friends hit on her. In the end, the maid is fired after Lula’s mom finds out he fell from the window after trying unsuccessfully to sneak into Clarinha’s room one more night. The final sequence shows Clarinha saying goodbye to Lula’s father and confirming another ‘appointment’ for the following week, implying they just had sex. In the same sequence, right after the father leaves, Lula sneaks into her house and they end up embracing and kissing on the couch, ending the episode.

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<sup>75</sup> Shaw and Dennison, 92.

The second episode, *O Terror das Empregadas* (*The Terror of the Maids*), is about Bebeto (Stepan Nercessian), also a white upper class male in his late teenage years that is sexually obsessed with maids. His mom (Maria Pompeu) comes home one day to find him forcefully trying to have sex with one of her maids, and decides to take the son to a psychologist, Doctor Leonel (Jose Lewgoy). The doctor promptly diagnoses him with inferiority complex, and claims that he is obsessed with maids because of their lower social status, given the boy is wealthy and upper class. The psychologist suggests that Bebeto must have sex with a prostitute, since they were deemed to have a higher social status in the hierarchy of society at the time.

Finally, on the third episode, entitled *O Melhor da Festa* (*The Best of the Party*), the focus is on Nana (Jorge Doria), a moralist upper class stakeholder white male that does not allow his daughter to date ‘boys with no surnames’, does not accept that his son is interested in the maids of the house and is extremely sexist towards his own wife’s way of dressing (by showing too much cleavage, for example). Nana, despite trying to pass as a politically correct subject, is hypocrite in the way that he acts – during a fancy party at a hotel, he sneaks a note to the maid/server (a woman of color as usual), implying he wants to see her at a later time. The episode ends with a plot twist turning Nana’s affair into a nightmare for his impeccable reputation of a ‘family man’.

In terms of narrative, all three episodes have a linear storyline, easy to follow and understand. The omissions that happen are when a couple is about to engage in sexual activity, due to censorship restrictions, the directors had to imply a great deal of what was about to happen. One of the strategies utilized was through the use of suggestive non-diegetic music – usually composed to give the sex scenes a more sensual approach. Watching the episodes in today’s world, where such censorship is (almost) non-existent even for Brazilian cinema, seems



simple and uncomplicated. Nonetheless, watching the film at the time represented a different form of viewing the world. Shaw and Dennison argue that one of the ‘missions’ of the *pornochanchada* genre was to disrupt the tedious everyday life of citizens. “The spectator would go to the cinema to take part in a kind of plot, to conspire against the established order” since these group conversations were not possible and any form of cultural manifestation or whatsoever had to be first authorized by the military government.<sup>76</sup> It is also important to remember that these films were preceded by government propaganda that tried to brainwash citizens with positive messages about the present and the future of the country. Watching such films that were, by contrast, individualistic, selfish and perpetrated ‘negative’ and morally inadequate messages was thus perhaps a form of dealing with the absurdity of the reality of the time. While the productions of *Cinema Novo* aimed for a direct political message in an effort to spread the word about the misdeeds of the military government, the *pornochanchada* productions seem to have their political value better understood with an interpretation of how characters interact, more specifically male ones. At surface level, *Como E Boa Nossa Empregada* depicts three funny and erotic stories that could possibly have happened in real life in the early 1970s in Brazil. When taking the socio-political context of the time in consideration, the male protagonists in *Como E Boa* invite a more in-depth reading of how the idea of masculinity was going through a crisis: men were exposed all the time to images of the military, which was very strict in terms of morals, hygiene and good manners. Watching a picture from the *pornochanchadas*, brought the male psyche to a crisis, as they would want to identify with the (sexist) characters portrayed on screen but had to pretend to be tough and perform their own masculinities in their homes or places of work. Laughing at those films was a way of relieving themselves of social pressures and escaping the reality.

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<sup>76</sup> Shaw and Dennison, 92.

With the loosening of censorship rules by the mid 1970s, the country also saw for the first time the exhibition of foreign films that had been previously banned due to the strict censorship guidelines and restrictions. One example is *A Clockwork Orange* (1972, Stanley Kubrick) that debuted in Brazilian screens only in 1978. However, ironically, censors still demanded that the film conform to the ‘Christian moral values,’ by cutting scenes where there was a focus on phallic symbols, pubic hair, and so on, not considering the film’s true message behind all the violence and sex that it contains. Cruz writes that censors required that little black balls were stamped in every film cell that showed nudity or genital parts. What happened was, ironically, that the audience actually paid more attention to the little ‘dancing balls’ on the screen than they would if the film just played as it is.<sup>77</sup> Interestingly, before the liberation of *A Clockwork Orange* in Brazil, the film was already a success by word-of-mouth, since some filmmakers had seen it outside the country and when returning to Brazil started spreading the word about it, only to have it censored. It was also controversial because during the 1974 World Cup, the Dutch soccer team was nicknamed Clockwork Orange, making a parallel between the film and the team’s success in the Cup that year.

Taking advantage of all the hype in regards to *A Clockwork Orange*, some filmmakers in the *Boca do Lixo* region saw the opportunity to exploit the public’s curiosity by creating a parody (even before the film was released in Brazil), which belonged to the *pornochanchada* genre, carefully named *Banana Mecanica* (*A Clockwork Banana*, 1974, Braz Chediak). The plot is nothing like *A Clockwork Orange* and instead, features a psychoanalyst who uses a newspaper ad to attract a thousand women to his practice in order to ‘treat’ a queer male patient. Parodies also became a frequent Brazilian way to satirize worldwide blockbusters during the *pornochanchada* and *Boca do Lixo* years.

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<sup>77</sup> Cruz, 5.

According to Abreu the cinematographic productions of *Boca do Lixo* during the 1970s totaled an average of 30% of the general film productions in the country.<sup>78</sup> By producing a variety of genres, from gore horror, to pornography, to westerns, these Brazilian films were occupying the place of foreign and mainly Hollywood films in the national screens. At the same time, directors had found the perfect timing to mock traditional conventions of Hollywood filmmaking by “adapting” well-known blockbusters giving them a Brazilian twist, with more sex, innuendo, and also subtle political commentary. This last feature is particularly important because most authors I have encountered during my research seem to have overlooked the fact that despite the transition from highly politicized films from *Cinema Novo* targeted towards a highly educated elite of the populations (mainly within the arts’ circle of artists), and the loosening of censorship, that did not mean that filmmakers were producing completely non-political films. Because dictatorship was still installed and the military government was far from adopting a friendly posture towards cultural practices, filmmakers of the *Boca do Lixo* started producing parodies and thus, qualifying their films for national exhibition as a Brazilian production. On the one hand, parodies at this time could be considered as self-deprecatory, as if the only way to achieve success with a film would be to copy the well-established American model and the classical Hollywood narrative structure, admitting the country’s inferiority to Hollywood’s film empire. On the other hand, parodying a blockbuster like *Jaws* meant that Brazilian filmmakers were highly attuned to what was happening around the world and knew that the success of *Jaws* could be recreated adding more spice so that the Brazilian audience could have something to identify themselves with.

The parody of *Jaws* was named *Bacalhau (Codfish)*, 1976, Adriano Stuart). In this one, an enormous codfish terrorizes tourists in a beach city in Sao Paulo. One of the most remarkable

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<sup>78</sup> Nuno Abreu, “Boca do Lixo: Cinema e Classes Populares” (doctor’s thesis, University of Campinas, 2002): 95.

scenes is when one of the policeman is looking through binoculars trying to catch sight of the fish in the sea, when he yells “Que monstruosidade!” (What a monstrosity!), when in fact the first person point-of-view lets the audience know he was actually checking out the backside of a young woman. The film employs sarcasm as it is described as pertaining to the comedy genre rather than the soft-core pornography genre, but could also fit the thriller/horror genre given how the film ends. Also, by purposely making fun of a highly-acclaimed American production like *Jaws*, Adriano Stuart claimed an anthropophagical attitude towards ‘Americanization’ and Brazil as a third world country: it is the colonized fighting back their colonizer, by ‘eating’ and adopting its main features but also producing a by-product that is not identical to the original one.<sup>79</sup>

Shaw and Denisson have argued that parodies were one of the ways in which the moviemakers of the time found to pay tribute to big and well-known worldwide productions, while at the same time avoiding rough cuts or scene alterations.<sup>80</sup> Subsequently, I would like to note, finally, the censorship comments and requests attributed to two films mentioned above. According to the censorship database I have been using, *Banana Mecanica* for example, was released for an 18+ audience, received the ‘Good Quality’ and ‘Ok To Export’ seals, but had a total of eight cuts imposed by censorship, and the majority of them were regarding the queer character in the film, or scenes in which there was insinuation of sexual activity considered illegal (affairs, for example).<sup>81</sup> *Bacalhau*, for instance, was rated only 16+ but also received the ‘Good Quality’ and ‘Ok To Export’ seals, as well as being quite well received by censors of the

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<sup>79</sup> I thought about the idea of ‘anthropophagy’ after reading bell hooks’ cultural appropriation article “Eating the Other.” In the case here, ‘eating the other’ refers to acquiring the others’ characteristics by absorbing it into their work, in a positive way.

<sup>80</sup> Shaw and Dennison, 98.

<sup>81</sup> Translated from Portuguese from the Censorship Certificates. Available at <http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/PDF/0030015C00701.pdf> and <http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/PDF/0030015C00702.pdf>. Accessed April 25, 2019.

time. The censorship statement available at the Memoirs of Censorship in Brazilian Cinema website describes the film as being “a national satire of the film *Jaws* utilizing popular language and malicious humour style.”<sup>82</sup> The censor even acknowledges that the characters depicted in the film are represented as such for being a comic representation in a comedic film.

After the director requested the censorship certificate be reanalyzed, censors reevaluated and authorized the film for a 14+ audience requesting however that parts of dialogue be suppressed/muted.<sup>83</sup> Those include swearing words and references to women and the homosexual character in the film being ‘eaten’ by the sea creature (“listen up here, woman, you’re eaten ten times a day”; “hasn’t he eaten you? Of course he did!” – translated from dialogues in the film.) The insinuation that the word ‘eaten’ refers to having sex was the main reason for having those pieces of dialogue censored (and the YouTube version I had access to maintained those suppressions as I have not found another full uncensored version). The information in the censorship certificate also acknowledges that despite not showing full-frontal nudity (except for the occasional breast shot), the film contains scenes where women are dressed in bikinis or swimming suits, however that does not go against the ‘good values’ and costumes, and such images “do not attempt against public organization or would serve as an inspiration for bad habits”, another proof of how censorship was ambiguous and fluid at most times.<sup>84</sup>

According to Abreu prior to the release of *Bacalhau* a cinematographic magazine entitled “Cinema em Close Up” published an article about the very chaotic production of the movie, in a way to attract viewers’ attentions to the upcoming release of the film.<sup>85</sup> The article in the

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<sup>82</sup> Translated from Portuguese from the Censorship Certificate available at <http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/PDF/0510209C004.pdf> Accessed April 25, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> Translated from Portuguese from the re-evaluation censorship certificate available at <http://www.memoriacinebr.com.br/PDF/0510209C011.pdf>. Accessed April 25, 2019.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid 83.

<sup>85</sup> Abreu, 176.

magazine cites that *Bacalhau* was inspired in *Jaws* and gives details about how the giant fish was manufactured and put into action. Similarly to the various almost-failure stories that surround the production of *Jaws*, it seems that *Bacalhau* did not escape from having a similar fate, including having problems in ‘wranglers’ operating it inside the water (it would not float and/or sink when they needed it to). Eventually, little tricks made maneuvering the big mechanical fish possible, and the film was a success because the audience enjoyed watching a movie with daring innovative equipment and also satire, sex, and just the right dose of political commentary.

## **Conclusion**

Researching about the three distinct film movements has led me to a better understanding of how fluid censorship restrictions were at the time it was still under government control. It is easily perceived why the *pornochanchadas* genre was perhaps the most prolific one in terms of Brazilian film production during the 1970s and early 1980s: extremely low budget, made to fill in screen time or the quotas for Brazilian films. The political content of *pornochanchadas* and the productions of *Boca do Lixo* has been, however, overlooked by researchers up to date, and given the scope of this Honours thesis, it would not be feasible to investigate all the productions of said time period. It is also worthwhile to mention that censorship was so eager to ban or act upon any form of cinematic manifestation that it might have spent (wasted) a lot of unnecessary time checking such features, that were made purely for fun and to be enjoyed, almost as an escape from the real world. After all, I do not think any citizen would have a sudden will to protest against the military government after watching a half-comedy half-soft core porn film that teased its audience through the use of creative and spicy titles. It is also worth mentioning that at the same time, the relationship between the government and cinematographic production

were very ambiguous; by having inserted in the same system a formal censorship organ that regulated the ideology (namely politics, moral, values, and so forth), but also wished to support and grow its national cinematographic industry. I have also noticed that the *pornochanchadas* were films that despite having a catchy title offered not much political awareness or a will to raise such awareness from the public. Their political messages were subtle, disguised in the middle of dialogues by criticizing and making fun of the government rather than attacking it directly. With the end of *Cinema Novo* by the beginning of the 1970s, and the introduction of *Cinema Marginal* and the inexpensive productions at *Boca do Lixo*, Brazilian cinema and filmmakers had to ‘obey the laws’ and try to play the government’s game. However, with time and the less harsh censorship restrictions, even Embrafilme would sometimes adopt the ‘aesthetics of garbage’ and fund films with the mere purpose of fulfilling screen time.

By the 1980s, with the overwhelming number of *pornochanchadas* produced at *Boca do Lixo*, the genre started to decay in popularity. This is also given to the fact that after the revocation of Institutional Act no. 5 in 1978, the country was once again open to receiving more foreign films, and all the efforts Embrafilme had put in to foster a national film industry also started to fall apart a couple of years after that. Foreign (pornographic) films at the time would only be screened under a special justice order.<sup>86</sup> Because of the influence of the foreign market, Brazilian filmmakers tried to compete but failed, leading to the final decay of *Boca do Lixo* and its productions. The fact that the State imposed some guidelines on Embrafilme’s productions led filmmakers, for at least a period of time, to produce films that actually connected to its public, even with the cheap productions of *Boca do Lixo* or other works from *Cinema Marginal*. This same public would see their own people reflected on the screens of *Cinema Novo* films, through the expression of revolutionary ideas that went against the military government. Later, they

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<sup>86</sup> Silveira and Carvalho, 88.

would also see themselves reflected through the *pornochanchadas*, one of the many genres produced at the *Boca do Lixo* region, with less political content, less censorship imposing, and a freedom to laugh at harsh times.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that the idea of a national cinema in Brazil could not be narrowed down to a certain set of formal characteristics that would describe it. At the same time, all the political changes that happened in the country, limiting freedom of expression in arts and culture, were not exclusive to Brazil: other countries in Latin American and Europe were going through similar debates in the realm of arts versus politics, generating a variety of art and world cinemas that went against well-established Hollywood conventions. Consequently, I find that both the national and transnational approaches offered by Andrew, Christie and Higson are useful to help in the understanding of Brazilian cinema in general, however it would be unfair to chose one lens instead of the other, as that would not consider major aspects of what constitutes Brazilian cinema, either by focusing on too many details and institutions specific only to the country, or by generalizing it to fit the bigger picture of other Latin American countries.



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