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Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Brazilian Popular Cinema

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ABSTRACT

Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Brazilian Popular Cinema

This study investigates the representation of gender and sexuality in Brazilian popular comedies. Due to its responsiveness to contemporary trends, popular cinema is a privileged locus for the analysis of social and cultural change. Comedy, in particular, is a fecund corpus for the study of power relations due to its ambivalent relation with the hegemonic power. While inherently relying on the status quo, comedy constantly pushes the boundaries of the socially acceptable; by transgressing and therefore expanding the boundaries of traditional gender representations, new models of femininity and masculinity emerge in these films in line with the changes of their time. This argument is supported by the close analysis of ten influential films spread across the three most prominent cycles of Brazilian popular cinema history: the *chanchada* in the 1950s, the *pornochanchada* in the 1970s and the *Globochanchada* in the 2000s. In the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation on the carnivalesque, and with the support of psychoanalytical theory, this study demonstrates that times of profound economic and political change call for a revision of gender models, and that comedy has been the preferred genre for Brazilian directors to provide a means of addressing, and coping with, the new demands on femininity and masculinity.

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LONG ABSTRACT

Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Brazilian Popular Cinema

There has been a long and conspicuous silence in relation to popular cinema in Brazilian academia. Often dismissed by critics as pointless entertainment with no artistic or cultural value, only recently this scenario has begun to change. The relationship between politics and popular cinema — and popular comedies in particular, as Brazil's historically most prominent genre — has been addressed in a handful of works, the most important of which have been produced outside of Brazil.¹ The relationship between politics and cinema is overt in the country's avant-garde movements, such as the 1950s Cinema Novo, but the power of popular cinema is not to be underestimated. Theorists who dismiss popular cinema as inconsequential entertainment ignore, or choose to ignore, popular cinema's powerful cultural influence. As Pierre Bourdieu has argued, "[d]omination, even when based on naked force, that of arms or money, always has a symbolic dimension"² and popular cinema — due to its appealing, ambivalent, seemingly apolitical and accessible nature, which generates large numbers of spectators — plays a pivotal role in (re)creating and reinforcing this symbolic dimension.

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1. Stam and Xavier 1988; Stam 1992; Johnson and Stam 1995; Stam 1997; Shaw 2001; Shaw 2003; Dennison and Shaw 2004; Shaw and Dennison 2005; Shaw and Dennison 2007.
 2. Bourdieu 1997, p. 172.

In order to contribute to bridge the gap, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between popular cinema and social transformation, with a focus on the representation of gender and sexuality in comedy.³ Using contemporary Hollywood films as a comparison corpus, through the close analysis of ten Brazilian films, this thesis covers the three most prominent cycles of popular comedies — significantly also the most prolific periods of Brazilian cinematic history — namely the *chanchada* of the 1950s, the *pornochanchada* in the 1970s, and the *Globochanchada* from the 2000s onwards.

The analysis is guided by, and endeavours to answer, a number of questions that interweave film and social transformation. These questions will be addressed in three analytical chapters that address the three cycles — the *chanchada*, the *pornochanchada* and the *Globochanchada* — in turns, with awareness of the weight of influence of previous cycles. A preceding chapter on the historical and theoretical framework provides the context against which the analyses will be developed.

In order to engage with a wider discussion on film and social transformation, this thesis performs the close analysis of ten popular comedies produced in Brazil between 1954 and 2011. Regarding the *chanchada*, two Brazilian films will be analysed, namely *Matar ou Correr* (Carlos Manga, 1954) and *Garotas e Samba* (Carlos Manga, 1957). For the investigation of the *pornochanchada*, three main films will be examined in detail: *A Viúva Virgem* (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1972), *A Super Fêmea* (Aníbal Massaini Neto, 1973), *A Banana Mecânica* (Braz Chediak, 1974). Two additional *pornochanchadas* will be analysed in

3. Since Greek comedy, humour has always been connected with gender, sex and the body (Bevis 2013, p. 21).

relative detail to offer points of comparison with the avant-garde Cinema Novo: *Berenice* (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1971) and *A Árvore dos Sexos* (Silvio de Abreu, 1977). Finally, the three popular *Globochanchadas* examined will be *Se Eu Fosse Você* (Daniel Filho, 2006), *A Mulher Invisível* (Cláudio Torres, 2009) and *De Pernas pro Ar* (Roberto Santucci, 2011). As part of the secondary corpus, several Hollywood films and other Brazilian films from each period, which will be mentioned in each chapter, offer contrast.

The secondary corpus is made up of canonical texts: Hollywood films (Chapters 4 and 6) and literary texts (Chapters 5 and 6). The contrast with the canonical texts is intended to cast a light on questions that the films themselves might not elucidate when analysed on their own. Functioning as a control group, the secondary corpus offers insights regarding the unique aspects of the Brazilian films. Furthermore, the influence of Hollywood films in Brazil cannot be underestimated. Since the advent of cinema in the country, foreign cinema in general has been overwhelmingly present in Brazil,⁴ as the market share of national films at its highest historically has been only 30.8%.⁵ Hollywood in particular has been an enduring and often overt reference in popular Brazilian cinema,⁶ which has been described as "a market occupied by a foreign power."⁷

In terms of theoretical methodology, the close analysis is carried out in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation on the carnivalesque, with the support of theory on humour and psychoanalytical theory.

4. Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes notes that, after an initial Golden Era that lasted from 1908 to 1911, films produced in the US and Europe started being imported to Brazil (Gomes 1996, p. 11).

5. The historical high took place in 1980 (Shaw and Dennison 2005, p. 18).

6. In the form of parodies during the 1950s, as will be shown in Chapter 2.

7. Shaw and Dennison 2005, p. 12.

The study demonstrates that times of profound economic and political change call for a revision of gender models, and that comedy has been the preferred genre to provide a means of addressing, and coping with, the new demands on femininity and masculinity. Particular attention is given to male and female characterisation and potentially subversive acts that provide an alternative for the status quo. The results shed a light not only on evolving gender relations but also on the development of consumerist culture and its reverberation in social relations. As some have argued, comedy is not inherently subversive or reactionary. Whether comedy films may diverge in terms of their progressiveness or moralism, they are always reactive, and in the margins, wittingly or not, new possibilities of representation emerge.

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1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a long and conspicuous silence in relation to popular cinema in Brazilian academia. Often dismissed by critics as pointless entertainment with no artistic or cultural value, only recently has this scenario begun to change. The relationship between politics and popular cinema — and popular comedies in particular, as Brazil's historically most prominent genre — has been addressed in a handful of works.¹ In order to contribute to bridge the gap, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between popular cinema and social transformation, with focus on the representation of gender and sexuality in comedy.² Using contemporary Hollywood films as a comparison corpus, through the close analysis of ten Brazilian films, this thesis covers the three most prominent cycles of popular comedy — significantly also the most prolific periods of Brazilian cinematic history — namely the *chanchada* of the 1950s, the *pornochanchada* in the 1970s, and the *Globochanchada* from the 2000s onwards.

In terms of critical attention, of these three cycles the *chanchada* has been problematised in greater depth. With nostalgia, these films acquire cultural capital in a way that has only

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1. Stam and Xavier 1988; Stam 1992; Johnson and Stam 1995; Stam 1997; Shaw 2001; Shaw 2003; Dennison and Shaw 2004; Shaw and Dennison 2005; Shaw and Dennison 2007.
 2. Since Greek comedy, humour has always been connected with gender, sex and the body (Bevis 2013, p. 21).

recently begun to take place with the *pornochanchada*³ and that is yet to be seen in relation to the *Globochanchada*. However, even in studies on the *chanchada*, particularly those produced locally, there is a relative lack regarding the representation of gender,⁴ which this study endeavours to address. Gender is often approached incidentally, and focus is given to issues of stereotyping and negative images.⁵ Borrowing Barbara Creed's insight regarding the turning point in post-colonial film studies, the present study proposes a "shift away from a study of 'flawed' or 'negative' images ('positive' images can be as demeaning as negative ones) to an understanding of the filmic construction"⁶ of femininity, masculinity, sexuality and the power flows between these elements. The same applies to the *pornochanchadas*, and to the *Globochanchadas*, particularly given the latter's contemporaneity.⁷

Although the political context of cinematic production is mentioned in seminal studies on Brazilian film, such as *Este Mundo é Um Pandeiro*,⁸ Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes's *Cinema uma Trajetória no Subdesenvolvimento*,⁹ Nuno César de Abreu's *Boca do Lixo: Cinema e Classes Populares*,¹⁰ and the numerous studies of JC Avellar and José Luiz Vieira, little consideration is given by Brazilian academia to the symbolic repercussions of the political

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3. The most important book wholly dedicated to the *pornochanchada* to date is Abreu 2006. Abreu covers the period from a historical perspective through interviews with actors and directors, but does not approach gender specifically.
 4. Foster 1999 provides analyses of Brazilian films of the 1980s and 1990s in relation to gender and sexuality, but the corpus does not include comedies.
 5. For an example of study on gender and Brazilian cinema that has used the approach of negative images, see Rodrigues 2009.
 6. Creed 1998.
 7. Since there is very little critical material on the most recent *Globochanchadas*, I will refer to sources such as newspaper and online reviews.
 8. Augusto 2005.
 9. Gomes 1996.
 10. Abreu 2006.

moment in which they are inserted. As Victoria Ruétalo and Dolores Tierney explain in relation to popular genre films,

[t]he reasons for such a lack of critical attention [suggests] that, for a critical elite (those who historically define the parameters of national culture) anxious to emphasize the prestige of their own national cinema, these often badly made, 'low'-culture genre films (fantasy, horror, wrestling, sexploitation, gore) provide little cultural capital.¹¹

It is then not surprising that analyses that give more careful consideration to the political implications of these films have been produced mainly outside of Brazil,¹² being Stephanie Dennison and Lisa Shaw in the UK, and Randal Johnson, Robert Stam and David William Foster in the US the most prominent Brazilianists researching popular film.¹³

This thesis demonstrates that times of profound economic and political change call for a revision of gender models, and that comedy has been the preferred genre to provide a means of addressing, and coping with, the new demands on femininity and masculinity. Due to the

11. Ruétalo and Tierney 2009, p. 1.

12. The critical reception on the horror films of director José Mojica Marins (also known as Zé do Caixão) shows the reluctance of Brazilian critics to approach B-film directors, as the observed increase in interest in Marins's work has stemmed from a fan base existing in the United States since the 1990s (Tierney 2009, p. 115). A more recent, and equally revealing, example is the 2012 Brazilian Cinemateca's retrospective of Boca do Lixo *pornochanchada* productions entitled *A Boca em Roterdã* (Cinemateca Brasileira 2012, n.p). Replicating the Rotterdam Film Festival's selection from earlier the same year (International Film Festival Rotterdam 2012, n.p.), international legitimisation still seems necessary — and made evident from the title — to justify the screening of these films 40 years after they were made. Infused with elitism and eager to affirm the artistic value of Brazilian cinema by excluding filmmakers such as Marins and the Boca directors from the canon, Brazilian academia still seems to need international validation in order to acknowledge popular film, and comedy in particular, as a corpus worthy of investigation.

13. See Stam and Xavier 1988; Stam 1992; Johnson and Stam 1995; Stam 1997; Shaw 2001; Shaw 2003; Dennison and Shaw 2004; Shaw and Dennison 2005; Shaw and Dennison 2007. Since the 1980s there has been a boom in Brazilian cinema studies abroad, but still few that approach popular cinema notably and consistently. Notable works published in the US include Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's groundbreaking study on multiculturalism, which includes a variety of examples from Brazilian cinema (Shohat and Stam 1994); and in the UK Lucia Nagib's works range from topics such as the nation and utopia (Nagib 2007) to the Revival (Nagib 2003).

centrality of the genre in Brazilian culture, and due to popular cinema's distinctive swiftness to reflect the changes of its time, this study advocates for humour to be taken seriously.

Throughout the analysis, particular attention is given to male and female characterisation and potentially subversive acts that provide an alternative for the status quo. The results shed a light not only on evolving gender relations but also on the development of consumerist culture and its reverberation in social relations.

These points will be addressed in three analytical chapters that address the three cycles — the *chanchada*, the *pornochanchada* and the *Globochanchada* — in turn, with awareness of the weight of influence of previous cycles. A preceding chapter on the historical and theoretical framework provides the context against which the analyses will be developed.

1.1 Corpus and Methods

In order to engage with a wider discussion on film and social transformation, this thesis performs the close analysis of ten popular comedies produced in Brazil between 1954 and 2011. The choice of films is based firstly on their popularity, under the premise that the most popular films are also paradigmatic films that capture the zeitgeist of their respective times.

On the *chanchada*, two Brazilian films will be analysed, namely *Matar ou Correr* (Carlos Manga, 1954) and *Garotas e Samba* (Carlos Manga, 1957). For the investigation of the *pornochanchada*, three main films will be examined in detail: *A Viúva Virgem* (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1972), *A Super Fêmea* (Aníbal Massaini Neto, 1973), *A Banana Mecânica* (Braz Chediak, 1974). Two additional *pornochanchadas* will be analysed in relative detail to offer points of comparison with the avant-garde Cinema Novo: *Berenice* (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1971) and *A Árvore dos Sexos* (Silvio de Abreu, 1977). Finally, the three popular *Globochanchadas* examined will be *Se Eu Fosse Você* (Daniel Filho, 2006), *A Mulher Invisível* (Cláudio Torres, 2009) and *De Pernas pro Ar* (Roberto Santucci, 2011). As part of the secondary corpus, several Hollywood films and other Brazilian films from each period, which will be mentioned in each chapter, provide context and contrast.

The films selected were directed by the most successful directors¹⁴ (in terms of box office returns) of each period, and with the exception of *Matar ou Correr*,¹⁵ have been little studied and consistently disavowed by the local cultural elite. The films were also chosen according to the relevance of their subject matter in relation to issues around gender and sexuality. Although any film could be analysed through this lens, these are movies that either focus on gender-related issues openly and directly (for example, *Garotas e Samba* and *De Pernas pro Ar* are about women and their struggle for professional success; *A Super Fêmea* makes clear references to the feminist movement and the advent of the contraceptive pill; and *Se Eu Fosse Você* is a body-swap movie and therefore entirely permeated by gender reversals) or indirectly (the male protagonists of *Matar ou Correr* and *A Mulher Invisível* offer insights on masculinity while *A Viúva Virgem* and *A Banana Mecânica* illustrate particularly well the carnivalesque stance adopted by the *pornochanchada* and its impact on gender and sexuality).

The secondary corpus consists of canonical texts: Hollywood films (Chapters 2 and 4) and literary texts (Chapters 3 and 4). The contrast with the canonical texts is intended to cast a light on questions that the films themselves might not elucidate when analysed on their own. Functioning as a control group, the secondary corpus offers insights regarding the unique

14. The primary corpus comprises only male directors, as there is an effective lack of female directors in the *chanchada* and the *pornochanchada*, and despite the boom of women filmmakers since the Revival, there are no female directors who fulfil the criteria of the corpus, i.e. a correlation of popularity and generic (*Globochanchada*) elements. In fact, of the 452 films with more than half a million spectators, only ten were directed or co-directed by women (less than 2.5%). The isolation of the male point of view enabled the analysis to focus on how women and femininity have been used as platforms for the expression of anxieties and fears associated with masculinity. Data from Ancine-Agência Nacional de Cinema 2013, n.p.

15. Vieira 1983 and Stam 1997 use *Matar ou Correr* as a paradigmatic example of the *chanchada* genre, and even as a metaphor for the industry at the time in relation to Hollywood.

aspects of the Brazilian films. Furthermore, the influence of Hollywood films in Brazil cannot be underestimated. Since the advent of cinema in the country, foreign cinema in general has been overwhelmingly present in Brazil,¹⁶ as the market share of national films at its highest historically has been only 30.8%.¹⁷ Hollywood in particular has been an enduring and often overt reference in popular Brazilian cinema,¹⁸ which has been described as "a market occupied by a foreign power."¹⁹

In terms of theoretical methodology, the close analysis is carried out in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation of the carnivalesque and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of horizon of expectations. The analysis will also be supported by theory on humour and the input of renowned Brazilianist film critics. Details on the reasoning behind this analytical framework as well as further information on the theories utilised can be found in Chapter 1.2.

16. Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes notes that, after an initial Golden Era that lasted from 1908 to 1911, Brazil started to import cinema produced in the US and Europe (Gomes 1996, p. 11).

17. The historical high took place in 1980 (Shaw and Dennison 2005, p. 18).

18. In the form of parodies during the 1950s, as will be shown in Chapter 2.

19. Shaw and Dennison 2005, p. 12.

1.2 Theoretical Background

1.2.1 Humour

Comedy is inextricably related to Brazilian culture broadly speaking, and metaphors related to humour are often used to describe the local culture.²⁰ While film, in general, reflects society while contributing towards shaping it, comedy in particular acts as an escape valve for societal tensions.²¹ Here the notion of 'comic relief' could not be more appropriate. Since in Brazilian culture comedy and laughter play an important role in everyday life,²² humour is used "as a vehicle for expressing sentiments that are difficult to communicate publicly or that point to areas of discontent in social life."²³ Indeed, as will be seen in the course of this thesis, humour does seem to provide a means to cope with anxieties and fears.

Goldstein clarifies the connection between humour and politics when reflecting on the ubiquitous laughter she heard in a deprived slum in Rio de Janeiro,

[t]his humour was a kind of running commentary about the political and economic structures that made up the context within which the people of Rio's shantytowns made their lives —

20. As seen in expressions such as "o país da piada pronta," used when alarming cases of corruption in politics result in no real consequence for those involved. There is a vast cultural production around the concept of *alegria*: from Brazilian popular music songs (e.g. "É melhor ser alegre que ser triste," "Alegria alegria") to popular sayings ("antes rir que chorar"). As Goldstein notes, in Brazil humour emerges, despite her own initial intentions, as the consolidating theme of her ethnography of Rio shantytowns (Goldstein 2003, p. 1).

21. For more on the 'escape valve analysis,' see Goldstein 2003 (p. 13).

22. Goldstein 2003, pp. 1-3.

23. Goldstein 2003, p. 5.

an indirect dialogue, sometimes critical, often ambivalent, always (at least partially) hidden, about the contradictions of poverty in the midst of late capitalism.²⁴

Indeed, comedy and politics are frequently connected²⁵ — like the court jester who is appointed by the king but the only one permitted to criticise him,²⁶ popular comedy has an ambivalent relationship with authority. It relies on the existing power structure whilst being licensed to criticise it. As Yvonne Tasker has stated,

[c]omedy is not inherently 'reactionary' or 'progressive' of course, whether our concern lies with the manipulation of form or more direct questions of an overt 'political' content. Yet comedy [...] does have a particular relationship to authority and to the transgression of convention; comedy provides a space in which taboos can be addressed, made visible and also contained, negotiated.²⁷

It is impossible to discuss popular cinema in general, and comedy in particular, without reflecting upon issues of elitism. Considering that "critérios de legitimação do produto ficcional foram sempre os dados pela literatura erudita,"²⁸ it is hardly surprising that popular comedy is often dismissed outrightly by critics and not seen as a worthy constituent of the cinematic canon, in Brazil and elsewhere. As director Fernando Meirelles has stated, "[i]t's amazing how dialectics ruins people's minds. They are unable to conceive of entertainment, emotion, and reflection in the same package. They always think in an exclusive and

24. Goldstein 2003, p. 2.

25. The very term 'vaudeville' can be associated with 'revolt,' as one of the possible explanations is that it is derived from Middle French dialectal *vauder* "to go" + *virer* "to turn" (*The Free Dictionary* n.d., n.p.).

26. As Beatrice Otto has argued, "[i]t is in the nature of jesters to speak their minds when the mood takes them, regardless of the consequences. They are neither calculating nor circumspect, and this may account for the 'foolishness' often ascribed to them. Jesters are also generally of inferior social and political status and have little to gain by caution and little to lose by candor — apart from liberty, livelihood, and occasionally even life, which hardly seems to have been a deterrent. They are peripheral to the game of politics, and this can reassure the king that their words are unlikely to be geared to their own advancement. Jesters are not noted for flattery or fawning" (Otto 2001, p. 245).

27. Tasker 1998, p. 163.

28. Santiago 1997, p. 533.

antagonistic way: it's either art or entertainment."²⁹ This study situates itself within the framework of postmodern and feminist theory, challenging the value hierarchy conferred to the notions of high and low art/art cinema and popular cinema.

Regardless of their cultural capital, popular comedies are symptomatic of their era beyond the unproblematically complicit place they are usually assigned by Brazilian critics. "Whether explicitly 'political' or not, comedy operates partly through an inversion of cultural assumptions which render them absurd, a foregrounding and transgression of conventions."³⁰ More than *panis et circenses*, they are a valid reflection of their time, moving beyond the categories of progressive and revolutionary. As Tierney points out, "there is a cultural capital not in marginality itself, but in a *certain kind* of marginality."³¹ Debunking (elitist) avant-gardism as a requisite for critical worth is also acknowledging that exploitation films

may represent a form of contestation and resistance not just to dominant (i.e., Hollywood-derived classicism's) stylistic aesthetic and narrative forms [...] but also to the bourgeois art cinema models that many of the New Latin American Cinemas (despite their rhetoric) ultimately aspired to [...].³²

Feminist theorist Tania Modleski further argues that it is essential for any politically engaged theory to earnestly consider popular culture:

If Jean-Paul Sartre was right that the 'surest way to be bowled over by one's age is to turn one's back on it,' then a radical cultural politics might begin to face its age by examining its connection to even the lowest forms of culture, rather than disavowing any implication in it

29. Cited in Shaw and Dennison 2005 (pp. 13-14).

30. Tasker 1998, p. 170.

31. Tierney 2009, p. 116.

32. Ruétalo and Tierney 2009, p. 5.

(or — what amounts to the same thing — celebrating this culture *as* politically progressive so as to legitimate and protect one's private pleasures).³³

As Modleski and others have emphasised, any analysis that aims at examining the political implications of popular culture is confronted with the danger of naïve optimism. Indeed, critics often tend to adopt one of two extreme positions: the complete dismissal of popular culture as a 'lower,' undeserving cultural form or its exultation as inherently subversive. As Pierre Bourdieu has convincingly argued in relation to the latter position,

[t]he cult of 'popular culture' is often simply a purely verbal and inconsequential (and therefore pseudo-revolutionary) inversion of the class racism which reduces working-class practices to barbarism or vulgarity. Just as some celebrations of femininity simply reinforce male domination, so this ultimately very comfortable way of respecting the 'people', which, under the guise of exalting the working class, helps to enclose it in what it is by converting privation into a choice or an elective accomplishment, provides all the profits of a show of subversive, paradoxical generosity, while leaving things as they are, with one side in possession of its truly cultivated culture (or language), which is capable of absorbing its own distinguished subversion, and the other with its culture of language devoid of any social value and subject to abrupt devaluation [...] which are fictitiously rehabilitated by a simple operation of theoretical false accounting.³⁴

Academic enquiry that is committed to the investigation of cinema needs to acknowledge and approach these films, despite the fact (or perhaps precisely because) they are "doubly marginalized,"³⁵ both internationally and locally. Regardless of critics' ethnocentric and exclusionist judgement of taste and value, box-office ratings alone demonstrate that these films offer "local pleasures [...] to a disenfranchised audience."³⁶ And that in itself is a good enough reason to investigate them.

33. Modleski 1991, p. ix.

34. Bourdieu 1997, p. 76.

35. Ruétalo and Tierney 2009, p. 6.

36. Ruétalo and Tierney 2009, p. 12.

This thesis therefore proposes a reading that does not dismiss these films as part of a domination based solely on *panis et circenses* and *alienação*,³⁷ but that, instead, analyses the reasons for their alienation and the ways in which they are, in fact, engaging politically, albeit not in the same way or not with the same level of awareness as the more avant-garde explicitly critical films. This line of enquiry then focuses less on ideological intentions and more on the processes whereby these films came into being — and thriving. As will be shown, popular cinema can offer a unique perspective on the political, cultural and social changes of its time.

1.2.2 Psychoanalytical Theory

Both cinema and comedy negotiate between the individual and the social. While comic stock characters cast the individual (actor) as a medium for social commentary, cinema, in Teresa de Lauretis's words, "powerfully participates in the production of forms of subjectivity that are individually shaped yet unequivocally social."³⁸ De Lauretis goes further to argue that "cinema's binding of fantasy to significant images affects the spectator as a subjective production, and so the movement of film actually inscribes and orients desire."³⁹ Popular cinema, fundamentally committed to selling fantasies to as wide an audience as possible, is a particularly prolific subject for the investigation of the nature of desire that it inscribes and orients.

37. A word which, in Brazilian Portuguese, is pejorative and strictly associated with political disengagement and apathy.

38. De Lauretis 1984, p. 8.

39. De Lauretis 1984, p. 8.

Psychoanalysis and cinema were born at the same time (in the turn of the 19th to the 20th century) and it is no surprise that psychoanalytical theory has been widely utilised as an analytical tool in film studies.⁴⁰ Furthermore, psychoanalysis applied to film has offered fertile ground for study in relation to gender, vide Laura Mulvey's seminal 1975 article on visual pleasure and narrative cinema.⁴¹ More than a tool for film analysis, however, psychoanalysis has had an immediate impact on the lives of real women, as can be seen from the history of Freud's theory conflated with the history of pathologisation of women.

A further link between women and psychoanalysis can be observed in relation to carnival, as "women and carnival are both placed outside in the zone of the anomalous in literature and psychoanalysis."⁴² As marginal sites, carnival and women have been subjected to the ascription of meaning by the legitimatised power, be it the elite culture or patriarchy.

Psychoanalytical theory is employed most rigorously in Chapter 3 on the *pornochanchada* due to its relevance to the period. The "psychoanalytic boom" in Brazil in the 1970s is seen as a result of the repressive political regime and the profound modernisation process of the previous decades. The "striking expansion" of psychoanalysis as the rise of a "psychoanalytical culture" explains the overwhelming presence of psychoanalysts and a psychoanalytical framework in films of the time.⁴³ Nonetheless, although not used as a

40. For a comprehensive history of the link between film studies and psychoanalysis, see Creed 1998.

41. Mulvey 1975.

42. Wills 1989, p. 138.

43. Russo 2012, pp. 166-168.

specific tool in the other chapters, psychoanalytical concepts of fantasy and desire, subjectivity and identity formation, will be referred to, where appropriate.

1.2.3 The Bakhtinian Framework

Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian theorist of the early 20th century, has become a canonical author among left-leaning academics in Brazil and elsewhere since his works became accessible in English, French and other languages, and were popularised as the field of cultural studies developed. The fact that Bakhtin's "theory grew and matured in the atmosphere of social change, intellectual polemic and artistic experimentation which pervaded the 1920s and early 1930s"⁴⁴ is relevant to this study, as the decades approached here are precisely times of deep social, cultural, artistic and economic change. As Robert Stam argues, "Bakhtinian categories [...] display an intrinsic identification with difference and alterity, a built-in affinity for the oppressed and the marginal, a feature making them especially appropriate for the analysis of opposition and marginal practices, be they Third World, feminist, or avant-garde."⁴⁵ Bakhtin is a particularly relevant source for the investigation of popular film, as he is "perhaps the only major contributor to Marxist cultural theory for whom popular culture is the privileged bearer of democratic and progressive values."⁴⁶

44. Hirschkop 1986, p. 93.

45. Stam 1989, p. 21.

46. Hirschkop 1986, pp. 92-93. Ken Hirschkop goes on to make an important reservation: "It is true that this faith in the people was anarchistic and utopian, and lacked the most rudimentary respect for political organization and strategy."

In Bakhtin's framework, "[t]he dialogical work accepted that its production was an historical act: not the signification of a static reality by a lonely subject but an active discursive intervention conditioned by precise social and historical circumstances."⁴⁷ Like the production of any work of art, critical engagement with popular film should also bear mind its social and historical circumstances. In an analogy to Bakhtin's linguistic framework, which foregrounds language not "as linguistic material but [...] as the material of competing ideologies,"⁴⁸ this thesis approaches Brazilian popular cinema precisely as the material of competing ideologies. As criticism involving deconstruction might prevent the politicisation of culture, the use of Bakhtin is of great importance.⁴⁹ Unlike psychoanalytical theory, Bakhtin's theory is pertinent for the investigation of social transformation as reflected in cultural products, as it is a "theory of the relation between language, subjectivity, social organization and power,"⁵⁰ according to which every utterance, if it is to be meaningful, must be connected with a speaker, an ideological situation, social interests and a social context.⁵¹

Although Bakhtin is gender blind in *Rabelais and His World*,⁵² he is nonetheless attractive to feminist theorists because his work "seems to resonate, more than perhaps any other theory emerging from a masculinist tradition, with our voices, because it seems to critique from a male perspective the power-plays deployed in patriarchal language."⁵³ Furthermore, "Bakhtin

47. Hirschkop 1986, p. 93.

48. Hirschkop 1986, p. 93.

49. In line with Hirschkop's argument for the rediscovery of Bakhtin in the 1980s (Hirschkop 1986, p. 93).

50. Chris Weedon cited in Pollock 1993 (p. 233).

51. Hirschkop 1986, p. 93.

52. Pollock 1993, p. 231.

53. Pollock 1993, p. 231-232. Pollock, however, moves on to critique a perceived limitation in Bakhtin's work: "[Yet] it is one thing to observe culture from a chosen boundary, quite another to observe culture from the boundary which is defined by patriarchy's response to my own female body."

shares with feminism a preference for process over product, a distrust of 'mastery' and the 'last word.'"⁵⁴ For these reasons, Bakhtin and feminist theory have been regarded as mutually corrective⁵⁵ and the present study aims at contributing to this gap.

The carnivalesque, as per Bakhtin, is defined by Robert Stam as the rejection of "formal harmony and unity in favor of the asymmetrical, the heterogenous, the oxymoronic, the miscegenated."⁵⁶ In less abstract terms,

Carnival, for Bakhtin, refers to the pre-Lenten revelry whose origins can be traced back to the Dionysian festivities of the Greeks and the Saturnalia of the Romans, but which enjoyed its apogee of both observance and symbolic meaning in the High Middle Ages. In that period, Bakhtin points out, carnival played a central symbolic role in the life of the community. Much more than the mere cessation of productive labor, carnival represented an alternative cosmovision characterized by the ludic undermining of all norms. The carnivalesque principle abolishes hierarchies, levels social classes, and creates another life free from conventional rules and restrictions. In carnival, all that is marginalized and excluded — the mad, the scandalous, the aleatory — takes over the center in a liberating explosion of otherness. The principle of material body — hunger, thirst, defecation, copulation — becomes a positively corrosive force, and festive laughter enjoys a symbolic victory over death, over all that is held sacred, over all that oppresses and restricts.⁵⁷

Whereas in European literature, carnival has "[s]hifted from public sphere to the bourgeois home, [ceasing] to be a site of actual struggle,"⁵⁸ in Brazil it continues to inhabit the public space, though its role as a site of struggle has been problematised. Once subversive and

54. Stam 1989, p. 22.

55. Pollock 1993, p. 235.

56. Shohat and Stam 1994, p. 302.

57. Stam 1989, p. 86.

58. Wills 1989, p. 141.

repressed for the first two decades of the 20th century,⁵⁹ it was co-opted by the ruling elite and sanctioned by hegemonic culture rather consciously. As Rachel Soihet has argued,

[c]om a Revolução de 1930 e a mudança de perspectiva dos grupos no poder com relação à cultura popular, o carnaval passa a ser objeto das maiores atenções desde os primeiros anos da Nova República. Tal interesse revela a estratégia dos novos grupos de poder controlar e disciplinar os trabalhadores, mediante a intereferência, a título de apoio, nessa festividade. A valorização da cultura popular por um Estado disposto a realizar a união entre elite e massa levaria à visão de uma sociedade mais harmônica.⁶⁰

Regardless of its effective threat to hegemonic power, carnival is a living reality in Brazil to the point that it has been theorised in relation to the national identity.⁶¹ In terms of theoretical production, there is a close link between Bakhtin and Brazil. Robert Stam goes into detail on the proximities between Bakhtin and Mário de Andrade, including the extraordinary fact that both authors devised the concept of polyphony, although it is unlikely that they ever had contact with each other's work.⁶² The carnivalesque offers a "combination of critique and

59. It is curious to observe similar process of popular subversion and elitist resistance repeating itself over time. While carnival has been completely sanctioned by the official culture and has been one of the symbols of national identity since the 1950s, in the present day similar frictions to those taking place in the 1920s take place in relation to funk. In April 2013, a law was approved (in the first instance) to prohibit *bailes funk* in public spaces in the municipality of São Paulo (Terra Cidades 2013, n.p.).

60. Soihet 2008, p. 207. On the topic of co-option, Robert Stam's reflection on the oft-cited hybridity and miscegenation of Brazilian culture is worth mention: "Elites have always made co-optive top-down raids on subaltern cultures, while the dominated have always parodied and 'signified' as well as emulated elite practice. Hybridity, in other words, is power-laden and asymmetrical. It is also co-optable. In Brazil, as in many countries in Latin America, national identity has often been *officially* articulated as hybrid and syncretic, through hypocritically integrationist ideologies that have glossed over subtle racial hegemonies" (Stam 1997, p. 358).

61. Stam 1989, pp. 128-129. Carnival has also often been utilised to analyse Brazilian culture and film; Stam, whose work is a notable example of its application to Brazilian film studies, argues that in Brazil, the idea of carnival is an integral part of theorisation on the national identity (Stam 1992, p. 50).

62. Stam 1989, pp. 135-136.

indecenty"⁶³ which is similar to Mário de Andrade's exultation of pleasure and *ócio* (leisure)⁶⁴ and the resistance to puritanical values according to which pleasure is condemned.⁶⁵

The carnivalesque in cinema may assume a variety of forms, from its literal presence as subject, such as *Alô, Alô, Carnaval!* (Adhemar Gonzaga, 1936) and *Orfeu Negro* (Marcelo Camus, 1959), to the "parody of the extracarnival life," promoting "the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (*à l'envers*), of the 'turnabout,' of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings."⁶⁶

In relation to characters, the carnivalesque often "animates not rounded three-dimensional characters but rather two-dimensional 'grotesques.'"⁶⁷ Since his early works, Bakhtin opposed individualism and positivism,⁶⁸ promoting a stance which casts new light on the analysis of Brazilian popular film, as will be shown in the course of this study. Bakhtin also offers a compelling theoretical apparatus to analyse the political implications of cultural products. In addition to the carnivalesque, two concepts are key to further the understanding of social transformation: heteroglossia and the issue of boundaries.

63. Wills 1989, p. 130.

64. As epitomised by Macunaíma's catchphrase 'ai, que preguiça!' in Mário de Andrade's 1928 *Macunaíma* (De Andrade 2007).

65. "A alegria é a prova dos nove," Oswald de Andrade repeats throughout his 'Manifesto Antropófago' (De Andrade 1972, p. 18).

66. Bakhtin 1984, p. 11.

67. Stam 1997, p. 246.

68. Hirschkop 1986, p. 94.

Heteroglossia or "many-languedness"⁶⁹ is originally a linguistic term to refer to language's stratification into different genres, registers and dialects.⁷⁰ Although originally applied to linguistics, it is a useful term to think of processes of social transformation in broader terms, as it entails that "meaning is never permanently fixed" and that the fluidity of language and the freedom of both the speaker and the listener open the possibility for the continual creation of new meaning.⁷¹ As Mary Pollock has argued, "[h]eteroglossia naturally counterbalances those forces which tend to fix language and limit meaning. Heteroglossia ensures change."⁷² According to Bakhtin's linguistic theory, "language's constant decay and re-formation necessarily create a free space for change."⁷³ The idea of cycles of decay (crisis) and re-formation (subversion or the re-establishment of the status quo) creating a free space for change is essential for the correlation between social transformation and popular cinema. As will be shown, the films analysed portray periods of crisis and, wittingly or not, they help create the new modes of being for which times of change call. These new modes usually emerge from the margins and indeed Bakhtin argues that heteroglossia creates energy for change along the "fault lines of language."⁷⁴

The concept of boundaries is also central to Bakhtin's work, as "[t]he barrier between text and context, between 'inside' and 'outside,' for Bakhtin is an artificial one, for in fact there is an easy permeability between the two."⁷⁵

69. Stam 1997, p. 351.

70. Vice 1997, p. 18.

71. Pollock 1993, p. 233.

72. Pollock 1993, p. 233.

73. Pollock 1993, p. 235.

74. Pollock 1993, p. 236.

75. Stam 1989, p. 20.

1.2.4 Bourdieu: Horizon of Expectations

Transgression, which is inherent to humour, also mobilises the idea of boundaries, testing and expanding boundaries, the limits of possibility. Transgression — the subtle and seemingly harmless acts taking place at the boundaries of what is socially acceptable — might serve to expand what could be termed the *horizon of expectations*. By feeding back to society their already consolidated views, popular comedies inevitably work as part of the status quo, but can also transgress it. By displaying the current horizon of possibilities, comedy (in)forms popular representations of gender and occasionally expands them, or works in the form of a backlash against patriarchy.⁷⁶

The symbolic power of cinema, and particularly of popular cinema with its wide reach and mass appeal, is undeniable, albeit difficult to measure. As Pierre Bourdieu explains, the importance of symbolic power cannot be underestimated:

Symbolic power, which can manipulate hopes and expectations, especially through a more or less inspired and uplifting performative evocation of the future — prophesy, forecast or prediction — can introduce a degree of play into the correspondence between expectations and chances and open up a space of freedom through the more or less voluntarist positing of more or less improbable possibles — utopia, project, programme or plan — which the pure logic of probabilities would lead one to regard as practically excluded.⁷⁷

76. According to Faludi 1993, backlash is a "powerful counterassault on women's rights" that she identifies as having occurred in the 1980s. It is, Faludi argues, "an attempt to retract the handful and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women" (p. 12).

77. Bourdieu 1997, p. 234.

Bourdieu further argues that "there is also a relative autonomy of the symbolic order, which, in all circumstances and especially in periods in which expectations and chances fall out of line, can leave a margin of freedom for political action aimed at reopening the space of possibles."⁷⁸ As will be discussed, the three periods investigated in this thesis constitute times of rapid and profound social changes, i.e. times of crises when "expectations and chances fall out of line." The films examined also introduce the margin of freedom that Bourdieu outlines through their constant portrayal of transgression.

The inherent ambivalence of both humour and popular cinema constitutes a theoretical impasse that has been observed in the literature. As Yvonne Tasker notes,

[c]ultural criticism that aims to produce a political evaluation of popular culture tends, as Richard Dyer has observed, to end up nowhere definite, describing popular phenomenon as having both oppositional and hegemonic potential. For Dyer, this is not necessarily a failure of cultural studies, but an indication of the fundamental ambivalence of cultural products.⁷⁹

This fundamental ambivalence of cultural products, and of popular comedies in particular, is symptomatic of an interplay with the margin of freedom. After all, "this margin of freedom is the basis of the autonomy of struggles over the sense of the social world, its meaning and orientation, its present and its future, one of the major stakes in symbolic struggle."⁸⁰ This is relevant to this thesis to the extent that, as will be discussed, the struggles over the sense of

78. Bourdieu 1997, p. 234. Bourdieu's concept of *space of possibles* is very closely associated with that of *horizon of expectations* developed here. However, whereas the space of possibles refers to critical and authorial positions and their relationship with each other and historically to the wider production that preceded them, the notion of *horizon of expectations* refers to representation. In other words, the first is related to the creative source and the latter to representational effect.

79. Tasker 1998, p. 17.

80. Bourdieu 1997, p. 234.

the social world takes place in the boundaries, where unequal power relations can be symbolically questioned or maintained in subtle ways. Given popular cinema's mass appeal and accessibility and the fact that comedy is the definitive genre in Brazilian cinema, the role of popular film comedies in the process of resignification of gender roles and sexual practices is pivotal.

Having laid out the main theoretical framework for this thesis, after a brief historical contextualisation, the next three main chapters will develop the theories outlined here through the close analysis of the ten films mentioned above, where it will be possible to verify how these powerful theoretical concepts can be articulated in popular film.

1.3 Historical Background

If comedy "can have ideological implications, in its imaginary reconciliation of both characters and thematic oppositions, these need to be located in the specific social-historical contexts in which it has been produced, particularly in terms of prevailing notions of gender relationships."¹ While the notions of gender relationships from each period will be discussed in the following chapters, the present chapter aims at providing an overview of the historical background of this study's corpus, showing that comedy plays a central role in the history of Brazilian cinema.

Historically, Brazilian cinema production has been characterised by intermittent outbursts of prolificacy followed by periods of deep decline, verging on extinction. The first massively popular period in Brazil's cinematic history consists of a home-grown genre: the *chanchada*, a genre of popular comedies that thrived during the 1950s. Although intellectually prolific, Cinema Novo's production in the 1950s and 1960s was never successful among popular audiences.² Another peak in production and consumption came with the *pornochanchada*, a genre of soft-core porn comedies of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which was followed by the dismantling process that nearly annihilated filmmaking in Brazil until the *Retomada* in the mid-1990s.³ The films produced by Globo Filmes, Brazil's media giant, in the 21st century can be seen to be not so dissimilar to preceding cycles of popular cinema in the sense

1. King 2002, pp. 55-56.

2. De Andrade and Viany 1995, p. 75.

3. Nagib 2003, p. xvii.

that it is the latest of many attempts to establish a thriving and mature national film industry. Brazilian cinema has always been greatly affected by the policies of the prevailing government: the lack of state protectionism in the early days of national cinema, quotas, the fierce military repression for two decades, and Fernando Collor de Melo's predatory policies in the early 1990s.⁴ The peaks in production coincided with times of economic prosperity: a period of intense industrialisation under President Getúlio Vargas, the so-called *milagre econômico* during the military dictatorship (which essentially consisted of massive bottom-to-top wealth transfer) and further development in the 21st century with a left-wing government and an emphasis on improving social inequality.

In contrast to what one may infer from recent box-office successes like *Cidade de Deus* (Fernando Meirelles, 2002) and *Tropa de Elite* (José Padilha, 2007), comedy has always been very close to Brazilians' hearts. The popularity of Martins Pena, the so-called Brazilian Molière, for example, and the revue or music hall (*teatro de revista*), both from the 19th century, easily made the transition to the silver screen. As early as 1910, we can find an example of a popular film comedy: *Paz e Amor* (Alberto Botelho/Alberto Moreira), a satire of the government of then-President Nilo Peçanha.⁵ The film is an example of the transposition of the *teatro de revista* to cinema, using the technique of *filme cantado*, where singers performed backstage while the film was screened.⁶ The first sound film was actually a comedy, *Acabaram-se os Otários* (Luiz de Barros, 1929), with actor Genésio Arruda playing

4. Caetano 2007, p. 196.

5. Augusto 2005, p. 86.

6. Gomes 1996, pp. 30-32.

a hillbilly who is conned in the big city. *O Babão* (Luiz de Barros, 1931) is an early example of a parody of a Hollywood success, *The Pagan* (W. S. Van Dyke, 1929).⁷

Another landmark for comedies in Brazilian cinema is 1930, marking the foundation of Cinédia studios in Rio de Janeiro by Adhemar Gonzaga. Cinédia also produced dramas, but it had a pivotal role in the development of the genre for various reasons. Firstly, it introduced comic actors such as Oscarito and Grande Otelo, who would later become huge national stars, and one of Brazil's biggest international stars, the enduringly referential Carmen Miranda. Two of Cinédia's comedies are considered to have set the paradigm for the birth of the *chanchadas*: *Alô, Alô, Brasil!* (Wallace Downey, João de Barro and Alberto Ribeiro, 1935) and *Alô, Alô, Carnaval!* (Adhemar Gonzaga, 1936). In these films, the static camera replicated the stage show of a revue performance.⁸ Cinédia is still in operation today (it is the longest lived film company in Brazil), but another studio was to take precedence in the production of comedies in the 1940s: Atlântida Cinematográfica. Founded in 1941, Atlântida started as a small cooperative of four men from Rio. Their first production was a drama entitled *Moleque Tião* (José Carlos Burle, 1943). In 1944, Atlântida produced *Tristezas Não Pagam Dívidas* (José Carlos Burle), the first comedy film of the studio and the first film in which Grande Otelo and Oscarito both appeared. The two would later comprise a comic duo

7. Augusto 2005, p. 152.

8. Another studio is worth mention; Vera Cruz, the short-lived studio founded in 1950s produced few comedies (seven of its 23 films), but is important to the history of humour in cinema for introducing Amácio Mazzaropi to the big screen. Mazzaropi would then go on to create his own film company and produce various movies in which he repeatedly played the same stock character: the naïve, good-hearted *caipira*.

that would star in several films together, and dozens of others individually,⁹ and their names would become synonymous with the *chanchadas*.¹⁰

The *chanchada* is considered a watershed, not only as a genre but in the history of Brazilian cinema. Although the 'pre-*chanchadas*' *Alô, Alô, Carnaval!* and *Alô, Alô, Brasil!* were acclaimed by both audience and critics, the cinematic era that followed was critically dismissed during its time as vulgar and unpolished. Initially they were also called *filmusicais carnavalescos*, but the name *chanchada* quickly stuck and indeed was the one to survive, but symptomatically it started out as a pejorative term. There is considerable debate about the origin of the term, but it is undoubtedly negative and denotes complete lack of aesthetic value. Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes's reappraisal of the importance of the *chanchada* in Brazil's cinematic history in the 1980s has resulted in their critical rescue as a worthy object of study. *Atlântida* and the *chanchada* tradition survived until the early 1960s, but during the 1950s it co-existed with the precursors of Cinema Novo (*Rio 40 Graus*, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1955), which would come to dominate the following decade. In the Cinema Novo tradition, *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1969) relies heavily on the *chanchada* tradition, with the presence of Grande Otelo initially as the protagonist. In parallel to Cinema Novo, the underground cinema (Udigrudi) of the 1960s and 1970s produced films that were not comedies per se, but that were nonetheless based on a non-sensical, surrealist view of the

9. Oscarito starred in over forty films and Grande Otelo's extraordinary career involved his participation in over one hundred films.

10. In addition to Grande Otelo and Oscarito, other comedians worthy of mention in this period include Dercy Gonçalves, Eva Todor, José Lewgoy, Renata Fronzi, Zezé Macedo, Zé Trindade and Violeta Ferraz.

world that had hints of humour, as can be seen from titles such as *Matou a Família e Foi ao Cinema* (Julio Bressane, 1969), at once tragic and comic.

Also in 1969, the popularity of two films produced in Rio de Janeiro — *Os Paqueras* (Reginaldo Faria, 1969) and *Memórias de um Gigolô* (Alberto Pieralisi, 1970) — set the tone for a new era of films, the *pornochanchada*, another detrimental name coined by critics. Although Rio continued to produce films, the *pornochanchada* tradition became largely associated with São Paulo, and with a very specific region called Boca do Lixo (which is why films of this cycle are sometimes referred to as Cinema da Boca). This is the first time in Brazilian film history that film production resembled that of an industry and movies were made quickly and paid for themselves, with little governmental support. Ironically, the rise of the *pornochanchada* coincides with the strengthening of the military dictatorship, and seemingly the cinematic answer to the repression of the time was a genre of erotic comedy. The sexual content of the films was not as extreme as the name suggests, relying on suggestion and the occasional view of a woman's breast rather than explicit sex. Famous films of this era will be analysed in Chapter 3, but these are only examples of an output of more than 600 films over the decade. The genre has been largely viewed as apolitical, but reading the *pornochanchadas* against their political context can be revealing, as will be shown in Chapter 3. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the *pornochanchada* morphed into hardcore porn and was defunct by the mid-1980s. In parallel to the *pornochanchada*, *Os Trapalhões*, a quartet doing comedy aimed at children produced commercially successful films which until the present figure as some of the largest grossing films in all of Brazilian cinema history.

The mid-1980s was the beginning of a grim decade for Brazilian cinema. The world economic crisis and the rampant inflation complicated the re-democratisation process and hit the domestic film industry hard. The year 1990 figures as the climax of what became known as the dismantling process of Brazilian cinema. Fernando Collor (the first president elected by direct vote after the dictatorship, and impeached two years later), closed a number of essential governmental organs that had fostered film production, Embrafilme being the most important. In 1992, famously, *A Grande Arte*, directed by Walter Salles, was the only Brazilian film produced (and it is an international co-production, with dialogue mostly in English). With the impeachment of Collor and the implementation of the Lei do Audiovisual,¹¹ Brazilian cinema 'revived.' The year 1995 has come to mark the *Retomada* (Revival) of Brazilian cinema. The film that is seen to have effectively brought Brazilian cinema back to life is a historical comedy: *Carlota Joaquina: Princesa do Brasil* (Carla Camurati, 1995). Since then comedies have again flourished in the domestic market which is confirmed by a survey from 2008 revealed that comedy is the preferred genre for Brazilians.¹²

Although comedy is overwhelmingly present in Brazilian film, as shown in this brief history, the national cinema has also produced films in a variety of genres: crime films in the 1910s, the avant-garde Cinema Novo, documentaries, other strictly home-bred genres like the *cangaço* film,¹³ recent action films such as *Cidade de Deus* and *Tropa de Elite*, to name a few. The mainstream of Brazilian film scholarship, particularly that of established institutions like

11. A law of fiscal incentives for cultural products. For more information, see Portal Brasil n.d., n.p.

12. Instituto de Pesquisas Datafolha 2008, pp. 216-218.

13. For more on the *cangaço* tradition, also known as *nordestern*, see Caetano 2005.

ECA at University of São Paulo, has largely disregarded comedy as a worthy topic of study, based on a elitist view that hierarchises art cinema as art form and popular cinema as entertainment. However, regardless of the critical dismissal of the genre, I would argue that comedy is one of the defining genre in Brazilian cinema, indeed the definitive one.

2 THE *CHANCHADA*

The *chanchada* was a genre of popular comedies produced during the 1940s until the mid-1960s,¹⁴ a time of intense economic expansion as well as mass migration from rural to urban centres.¹⁵ In the 1950s, the decade in which the most prominent *chanchadas* were made, Brazil was for the first time a country with the majority of its population living in urban areas. In the political arena, Getúlio Vargas was elected President by direct vote in 1951 for the second time after a fifteen-year dictatorship (1930-1945). Under Vargas's previous regime, Brazil saw the birth of industrialisation, a process which continued under his democratic government. Marked by an intense process of modernisation accompanied by strikes and demonstrations, the political and social turmoil resulted in Vargas's suicide in 1954.

The *chanchadas* reflect the "sweeping economic, social and cultural change"¹⁶ of the period under various guises. Mirroring the massive movement of people from urban to rural areas in the country, the protagonists are usually migrants themselves¹⁷ and often seem confused by

14. Dennison and Shaw 2004, p. 66 and p. 131.

15. The urban population rose from 30 to 70 percent (Shaw 2001, p. 19).

16. Dennison and Shaw 2004, p. 31.

17. Examples include Oscarito in *Homem do Sputnik* (Carlos Manga, 1959), Dercy Gonçalves in *Entre de Gaiato* (J. B. Tanko, 1959), Renata Fronzi in *Treze Cadeiras* (Franz Eichhorn, 1957), not to mention Jeca Tatu, a redneck stock character embodied by Mazzaropi in over 30 films.

urban life.¹⁸ Their concern with better living and working conditions ('making it' in the city) drives the narrative of various films: the saga of the of *Treze Cadeiras* (Franz Eichhorn, 1957) consists in finding one chair from a set of thirteen that contains a distant relative's inheritance, and the protagonist of *Entrei de Gaiato* (J. B. Tanko, 1959) passes as a rich woman to try to seduce a rich man, to name but two examples. As Lisa Shaw has argued, "this popular genre articulated and perhaps helped to remedy the Brazilian masses' unstable sense of belonging to a society that was experiencing dramatic shifts at its very core."¹⁹

As in other parts of the globe, consumption beyond mere subsistence developed as "the beginnings of a consumer culture in the 1930s and 1940s blossomed [in the 1950s] into the cult of consumerism,"²⁰ and indeed, a nascent consumer culture can be observed in the films in the form of an endless parade of cars, white goods, fur coats, hats, shoes and dresses. As Stephanie Dennison and Lisa Shaw have argued, "[t]he crisis of identity provoked by industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation continued to be reflected in the *chanchadas* of the 1950s via the adoption of a new persona by characters on the bottom rung of the social ladder, like their audiences."²¹ This crisis of identity is also a crisis in gender identity, and the films of the period offer a way of elaborating on the impacts of these changes in relation to gender roles while expanding the *horizon of expectations* in the representation of femininity and masculinity.

18. "Both newcomers to the city and uninitiated locals experience an identity crises when confronted by the rampant modernity of the big city. In *Esse milhão é meu*, for example, Oscarito's character, a humble civil servant, is nearly knocked down by a bus. This physical joke would have struck a chord with faceless migrants in the audience. [...] As the hick Bonifácio anxiously points out on his arrival in Rio in *Treze cadeiras*: 'Eu não conheço ninguém aqui' "(Dennison and Shaw 2004, p. 91).

19. Shaw 2001, p. 17.

20. Günsberg 2005, p. 60.

21. Dennison and Shaw 2004, p. 92.



Dercy Gonçalves is a poor migrant passing as rich in *Entre de Gaiato* (J. B. Tanco, 1959). The close up of her feet promotes a status-conferring product (shoes) while showing her discomfort in wearing it. Spectators could identify with her desire to have these products as well as her ineptitude in handling them.

In the 1950s, popular cinema thrived in a genre that came to be known as *chanchada*.²² While there is considerable debate about the definition of the term *chanchada*,²³ in the 1940s it was used pejoratively by contemptuous critics to denote what they perceived as unpolished films with no aesthetic value.²⁴ Indeed, the *chanchadas'* critical reception among their contemporaries was mainly negative and Alex Viany, in the 1950s, defined them as "comédia popularesca, em geral apressada e desleixada, com interpolações musicais."²⁵ Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes's reappraisal of the *chanchadas* in the 1980s²⁶ marks a shift in their critical reception, resulting in their revalorisation as one of the most important Brazilian genres.²⁷

22. Stam 1989, p. 139.

23. Augusto retraces the term back to its European origins with 'chancho' meaning *porcaria* while Vieira argues that the term has its origins in Italy, and that the word *cianciata* ("um discurso sem sentido, uma espécie de arremedo vulgar, argumento falso") arrived in Portugal in the 16th century (Augusto 2005, p. 17).

24. Augusto 2005, p. 17.

25. Augusto 2005, p. 17-18.

26. Shaw and Dennison 2007, p. 190 n. 37.

27. This is not only due to the use of Brazilian Portuguese (crucial to the survival of the national cinema at the time), but also due to the kind of self-deprecating humour mobilised in the films (Shaw and Dennison 2007, p. 70, 76-77).

Although the *chanchadas* often reference Hollywood films, they are understood as "the embodiment of some kind of inescapable 'Brazilianness.'"²⁸ Mobilising elements that were very familiar to audiences and critics alike — *malandragem* and anthropophagy, for example, both of which will be discussed below —, as Sérgio Augusto lyrically puts it, "as chanchadas transpiravam brasilidade por quase todos os fotogramas."²⁹

The body of films produced under the umbrella of the genre is varied and, in retrospect, critics have identified turning points which are useful for advancing the understanding of the use of the carnivalesque in these films.³⁰ In João Luiz Vieira's framework, the first phase encompasses films produced from the 1930s until the mid-1940s and containing sketches and jokes interpolated with "more or less autonomous musical numbers," similar to a vaudeville theatre show.³¹ The second phase arises with the foundation of the Atlântida Cinematográfica studio in 1941 and its consolidation over the subsequent two decades. This phase is characterised by "more complex narratives no longer centered on the traditional backstage plots and introducing new elements such as gangsters and suspense."³² Augusto points out that there is an internal shift in the content of the studio's films, which, in turn, is reflected in the genre as a whole.³³ Lisa Shaw argues that this shift is due to the political uncertainty

28. Shaw and Dennison 2007, p. 77.

29. Augusto 2005, p. 16.

30. Sérgio Augusto considers *Carnaval no Fogo* (1949) as the first film to encapsulate all the generic elements of the *chanchada*. Although João Luiz Vieira refrains from qualifying early productions as *chanchadas*, like Augusto he divides the history of the *chanchada* into two phases.

31. Dennison and Shaw 2004, p. 26.

32. Dennison and Shaw 2004, p. 26.

33. He identifies *Este mundo é um pandeiro* (Watson Macedo, 1946) as the embryo of the formula that would be fully developed for the first time in *Carnaval no Fogo* (Watson Macedo, 1949): "*Este mundo é um pandeiro* já dava mostras de que um novo gênero de comédias musicadas, com uma integração maior entre as suas partes, estava prestes a surgir" (Augusto 2005, p. 111).

following President Getúlio Vargas's suicide in 1954, which made musical performances no longer an adequate locus to approach popular identity and instead focused on the definition of Brazil's place in the world.³⁴

While directors such as Watson Macedo and José Carlos Burle are central figures in the development of the genre in the Atlântida studio, it is Carlos Manga who is considered to have caused "uma pequena mas considerável revolução no estúdio, integrando um número musical ao corpo ficcional de uma chanchada."³⁵ Later, musical numbers disappeared completely and carnival became an allegorical manifestation, like that proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin as being the "consistent application of the social principle of inversion."³⁶ Therefore the *chanchada*, although participating in the tradition of carnivalesque films dating back to the silent era, was definitively established and came to fruition during the 1950s³⁷ —, and it was with the Atlântida studios, and with Manga in particular, that the genre reached its creative climax. With Manga, the carnival that was literal onscreen (in the form of musical numbers and footage of the actual carnival celebrations) became more integrated in the film plot. At the end of this gradual shift, which culminated in the films produced by Atlântida Cinematográfica and, more specifically with Manga's films, carnival was symbolically incorporated into the films, and the carnivalesque fully developed as an abstract mode of representation, rather than as the mere transposition of a popular festivity onscreen. This period is also relevant as it marks the time when the *chanchadas* became an unprecedented

34. Shaw 2003, p. 82.

35. Augusto 2005, p. 121.

36. DaMatta 1997, p. 169.

37. Shaw and Dennison 2007, p. 71; Augusto 2005, p. 30; João Luiz Vieira in Ramos and Miranda 1997 (p. 117).

cinematic phenomenon. Relying on a successful formula and a home-grown star system,³⁸ 178 million spectators went to the movies in Brazil in 1948³⁹ — an extraordinary figure, particularly when compared to the average of 90 million from 2005 to 2008.⁴⁰

For the corpus of this chapter, two films directed by Carlos Manga were chosen to serve as case studies: *Matar ou Correr* (1954) and *Garotas e Samba* (1957). In addition to having been directed by Manga, whose body of work best seems to best epitomise a carnivalesque ambivalence toward what in other films appears as a clear-cut promotion of morality, the two selected films share other similarities. As per Vieira and Augusto, both films are situated in the second phase of the *chanchadas*, which encompasses more sophisticated films, both technically and symbolically. Also analogous are the two films' references to North American cinema; *Matar ou Correr* parodies Fred Zinnemann's *High Noon* (1952) and, although not a parody per se, *Garotas e Samba* (1957) is loosely based on *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Jean Negulesco, 1953). This relationship with their Hollywood counterparts, as well as other *chanchadas*, is also explored in the sections that follow. The analyses approach different facets of gender dynamics: the representation of masculinity in *Matar ou Correr* and its possible subversion of the masculinity portrayed in the traditional Western film; and the ways in which the femininity portrayed in *Garotas and Samba* might reflect — in an attempt to cope with — the women's emancipatory movement at the time.

38. Shaw and Dennison 2007, pp. 117-140.

39. Augusto 2005, p. 51. NB — the figures refer to the overall audience, not specifically to *chanchadas* or to national films.

40. Filme B 2010, n.p.

2.1 *Matar ou Correr*: Infantilised Men

The relationship between Brazilian and foreign culture has often been of concern to Brazilian intellectuals,⁴¹ a fact which has been reflected in Brazilian cinema. Parodies participate in this process as a means of tackling what is often regarded as a problematic relationship; the number of parodies, which indeed represent a rich tradition,⁴² is an eloquent index of the importance of such tension. João Luiz Vieira argues that "[c]omo uma das formas de sátira, a paródia se coloca numa posição sempre crítica do próprio discurso ao qual ela se dirige."⁴³ It is precisely this critical position with which this section takes issue. If parody in general stands as a fertile site for destabilisation and critique, it is also particularly useful in relation to gender. The approximation between gender performance and comedy is emphasised in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, where the concepts of parody and pastiche are advanced.⁴⁴ Among the various cinematic genres, the Western as a genre that is "devoted to the activities of men"⁴⁵ constitutes a rich object for the investigation of gender and its potential parodical subversion. By looking at the Brazilian *chanchada* *Matar ou Correr* in relation to the film on which it is based, *High Noon*, and the Western as a genre in general, this section investigates the extent to which ideals associated with masculinity are subverted.

41. See the work of Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes, Oswald de Andrade, Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, to name a few.

42. Vieira 1983, p. 22; also Stam 1997, p. 97.

43. Vieira 1983, p. 22.

44. Butler 1999, pp. 188-203.

45. Peek 2003, p. 209.

High Noon is not an arbitrary model for the Brazilian parody, as it was in itself a genre-destabilising work.⁴⁶ Jeremy Byman argues that, although "*High Noon* is nothing if not a Western,"⁴⁷ it subverted the formula to such a great extent that "what would come after would be variations on its bitter theme — or parody."⁴⁸ Rejecting "the Western's status as a holy relic,"⁴⁹ *High Noon* seems to have caused a fissure in the very genre from which the Brazilian parody would develop.

Fred Zinnemann's *High Noon* was released in 1952, the year of President Dwight Eisenhower's election. After the Great Depression and amidst the rapid economic growth of the post-World War II boom, the middle class expanded exponentially and consumption reached new levels. The media (TV, cinema and advertising) played an important role in promoting the beginnings of a new consumerist culture, at the basis of which is the individual. Against this backdrop, *High Noon*, a watershed film, portrays the victory of the individual and his ideals over a community that consistently turns its back on him.

The film unravels during a day in the life of its protagonist, Marshal Will Kane (played by Gary Cooper), from his wedding to the final confrontation with the film's barbarous villain, Frank Miller. Minutes after his wedding ceremony, Kane learns that Miller is out of prison and on his way to the city to settle a score with him and, as the spectators are led to understand throughout the film, to re-establish lawlessness in the city. Kane decides to stay

46. Byman 2004, pp. 123-157 (the chapter is entitled 'Formula and Subversion').

47. Byman 2004, p. 143.

48. Byman 2004, p. 153.

49. Byman 2004, p. 127.

and face Frank Miller, though "[h]is motives for staying and fighting are unclear, whether private conscience, fear, public obligation or pride, or some mixture."⁵⁰ *Kane's* split "'twixt love and duty," as suggested by the ballad that accompanies the film's opening scene, is not the only crisis faced by *High Noon's* hero. Marshal Kane is also abandoned by his newly-wed wife Amy (Grace Kelly), his former lover Helen (Katy Jurado), his deputy Harvey Pell (Lloyd Bridges) and the townsfolk who, intimidated by Frank Miller, constantly advise Kane himself to run. Kane relentlessly sustains his values and faces Miller and his three accomplices with no help from his fellow citizens. With the sole support of his wife, who in a last minute decision returns to his side, Kane defeats Frank Miller. As they leave town surrounded by the crowd of incredulous citizens, Kane performs the thereafter legendary gesture of throwing the tin star on the ground.

Matar ou Correr, directed by Carlos Manga, was released in 1954, two years after *High Noon*. The title (literally, 'kill or run') is a subversion of the film's translated title, *Matar ou Morrer* (Kill or Die),⁵¹ signalling the ease and creativity with which carnivalesque inversion can be promoted. *Matar ou Correr* begins with the film's *mocinho*, Bill (played by John Herbert) jumping off a cliff into a river to escape from criminals, who believe him to be dead. The spectators are then presented with the famous Brazilian double act, Oscarito and Grande Otelo, on the verge of being hanged for their con tricks. They are saved by Oscarito's character's wife-to-be, who claims his life to be able to marry him. Faced with her wrath, the community allows both to be freed. The duo immediately sets up another con, offering

50. Byman 2004, p. 145.

51. The title also unwittingly reverberates the English phrase 'fight or flight.'

everybody a somniferous drink, which enables them to escape. On the road again, they find Bill unconscious and take him back to his hometown, City Down, where Oscarito's character almost inadvertently manages to defeat the city's most feared villain, Jesse Gordon (played by José Lewgoy). As a reward for defeating Jesse Gordon, Kid Bolha (Oscarito's character) is offered a position as the city's sheriff with Ciscocada (Grande Otelo) as his deputy. City Down is suffering from a spate of robberies secretly organised by Bob (Renato Restier), which brings to town a government agent, Roy (Altair Vilar). Gordon is imprisoned but succeeds in escaping with the help of Bob. Like *High Noon*, it is a telegram that sets off the action, which then unfolds with Kid Bolha cowardly waiting for Jesse Gordon's train, followed by his repeated defeat of the villain — first by a lucky shot that disarms Gordon, and subsequently with the help of Bill and Roy. The film ends with Bill kissing his girlfriend Helen, Roy kissing the saloon's owner, Bela, and Kid Bolha and Ciscocada, in an attempt to kiss Gordon, kissing one another.

Director Carlos Manga reportedly watched *High Noon* six times before the production of the Brazilian parody,⁵² suggesting that the changes in relation to the original film are not gratuitous. Although some key elements of the plot refer directly to *High Noon* (including the final sequence of the showdown),⁵³ *Matar ou Correr* seems to establish itself in a dialogue not only with its source of inspiration, but also with the wider generic tradition of the Western. For example, with one notable exception (to be discussed below), the characters' names are not derived from *High Noon*; they are, however, of Anglo-Saxon origin ('Bill,'

52. Augusto 2005, p. 135.

53. As noted by Augusto 2005 (p. 153) and Vieira 1983 (p. 29).

'Roy,' 'Mr. Adams') and closely associated with the Western genre ('Ringo,' 'Kid' and 'Cisco'). Although *Matar ou Correr* is clearly a parody of *High Noon*, critics like João Luiz Vieira have argued that the main target of ridicule in the Brazilian parodies is not the original films with which they dialogue, but rather "[uma] sátira de si mesmo, criticando o próprio cinema brasileiro."⁵⁴ Indeed, the critique of national cinema seems to be performed rather self-consciously in some Brazilian parodies, including *Matar ou Correr*. Whereas in *High Noon* the villain arrives in town at twelve o'clock, in *Matar ou Correr* he arrives at two in the afternoon, the delay signifying a metaphor for the underdevelopment of Brazilian cinema in relation to Hollywood.⁵⁵ However, as any parody contains the potential for disruption and social critique, the analysis proposed here looks at how the Brazilian parody differs in terms of the representation of femininity, and particularly in relation to the portrayal of masculinity, in comparison to the ideals promoted by the Hollywood film. In relation to masculinity, the contrast between the two movies reveals different modes of coping with a burgeoning consumer culture and its demands on masculinity.

2.1.1 The Binaries of Femininity

Although *Matar ou Correr* does not feature carnivalesque musical numbers, it is still framed within the universe of carnival due to the carnivalesque strategies employed,⁵⁶ namely the

54. Vieira's argument continues, "[a]qui, a intenção primeira da paródia seria muito mais a capitalização dos resíduos de sucesso do modelo original do que a crítica ao seu discurso" (Vieira 1983, p. 22).

55. Augusto 2005, p. 153.

56. Vieira 1983, p. 25.

consistent application of the social principle of inversion.⁵⁷ Byman points out that *High Noon* itself promotes a series of inversions of Western clichés,⁵⁸ which seem to have paved the way for the inversions implemented in *Matar ou Correr*.

The original film is clearly inverted in regard to the female characters. Whereas in *High Noon* the female characters are named Amy and Helen, in *Matar ou Correr* their counterparts are called Helen and Bela, respectively. The *High Noon*'s heroine's name in French refers precisely to the official name of the Quakers ('amis', i.e. 'friends'),⁵⁹ and contrasts with the name of *Matar ou Correr*'s supporting female character, Bela. Whilst Amy's name reiterates her religious beliefs, Bela's overtly refers to her physical attributes — literally embodying her name — resulting in a cross-filmic counterposition between spiritual and earthly qualities.

A more elaborate inversion is seen in the case of Helen, the only name to be directly transposed to the Brazilian parody.⁶⁰ In Western literary tradition, 'Helen' signifies 'Helen of Troy' — woman as destroyer of civilisation — which is deeply involved in the virgin/whore binary and the mystical beauty of women as cause of devastation. *High Noon* might be responding to a long tradition of Helen characterisation dating back centuries.⁶¹ In *High*

57. DaMatta 1997, p. 169.

58. Examples are the beginning of the film with Kane and Amy's wedding (i.e. the conventional happy ending), the selfishness of the deputy, the townsfolk's moral ambivalence, the fact that Kane is helped by a wife committed to nonviolence, to name a few (Byman 2004, pp. 145-147).

59. Byman 2004, p. 129.

60. Laurie Maguire's chapter 'Shakespeare's Names' explores how the name Helen is used as parodic inversion in Shakespeare's comedies, and how name can act as a horizon of expectation within genre (and how methods of character development/naming necessarily differ between genres). If identity within a comedy stems from name and the act of naming, a parody will necessarily manipulate the power of name to create comedy, and it may do so quite self-consciously (Maguire 2007, pp. 74-119).

61. Shakespeare subverts it to further play with the virgin/whore stereotype in *All's Well That Ends Well*, working against audience expectation stemming from genre.

Noon, the character of Helen stands in stark contrast to Amy, Kane's newly-wed wife. Helen is played by Mexican Katy Jurado, who has black hair, dark eyes, and fleshy lips whilst Grace Kelly's Amy is fair-skinned and blonde. The contrast is further emphasised by their clothing throughout the film; Amy (having just wed) wears white dress and hat whereas Helen is seen in dark attire. This visual contrast is indeed reflective of a symbolic disparity — Amy is Kane's wife while Helen is his former lover.⁶² The virgin/whore binary, as well as other oppositions such as white-ethnic and us-other are therefore strongly established both visually and symbolically.

62. That the nature of Helen's bond with Kane is a sign of her moral decay (but not his, thus constituting a sexist double standard) is further hinted by the hotel manager, who says that she is now Harvey's 'friend,' and before Kane's, she was Frank Miller's.



High Noon's Amy (Grace Kelly) and Helen (Katy Jurado)



Matar ou Correr's Bela (Julie Bardot) and Helen (Inalda de Carvalho)

The visual contrast between *Matar ou Correr's* female characters, Helen and Bela, could at first suggest a symmetry with the two characters of *High Noon*, as indeed the Brazilian Helen, played by Inalda de Carvalho, has ebony hair and dark eyes in stark opposition to Julie Bardot's fairness. The carnivalesque inversion is again at play, as Carvalho's character should effectively be closer to that of Amy in *High Noon*. Unlike Jurado's character, and in line with Amy's moral, the Brazilian Helen is portrayed as respectable, as she constantly

attempts to deter Bill's flirtatious advances. Bela, on the other hand, is portrayed in a less virtuous light, also reinforcing the stereotypical link between blondness and prostitution in Brazil.⁶³ While Helen constantly reminds Bill of the presence of her father (thus qualifying her as a *moça de família* or a well-bred girl), Bela is not portrayed in the context of family values. Her moral ambivalence is emphasised by her job as a can-can dancer at the saloon, which is iterated throughout the film as a lawless site of violence, gambling, prostitution and crime. Furthermore, as we learn toward the middle of the film, she previously had an affair (with Roy) that did not result in marriage. Although much more understated than in *High Noon*, in the virgin/whore dichotomy, Bela would fall into the second category, which is that of Helen in the North American Western.⁶⁴ Although the dichotomy is presented, *Matar ou Correr's* carnivalesque stance complicates the virgin/whore dichotomy in a number of ways. In spite of the fact that it is hinted that Helen is morally more virtuous than Bela, they seem to share the role of the film's *mocinha*. They have approximately the same screen time devoted to the development of their stories and, most obviously, the film ends with their kissing their respective romantic partners. In *High Noon*, only the virgin Amy gets a happy ending (here signifying heterosexual coupling). The fact that Bela ends the film with Roy is nevertheless two-sided. If on the one hand it equates the whore and virgin figures, on the other it also serves as a means of regulating morally unacceptable conduct. The ennobled

63. Shaw and Dennison 2007, p. 168-169.

64. Also similar is the fact that both films' "ennobled whores" enjoy more independence than the virgins; they are financially independent businesswomen (Helen is a shop owner and Bela is Bob's partner in the saloon). *High Noon's* Helen is also independent and resolute in her decisions, as she rejects Harvey and leaves town by herself.

whore, who in *High Noon* ends up alone and therefore independent and free, in *Matar ou Correr* is domesticated in a heterosexual relationship.⁶⁵

The contrast between the female and male characters in *Matar ou Correr* is worthy of further scrutiny, having recognised that "[g]enerally it is understood that masculinity is a relational category that is established first in opposition to women as a gendered other and then [...] broken down into a more complex web of power relations with other men."⁶⁶ Just as in *High Noon*, the women in *Matar ou Correr* initially appear to be portrayed as peace-loving. For example, Bela expresses indignation at Gordon's killing rampage, and in the scene inside the wagon Helen discourages Bill from acting on the robberies. However, neither Helen nor Bela opposes the final confrontation with the villains; on the contrary, Helen is eager to join Bill in the climactic showdown:

Bill: Roy, vamos agir.

[Helen follows.]

Bill [to Helen]: Você não vai.

Helen: Eu vou.

Bill: Não, Helen, é melhor para você ficar. [She gets cross.] Promete que fica?

[She nods. He kisses her on the forehead. She pulls his face to hers and kisses him on the lips.]

In the face of violence, women are associated with passivity rather than pacifism, and men are clearly associated with activity ("Roy, vamos agir"). The fact that the men go outside while both Helen and Bela stay indoors quite literally locates masculinity (with its associated

65. The same regulatory strategy can be observed in a number of Hollywood movies of around the same time, including notable examples such as *Some Like it Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959) and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Blake Edwards, 1961). The latter remarkably features a cat, whose overemphasised importance in the final sequence hints at its signification as the couple's future offspring, thus completing the family portrait in the last shot of the movie.

66. McDonald 2006, p. 21.

aggression and activeness) as belonging to the public sphere while (passive) femininity is confined to the private space. The dialogue in the aforementioned scene also shows Bill's paternalistic attitude toward Helen, further emphasised by Roy in the scene's continuation. Roy's statement also suggests another prominent trait associated with femininity — the need for protection:

Roy: Bela, tome conta de Helen.

Bela: Tome cuidado, Roy.

Roy: Não se preocupe. Ciscocada, olha. [He hands Ciscocada a gun.] Tome conta das moças.

Ciscocada: [Ciscocada laughs out loud.] Pode deixar, Roy. Aqui só por cima do meu cadáver.

This scene clearly illustrates well the gender scale that the film constructs. As a *moça de família* engaged in domestic activities (she is first seen cleaning a window), Helen is the most stereotypically feminine character and therefore the one who most needs protecting; Helen is followed by Bela, who, as a businesswoman, shows greater degree of activity and independence. Although Ciscocada is not masculine enough to join the other men in fighting Gordon, his maleness (which, unlike his masculinity, does not seem to be questioned in the film) equips him to offer protection to the women.

2.1.2 The Carnavalesque Debasement of Masculinity

Analysing the cross-filmic inversions in relation to male characters is relevant due to the fact that at the heart of *High Noon*'s destabilisation there lies the figure of the Westerner. As director Fred Zinnemann has observed, "[t]he nervousness about subversion was perhaps not even political, but rather a subconscious worry that the classic myth of the fearless Western

hero... was in danger of being subverted. The marshal was not fearless, he was scared; he was not a mythical figure — he was human."⁶⁷

Matar ou Correr furthers *High Noon's* groundbreaking blow to the Western hero's constitution, and transforms him into a clown-like figure, whose fear is evident in virtually every scene. Whilst Marshal Kane himself shows vulnerability to the point of crying (which Byman argues is what is "[m]ost destructive to the code of all"),⁶⁸ he nevertheless maintains other traits that are strongly coded as masculine, such as bravery and honour, as the pervasive ballad in the opening sequence suggests. Perhaps one of the "most widely known and fondly remembered theme songs of all time,"⁶⁹ the lyrics by Ned Washington set in motion precise and overtly prescriptive values relative to masculinity, of which the most notable are the following lines:

If I'm a man I must be brave
And I must face that deadly killer
Or lie a coward, a craven coward,
Or lie a coward in my grave.

In a typical carnivalesque inversion, Kane's code of honour and courage is turned into a lack of principles, cowardice and fear, extravagantly enacted by Oscarito as Kid Bolha. This is evident in the sequence where Kid Bolha waits for Jesse Gordon's arrival; Oscarito's clownish faces, literally crying out for his *mamã* and his desperation, illustrated by his eating paper, culminates in a futile attempt to escape confrontation with the villain — literally trying to stop time by rewinding the clock.

67. Byman 2004, p.141.

68. Byman 2004, p. 152.

69. Allison 2003, n.p.

Illustrations of anthropophagic⁷⁰ appropriations in relation to the original film abound in *Matar ou Correr*. For example, the film's comic duo, played by Oscarito and Grande Otelo, are renamed. The two characters are initially named Humphrey and Bogart, respectively, as revealed publicly when Oscarito's character succeeds in capturing Jesse Gordon. As Oscarito and Grande Otelo say their characters' names (one straight after the other, clearly to maintain the connection with the name of the North American actor, hence the gag), the community distinctly disapproves. Humphrey is solemnly renamed, as Mr. Adams proclaims, "[m]eu amigo, de hoje em diante, deixará esse lugar comum para entrar na história com o nome de Kid Bolha." Festivities ensue. The choice of Humphrey Bogart's name is significant; one of the greatest stars of Hollywood, and indeed, considered by the American Film Institute the greatest male "American screen legend,"⁷¹ Bogart is an icon of North American cinema. In the ambivalent relation between the parody and its original (as well as the national and the foreign, and Brazilian national cinema and Hollywood), the foreign pole of the binary opposition is rejected. Nevertheless, the national is not fully embraced, as the English word 'Kid' is incorporated in the Oscarito character's new name, which thus constitutes a hybrid. In contrast to Will Kane's name, which clearly stands for fortitude and strong will, the new

70. Anthropophagy is the much cited concept devised by Modernist writer Oswald de Andrade in his 'Manifesto Antropófago' of 1928, in which Andrade advocates the metaphorical ingestion of foreign models "to forge a new synthesis that could be turned against the foreigner" (Stam 1997 [pp. 237]; for the original *Manifesto Antropófago*, see De Andrade 1972). Such an anthropophagic stance is seen in the film in regard to the characters' names. One of Jesse Gordon's accomplices, for example, is named Gringo. The character, however, is not North American but Mexican; he speaks Spanish and wears stereotypically Mexican attire. The word's connotation is thus destabilised due to its odd attribution; used by the Mexicans to refer pejoratively to North Americans, the word 'gringo' is assimilated as the name of a Mexican character. Yet another layer of meaning is added when considering that in Brazil the word 'gringo' usually refers to a foreigner of any nationality, not necessarily in a pejorative way. The complexity of the dynamics and friction between ideas involving foreign 'others' — as well as the relativity of such dynamics — is therefore foregrounded.

71. American Film Institute 1999, n.p.

name of Oscarito's character seems to signify the opposite. In spite of being a common Western nickname, 'kid' also emphasises the infantilisation of the character, and 'bolha', a slang term meaning "bobo, idiota,"⁷² demonstrates the difference between Kane and Bolha.

Another blatant example of an anthropophagic appropriation comes in relation to Grande Otelo's character, Bogart, renamed Ciscocada. A mixture of the iconic Cisco Kid, and 'cocada,' the typically Brazilian coconut confectionary,⁷³ the Grande Otelo character's new name is exemplary of the operation at play, for it encompasses both worlds in a continuum. The improvised renaming ceremony of Humphrey and Bogart at the saloon could hence be seen as the effective enactment of an anthropophagic baptism. Whilst anthropophagy is posed abstractly in the case of the characters' renaming, the dialogue that precedes it puts anthropophagy in rather explicit terms. As they capture Jesse Gordon, Humphrey and Bogart, in an ambivalent mixture between threat and play, yell:

Humphrey: Sabe o que eu vou fazer? Eu vou morder a orelha dele. [...]
 Bogart: Peraí, eu vou morder o nariz dele.
 Humphrey: Não, tu vai ficar gripado.

The anthropophagic processes at play serve to appropriate foreign culture in a way that is meaningful in Brazilian culture. The result of these appropriations reveals a typically carnivalesque debasement of the idealised masculinity portrayed by Will Kane. As the new names as well as their dialogue show, Kid Bolha and Ciscocada are constantly portrayed as

72. Da Silva 1974, p. 27.

73. Another interesting point regarding the character's name is that *cocada* is a distinctively white confectionary, which, combined with the fact that Grande Otelo is black, adds to the inversions at play within the carnivalesque framework of the film.

infantile. Infantilised comic characters are observed in other national cinemas, such as in *commedia all'italiana*, which developed in Italy roughly at the same time as the *chanchada*. As Maggie Günsberg has argued in relation to Italian cinema, the association between adult men and childhood, a notable period of lack of control (whether over others, the environment or oneself), indicates the denial of the desire to control which drives consumerism.⁷⁴

2.1.3 Infantilised Sexuality and Gender Performativity

In the universe of the film, transgressive gender acts are shown to result in transgressive sexual behaviour. Sérgio Augusto argues that in *Matar ou Correr* "Kid Bolha, o desastrado pistoleiro interpretado por Oscarito, que já não tinha a coragem, nem a pontaria, nem a honestidade do xerife imortalizado por Gary Cooper em *Matar ou Morrer*, perdeu também o direito à mocinha."⁷⁵ Furthering Augusto's argument, it is precisely because Kid Bolha does not have Kane's *coragem*, *pontaria* and *honestidade* — metonyms for the macho archetype of the cowboy — that he loses the *mocinha*. Not only is Kid Bolha unable to pair up with Helen but, most notably, he ends the film kissing Ciscocada, who equally lacks masculine traits. It seems that by missing the attributes that qualify him as masculine, Kid Bolha also loses the

74. Günsberg 2005, p. 71

75. Augusto 2005, p. 135. The sexist subtext of this affirmation should be noted. The wording itself — the 'right' to a girl — is a distant echo of the concept of women as exchangeable property, which is at the basis of patriarchal societies.

attributes to qualify as sexually active.⁷⁶ Also in regard to the comic duo's sexuality, it is relevant to note that Kid Bolha presents infantilised sexuality; as much as Kid Bolha seems to be interested in women, he is portrayed as a curious child rather than a sexually active man. When he enters the saloon, for example, he shows satisfaction as two women approach him; however, he does not interact with them except for lifting the skirt of one of them. Having had a peek at her ankle, he childishly skips away. However infantilised, in the case of Kid Bolha, desire is minimally presented, whereas the same would not hold true in the case of Ciscocada. Likely due to racial anxieties,⁷⁷ the film enacts the complete effacement of Ciscocada's sexuality.

It should also be noted, however, that the comicality of the Grande Otelo and Oscarito characters is to normative gender as poetic license is to fiction. If McGillis argues that even in B Westerns "no one would accuse (the operative word here) [the cowboys] of homosexuality"⁷⁸ in *Matar ou Correr* such a troubling association is enabled through, and neutralised by, laughter. In B Westerns, "[a]ny hint of homosexuality attaches instead to the bad guys or in some cases the swishy sidekick,"⁷⁹ in *Matar our Correr* the hint of

76. In regard to the bandits, Bob is portrayed as unambiguously heterosexual due to his interest in Bela. Indeed, in his introductory scene Bob is shown forcefully holding Bela, who slaps him to get away. Jesse Gordon, on the other hand, does not seem particularly interested in women; there is no reaction from him during the can-can dance (which appears to be quite stimulating for Ringo and Gringo, for example). His sexuality is therefore subtly ambivalent, as suggested by the final kiss, which was actually intended for him. Not much emphasis is given to his sexual ambivalence and, as literally portrayed in the final scene, Jesse Gordon slips away from the taint of homoeroticism.

77. Grande Otelo, who had a long career in Brazilian cinema, participating in more than one hundred films, was finally able to kiss a white woman on screen in 1973 (Stam 1997, p. 253). Race would be at the core of later North American satirical Western comedies, as the notable example of *Blazing Saddles* (Mel Brooks, 1974), featuring a (completely marginalised) black sheriff, shows.

78. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that the latent possibility of homosexuality is finally enacted in Ang Lee's 2005 *Brokeback Mountain*.

79. McGillis 2009, p. 88.

homosexuality can attach to Kid Bolha and Ciscocada precisely because they are the comic duo inserted in the universe of carnival. Comic distortion enables them to act in deeply disruptive ways without effectively disrupting gender norms, conveniently transferred to the characters of Bill and Roy. Indeed, the final scene with the three kisses is highly revelatory in that regard; for the disruptive same-sex kiss between the two comic characters there are two heterosexual kisses placed within the traditional *mocinho-mocinha* framework. As McGillis points out, "[w]e can take pleasure in something a little bit transgressive."⁸⁰

Given that cowboys wear their masculinity,⁸¹ one index of Kid Bolha and Ciscocada's disruptive gender acts is their cowboy outfits. That clothing can provide interesting insights regarding gender is the argument of Roderick McGillis, who supports that cowboys "performed masculinity, and their costumes were as much part of their messages as were the plots in which they found themselves performing."⁸²

80. McGillis 2009, p. 98.

81. McGillis 2009, p. 89.

82. McGillis 2009, p. 86.



Ciscocada and Kid Bolha skirt-like chaps



Kid Bolha and Ciscocada's oversized hats



Kid Bolha and his gloves

The stills from *Matar ou Correr* show Kid Bolha and Ciscocada's extravagant chaps, arguably resembling skirts; oversized hats worn in particularly odd fashion by Oscarito, and gloves, an item of clothing commonly associated with femininity. Special emphasis is given to Kid Bolha's gloves having seen that, in the sequence depicted above, Oscarito puts his gloves on and takes them off no less than three times in the space of four minutes.⁸³ McGillis develops his thesis of the B Western cowboys as camp figures, whose "clothes bespeak queerness, [reminding] us of cross-dressing and drag,"⁸⁴ and concludes:

The elaborately tooled boots, the large and loud spurs, the shirts with fringe and embroidery, the chaps, the gun belts, the scarves, the stitched pants, and the huge hats are the stuff of extravagance.[...] What does it say about gender? At the very least, we have here a reminder of the fetish, cross-dressing, and ambiguous manhood.⁸⁵

In *Matar ou Correr*, such disruptive gender acts (the "ambiguous manhood" that McGillis observes) displace Ciscocada and Kid Bolha to the realm of the feminine. As the film clearly

83. Costumes are also significant to Brazilian cowboys, as seen in the case of legendary *cangaceiro* Virgulino Lampião's fashionable attire.

84. McGillis 2009, p. 93.

85. McGillis 2009, p. 100.

illustrates, they stay indoors during most of the showdown scene, thus being equated to the female characters. Similar to the B Western cowboys that McGillis analyses, Ciscocada and Kid Bolha "present an image of masculinity that has a visible feminine side."⁸⁶

McGillis further argues that the extravagance of the B Westerner's clothes are "one of the most obviously parodic elements of these films."⁸⁷ The relation between gender, clothing and parody is also postulated by Judith Butler, who argues that drag amounts to a parody of the "construction of a primary and interior gendered self."⁸⁸ Butler's reflection on drag seems applicable to Ciscocada and Kid Bolha's costumes, as their grotesque excessiveness potentially hints at the fictionality of the very notion of the cowboy's masculinity. For Bakhtin, just as for Butler, the barrier between 'inside' and 'outside' is artificial and the two are, in fact, inter-permeable.⁸⁹ It should be noted, however, that the critique provided by the costumes is not likely to be directed at the original model (the A Western cowboy), but rather at the incompetence of the copy. As per Vieira, Kid Bolha and Ciscocada's clothes would signify less of a mockery of the cowboys' masculinity than their own inappropriateness in wearing 'serious' cowboy outfits. This is also suggested in an earlier scene when Ciscocada, in dialogue with Kid Bolha, says he will buy "uma roupa de Tom Mix;" Tom Mix here stands as the 'real' cowboy in opposition to the carnivalised infantilised 'versions' that are Kid Bolha and Ciscocada.

86. McGillis 2009, p. 101.

87. McGillis 2009, p. 91.

88. Butler 1999, p. 188.

89. Stam 1989, p. 20.

The result nevertheless seems challenging as the oddness of the costumes (however unintentionally) places emphasis on the fabrication of the original itself. This seems rather evident when Ciscocada is first seen wearing his new cowboy costume. He barges into the saloon shooting his gun and shouts "Ah, vaqueiro!" At the end of a short monologue, hyperbolically deepening his voice, he says (in reference to Jesse Gordon): "O dia que eu topar com esse cara, vou lhe rasgar o cartaz." Shooting and feigning a deep voice as he asserts violence, the Otelo character is clearly parodying phallic masculinity. Although the comic effect is less due to a mockery of phallic masculinity than to Ciscocada's unsuitability to embody it (quite literally, due to Grande Otelo's diminutive stature), the result is still destabilising considering that, "[a]s imitations which effectively displace the meaning of the original, they imitate the myth of originality itself."⁹⁰

2.1.4 Masculinity in Crisis: *Malandragem*

While Wendy Peek argues that the cowboy's masculinity is usually interpreted by critics as "crisis, tension, conflict, and ambiguity,"⁹¹ Bill and Roy's masculinity seems not to signify "static paradoxes that can find no resolution,"⁹² but rather the embodiment of a different ideal to that of the North American cowboy. In a country with no tradition of Western per se,⁹³ *Matar ou Correr* appropriates the genre and creates a different kind of cowboy, one that

90. Butler 1999, p. 188.

91. Peek 2003, p. 7.

92. Peek 2003, p. 15.

93. The *cangaço* film could potentially be seen as a cannibalised local version of the Western, as per Dídimo 2010.

expands the categories of the traditional Western. As Peek proposes, "[t]he hero of the postwar Western is thus redefining ideal masculinity as he transgresses the limitations of ideal, phallic masculinity to create, per accidens, a new model of ideal masculinity that incorporates all manner of behaviors, provided they lead to male success."⁹⁴ The double act as well as the *mocinhos* of *Matar ou Correr* seem to further transgress the limitations of the phallic masculinity of the cowboy to define ideal masculinity, thus creating a new model — one that incorporates *malandragem*.

Shaw and Dennison define the *malandro* as "a street-wise hustler, often of mixed race, who evades the law and the world of work in favour of a life of petty crime, gambling, womanising and drinking."⁹⁵ Kid Bolha and Ciscocada epitomise all the characteristics cited here by Shaw and Dennison, with the telling exception of womanising. As discussed above, the film presents an infantilised Kid Bolha and a Ciscocada whose sexuality is expunged, thus contradicting one of the key characteristics of the *malandro*. The *malandro* is often a highly sexualised figure and one which, not incidentally, is strongly associated with carnival — in itself a highly sexually-charged festivity. Although DaMatta situates the *malandro* as the symbol of carnival, he emphasises his stance in regard to the law rather than to sexuality:

No Rio de Janeiro, o símbolo do carnaval é o *malandro*, isto é, o personagem deslocado. De fato, o malandro não cabe nem dentro da ordem nem fora dela: vive nos seus interstícios, entre a ordem e a desordem, utilizando ambas e nutrindo-se tanto dos que estão fora quanto dos que estão dentro do mundo quadrado da estrutura.⁹⁶

94. Peek 2003, p. 5.

95. Shaw and Dennison 2007, p. 189.

96. DaMatta 1997, p. 172 and 263.

Although the *malandro* in his original incarnation encompasses the characteristics cited by Shaw and Dennison, it seems that there are a variety of *malandros*,⁹⁷ or, in other words, that *malandragem* is a more or less fluid concept with shifting meanings over time. The *malandro* of the turn of the century is associated with Afro-Brazilians (to the point that his existence was once seen as a proof that Afro-Brazilians could not adapt to a post-slavery economy),⁹⁸ but, as Marc Hertzman points out, by the 1940s the *malandro* was portrayed as white as a means of assimilating fears toward black sexuality.⁹⁹ However fluid, it seems that the *malandro's* archetypal form encompasses three spheres, namely that of sexuality, race and work. Albeit constituent, these traits have been reconfigured over time in order to embody changing ideals.¹⁰⁰ Expanding upon Robert Stam's argument that the *malandro* transcends "racial definition, constituting archetypes incarnated as well by other, nonblack actors,"¹⁰¹ the *malandro* also transcends sexual affirmation in the form of womanising, for example. Indeed, the iconicity of this figure seems to be generated precisely by its constant reworkings and resignifications, thus being transferred to a variety of contexts. From his genesis as an African descendent until his associations with the samba songs in the 1930s, he later became not only white, but also *paulista*,¹⁰² female,¹⁰³ a transvestite,¹⁰⁴ and has had his sexuality underplayed, as in the case of Kid Bolha and Ciscocada.

97. Ciscati 2001, p. 27.

98. Hertzman 2010, p. 594.

99. Hertzman 2010, p. 619.

100. On the appropriation of the figure of the *malandro* by the ruling class, see Oliven 1984 (pp. 107-109).

101. Stam 1997, p. 103.

102. Ciscati 2001, pp. 17-18.

103. Fonseca 2003, p. 70.

104. Da Silva 2009, pp. 81-83.

In regard to the double act, their masculinity is by no means associated to moral righteousness. Unlike Marshal Kane, "a man of principle who lives by that principle no matter what,"¹⁰⁵ Grande Otelo and Oscarito's characters make a living out of minor crimes and con tricks (*golpes*). Although DaMatta suggests that a *malandro* may become a *bandido*, the latter differs considerably from the former in *Matar ou Correr*. While the *malandro* inhabits the space between law and chaos (profiting from both), the *bandido* has evidently crossed the line to the side of lawlessness. As *Matar ou Correr* clearly portrays, Kid Bolha and Ciscocada can be conned as well as lawmen whilst Jesse Gordon (killing people at will) and Bob (planning and performing robberies) are unequivocal bandits. Furthermore, as Grande Otelo and Oscarito brilliantly demonstrate, the *malandro* has a ludic side that stands in opposition to the aggression and bullying of the bandits. In that regard, the insults used by Kid Bolha and Ciscocada in the scene where they catch the villain are revealing:

Kid Bolha: Bruto, antipático...
 Ciscocada: Chama ele de feio.
 Kid Bolha: Chama tu.
 Ciscocada: Seu feio! [sticks his tongue out]
 Kid Bolha: Feio.

While Gordon's looks ("feio") oppose him to the "tall, fair, muscular, and straight-backed" *mocinho*, his brutality and *antipatia* oppose him both to the *mocinho* and to the *malandro*. Lastly, and as a result of these elements, *bandidos* are not likeable — *simpatia* being another tenet of Brazilian culture.¹⁰⁶ His masculinity, however, is affirmed (primarily in opposition to

105.Byman 2004, p. 125.

106.As per Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's thesis on the cordial man: "To define the human substrate of Brazilian society, Sergio advanced his disputed notion of the 'cordial man.' By cordiality he meant neither the calculated leniency of patrons soothing their workers nor elaborated rituals of politeness (e.g., English or Japanese) that disguised or repressed private feelings. Brazilians, Sergio felt, were averse to ritual" (Morse 1995, p. 54).

women), as Ciscocada clarifies minutes earlier in the aforementioned scene, "Ele é valente lá pras nega dele."

While Jesse Gordon's masculinity is not questioned, there is a scene in which Bob's maleness seems to be at stake:

Bela: Jesse já está passando da conta, é preciso tomar uma providência.

Bob: Por que você não toma uma providência? Não somos sócios?

Bela: E quem é o homem da sociedade?

Rather than challenging the unequivocalness of the sex dichotomy, Bela's question demonstrates that in the universe of the film maleness and masculinity conflate. As the word *macho* in Portuguese literally means 'biological male' for animals, anatomy functions as a metonym for gender. The interchangeability between the two notions demonstrates that the film relies on the notion of anatomical sex as a stable and indisputable binary that is not dissociable from its normative 'corresponding' gender. By suggesting that Bob is failing to be a man, Bela means that he fails to perform what is expected according to a hegemonic model of masculinity, e.g. lacking assertiveness and a confrontational attitude. Bela's sentence is also interestingly ambiguous. *E quem é o homem da sociedade?* can be understood as "And who is the man of the partnership," i.e. their partnership in owning the saloon; or, more abstractly but equally possible, 'And who is the man in this society?' The latter could potentially be symptomatic of the film's historical context, in which gender roles were being resignified.¹⁰⁷

107. As per Besse 1996. For a detailed discussion on the changing gender roles at the time of the *chanchadas*, see Chapter 2.2 on *Garotas e Samba*.

As DaMatta argues, what qualifies the *malandro* first and foremost seems to be the evasion of work and his particular relationship with the law (bending it whilst profiting from it). Just as samba (the medium for earlier manifestations of the *malandro*) was assimilated as commercial merchandise,¹⁰⁸ so does the *malandro* appear to have been domesticated. Ciscati argues that the *malandro* becomes a new type of worker, thus losing his highly subversive work-evading ethos.¹⁰⁹ In *Matar ou Correr* the "disciplinarisation of the *malandro*"¹¹⁰ is hinted at as Kid Bolha and Ciscocada turn into working lawmen. However, just as "everything is pregnant with its opposite"¹¹¹ in carnival, closure is denied and Ciscocada constantly reminds us that they can flee at any time while Kid Bolha stresses that they need to stay — but only to cash the cheque they were given.¹¹² As argued by Maggie Günsberg in the context of *commedia all'italiana*, "[b]y stealing products, rather than earning money to buy them, [the male protagonists] subvert capitalism, both side-stepping and diverting the 'correct' flow of capital from labour power to consumer power."¹¹³

Although Vieira points out that the parody is limited to the double act while other characters are portrayed 'seriously' and reproduce "o tipo representado nos moldes conhecidos pelo público (o galã, o mocinho, os vilões, etc),"¹¹⁴ close analysis shows that, to a lesser extent, moments of comedy are also attributed to the *mocinhos*. The most notable example is perhaps the scene in the wagon, when Bill roguishly pretends to be in pain in order to embrace Helen.

108. Salvadori cited in Ciscati 2001 (p. 24).

109. Ciscati 2001, p. 23-24.

110. Ciscati 2001, p. 23-24.

111. Stam 2000, p. 156.

112. It is interesting to note that the *malandro* category is not fixed but rather relational. Kid Bolha exemplifies this well, as he is a *malandro* in relation to the townsfolk (fooling them into his con tricks), but in comparison to Ciscocada he would represent the *malandro*'s opposite counterpart, the *otário*.

113. Günsberg 2005, p. 70.

114. Vieira 1983, p. 26.



Bill roguishly pretends to be in pain

Also amusing is the scene in which Bill makes several attempts to kiss the resistant Helen while serenading her.



While serenading Helen, Bill attempts to steal a kiss
five times in less than two minutes

In postwar Westerns, singing is not associated with seriousness, as seen in *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956) with the character of Charlie MacCorry and his guitar providing comic relief. Moreover, whereas *High Noon*'s hero is tough, inarticulate and completely unable to explain his motivation to the film's heroine, Bill seems expressive and eloquent when serenading Helen. Also contrasting with *High Noon* (which begins with Kane and Amy's sanctifying their union) are Bill's overt sexual advances toward Helen with no mention of marriage.

Bill's roguish attitude towards Helen seems to be a symptom of a more complex stance, not only in relation to courtship. At least in these scenes where Bill is shown as a loveable rogue, he is approximated to the figure of the *malandro*. Even the character of Roy, the government agent, mostly portrayed as stiff and righteous, reveals his share of *malandragem*. After being knocked unconscious by Gringo, Roy wakes up to find the villain Bob also lying unconscious in the room. Roy realises Bob is waking up and, instead of confronting him face-to-face, feigns prolonged unconsciousness to catch Bob off guard. As an act of pliable integrity, this appears to be constituent of the repertoire of the *malandro* rather than the Westerner's etiquette.¹¹⁵ These acts, however marginal, are significant because both Roy and Bill embody the stock character of the *mocinho*, thus representing the ideal of masculinity in the film.

In the environment of Brazilian culture, Bill and Roy's *malandragem* does not figure as challenging. That the wagon scene is the first where Bill and Helen appear together (and the third in which Bill appears at all) suggests that this type of behaviour was not deemed morally unacceptable and consequently did not hinder spectators' empathy. Indeed, as Shaw and Dennison observe, "[t]he ethos of *malandragem* permeates Brazilian popular culture and is often referred to as an unofficial tenet of national identity."¹¹⁶

DaMatta points out that *malandragem* comprises a sliding scale, i.e.

115. Although this is the sole case in which Roy demonstrates this kind of behaviour, it is still significant considering that his character effectively appears only half way through the film.

116. Shaw and Dennison 2007, p. 189.

numa gradação, da malandragem socialmente aprovada e vista entre nós como esperteza e vivacidade, ao ponto mais pesado do gesto francamente desonesto. É quando o malandro corre o risco de deixar de viver do jeito e do expediente para viver dos golpes, virando então um autêntico *marginal* ou *bandido*.¹¹⁷

Bill and Roy — who use their *esperteza* and *vivacidade* in ways that are not only socially approved but also applauded — are placed at the top of the scale, and indeed, the instances in which they use their 'street smarts' are portrayed as jocularly satisfying. Further down the spectrum are Kid Bolha and Ciscocada, both of whom make a living from their *golpes*. *Matar ou Correr*, however, does not portray them as *bandidos*, but rather as likeable *malandros*. The films' real bandits significantly lack any trait of *malandragem*, suggesting that the model of masculinity promoted by the film necessarily encompasses *malandragem*, often portrayed as puerile.

2.1.5 Parodies

Butler's conclusion regarding drag seems applicable both to gender and to *Matar ou Correr* as a parodic film in broader terms:

[p]arody itself is not subversive, and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony.¹¹⁸

In relation to the *chanchadas*, Augusto argues that "a paródia revelou-se uma válvula de escape de eficácia limitada,"¹¹⁹ and it would indeed appear naïve to interpret *Matar ou Correr*

117. DaMatta 1997, p. 269.

118. Butler 1999, p. 189.

119. Augusto 2005, p. 151.

as a radically subversive film as it "reafirma, de todas as maneiras, a superioridade do cinema americano."¹²⁰ Nevertheless, "[p]ractices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the very distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration and one that appears as derived, phantasmatic, and mimetic — a failed copy, as it were."¹²¹ While some critics have emphasised the fact that Kid Bolha is a failed copy of Will Kane (and indeed that *Matar ou Correr* is a failed copy of *High Noon*), I would argue that, in relation to gender, the copy signals its own failure as much as it serves to signify the original's fictionality. *Matar ou Correr* seems to rather self-consciously mock the ideals of masculinity that were seminally destabilised by *High Noon*. As a film that subverted the genre of the Western as well as masculinity itself, the gesture of *High Noon*'s Will Kane throwing the tin star on the ground metaphorically stands for the negation of hegemonic postwar masculinity, as argued by Peek. If in 1971 Clint Eastwood throws his badge into a pond in homage to Kane,¹²² in 1954 Oscarito's character polishes the tin star in *Matar ou Correr*, a gesture that is, above all, mocking and ironic.

120. Vieira 1983, p. 26.

121. Butler 1999, p. 200.

122. Byman 2004 (p. 161-162) in reference to *Dirty Harry* (Don Siegel, 1971).



Kid Bolha polishes his badge

In dialogue with *High Noon*, Oscarito's badge also stands for the tin star that was thrown on the ground by Marshall Kane; Oscarito's extravagance in polishing it is amusing precisely due to the meaninglessness of the ideals for which it stands — both regarding masculinity (the Westerner's etiquette) and regarding work (the *malandro's* cynical attitude toward the institution that employs him). As Byman argues, following *High Noon's* violent refusal to the values of the Western it became impossible to make a 'serious' reworking of it, thus generating the kitsch of spaghetti and B Westerns. Many films have promoted this kind of mockery,¹²³ but *Matar ou Correr* did it particularly early on.

The fact that Ciscocada and Kid Bolha bear no resemblance to the Brazilian cowboy equivalent (conceivably the *cangaceiro*, the Brazilian North-eastern *vaqueiro* or the Southern *gaúcho*) reveals the purely imitative character of their performance. The film is therefore

123. Indeed, the British comedy *Carry On Cowboy* (Gerald Thomas) was still alluding to *High Noon* as late as 1965.

highly Brazilian, yet paradoxically stems from the Western tradition. By only embracing some aspects of Brazilian culture while parodically reworking the Hollywood depiction of the cowboy, *Matar ou Correr* critiques the US cowboy's unaffected masculinity. Whether "[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself — as well as its contingency,"¹²⁴ in imitating the US cowboy, the Brazilian parody, however inadvertently, emphasises the performance implied in the cowboy's masculinity (as Otelo deepens his voice to express aggressiveness) as well as its contingency — and, indeed, the sterile coolness of the North American cowboy morphs into the lively *malandragem* of the Brazilian *vaqueiro*.

By carnivalising and 'ingesting' *High Noon* and the established genre of the Western, *Matar ou Correr* promotes a Brazilian model of masculinity, remarkably only two years after the original film. The virgin/whore roles are not only inverted across the two films but, most importantly, equated in *Matar ou Correr*. Not only does the marshal become a clown, he also challenges normative sexual behaviour — although the final kiss between the comic duo is somewhat neutralised by the two heterosexual couples, it is nevertheless "a kiss that probably would have provoked paroxysms of racialized homophobia in the Hollywood of the same period."¹²⁵ Despite the fact that the ideal masculinity of the Westerner is transferred to the secondary characters of Bill and Roy, it is subtly altered. If on the one hand some attributes such as bravery and activeness are maintained, on the other the cowboy's inarticulacy and toughness are substituted by *simpatia* and suaveness, as the cowboy acquires the taint of the

124. Butler 1999, p. 187.

125. Stam 1997, p. 92.

malandro. If the film encourages "uma gargalhada à sua incompetência,"¹²⁶ such a *gargalhada* is vigorous, creative, innovative, and contains at least the seed of subversion.

This subversion, however, is not in relation to the Hollywood film itself, as the *chanchadas* catered exclusively to the Brazilian audience. The two films represent turning points in the relationship between gender and capitalism. In the postwar boom setting, Will Kane symbolises control, will power and individualism, characteristics that need to be fundamentally promoted for mass consumption. As consumption was no longer related to mere subsistence, in the beginnings of a liberal capitalist model of production and consumption, Kane's rebelliousness against the institution and against his townsfolk is a promotion of individual values — and the value of the individual — over the State and the community. Kane therefore updates the stoic, unemotional macho archetype, which would later develop into the action hero, epitomised by expressionless Rambo and Terminator. In contrast with this model, the masculinity portrayed in *Matar ou Correr* could not be anything but critical parody. Against the backdrop of a nascent consumerist culture and its consequent pressure on the (male) breadwinner, the model of masculinity promoted by these characters evades its demands with *malandragem*, both in relation to work and to women, in the form of womanising. As this analysis has demonstrated, both in terms of gender and sexuality, the masculinity portrayed by the male characters in this *chanchada* is infantilised, inconsequent and thieving.

126. Vieira 1983, p. 29.

2.2 *Garotas e Samba*: Money over Love

The changes taking place in the early 20th century had an impact not only the way masculinity was represented on film but also femininity. The 19th century saw a transition in the household paradigm, from self-sufficient rural families to urban "units of consumption,"¹²⁷ and by the 1920s, the middle classes had "succumbed to the pressures of conspicuous consumption."¹²⁸ As part of the redefinition of gender roles in the 1950s, this consumerist culture created increasing demands on masculinity, as discussed in the previous section, and a closer relationship between femininity and consumption.

Cinema as a modern phenomenon plays a pivotal role in boosting consumerism, as "[t]here is a longstanding link between the screen and the shop window, enhanced by press-books and posters, with the construction of the spectating self mirroring the appearance and lifestyle of the stars in materialist terms of buying clothes, cosmetics, cars and furnishings."¹²⁹ This broader link between cinema and consumption is underscored by Brazilian films of the 1950s with a rather self-conscious promotion of consumer culture, reflecting the rapid industrialisation process set in motion during the Vargas Era. As Dennison and Shaw have stated, "[c]onspicuous and vulgar consumption [was...] applauded on screen, in a satirical response to the aspirational living of the 1950s and the consumerism promoted in Hollywood movies of this era."¹³⁰ More than a "satirical response," Brazilian popular films of the time

127. Besse 1996, p. 18.

128. Besse 1996, p. 19.

129. Günsberg 2005, p. 61.

130. Dennison and Shaw 2004, p. 84.

found in humour a means of coping with these rapid changes and elaborating new paradigms for both genders, with love and marriage as symbolic battleground for the power struggles between men and women.

The women's movement was very active in Brazil in the early 20th century, but its gains were limited. Although claims to female suffrage date back at least as far as 1919, when Bertha Lutz became director of the *Federação Brasileira para o Progresso Feminino* (FBPF),¹³¹ the right to vote was in fact secured for women as late as 1932.¹³² However, as most Brazilian women had not gained access to educational and professional opportunities, the right to vote, which still had literacy as a requirement, did not cause a significant change in the lives of the vast majority of Brazilian women.¹³³ Furthermore, with the dissolution of the legislature in 1937 by Getúlio Vargas and the establishment of the Estado Novo, a populist dictatorship, no one could vote for another eight years. Due to the bourgeois nature of the FBPF, it was alien for the majority of women, lacking the grassroots support necessary for radical cultural

131. Women had individually claimed the right to vote before that, since the late 19th century (Pinto 2003, p. 15). Pinto dubs Lutz's feminism as "bem-comportado," in opposition to other more radical forms that existed concomitant to it (p. 10).

132. With the FBPF the struggle for female suffrage became organised, but individual demands for the right to vote can be found as far back as 1891, in carnival *marchas*: "As mulheres votam: propaganda prática e animada por espirituosos tribunos, no intuito de dar à mulher o que só tem sido dos homens / Discutiu-se ardentemente e é crença de muita gente que dê lá por onde der o que ao homem se garante não se negue doravante à mulher / Mas que o voto lhe assegure aparte o exército e o júri tanto quanto se puder / Já num discurso inspirado disse isso o Costa Machado da mulher / Que o voto se lhe permita, mas (exceção esquisita de quem tal reforma quer) que não seja recrutada nem para o júri sorteada a mulher / Porém o exemplo palpável vivo, claro, incontestável diga o Zama o que disser. Em resumo disso eu noto que há assim de ser o voto da mulher" (Ferreira 1995, pp. 156-157).

133. Besse 1996, p. 165.

change.¹³⁴ Confronted with the strong anti-feminist social stance and the installation of the Estado Novo, the still fledgling feminist movement was neutralised.¹³⁵

The 1950s was then a rather uneventful decade for the history of the feminist movement in Brazil, as the turmoil of the first decades of the 20th century had settled maintaining the fundamental gender asymmetries. Nonetheless, as the films of the period demonstrate, the memory of the women's emancipatory movement was still present, despite the fact that its threat to the status quo had been largely neutralised (to reemerge in the 1970s).¹³⁶ In a moment of resolution following a period of social and cultural crisis, the relative lull of the 1950s enabled films to portray the otherwise unsettling figure of the strong-willed, unruly woman in a relatively unsettling manner.

A paradigmatic film in relation to this change in culture, and one which has been little studied,¹³⁷ is *Garotas e Samba* (Carlos Manga, 1954). By focusing on three women in search of better opportunities in the city, the film addresses the modern issues of its time with particular interest in their impact on the lives of women. As most films were made by men, the focus on women reveals femininity and female sexuality as signs to cope with anxieties related to masculinity. As Günsberg argues in relation to Italian films of around the same time:

134. Besse 1996, p. 165.

135. Besse 1996, p. 165. For the dismantling of the political power of FBPF, see Besse 1996 (pp. 174-175). For other, more radical, feminist currents of the time, see Pinto 2003 (pp. 33-39).

136. Pinto 2003, p. 49.

137. Shaw 2001, p. 17.

In this context of intensified commodification of social relations, the subversive possibilities inherent in the comic genre [...] rub against the status quo of patriarchal ideology, which continues to construct femininity as an arena for relations between men, with the commodification of female sexuality as the basis of these relations.¹³⁸

Garotas e Samba tells the story of three migrant women arriving in Rio de Janeiro in search of better life opportunities. Zizi (Sônia Mamede), Didi (Adelaide Chiozzo) and Naná (Renata Fronzi) meet in a boarding house run by Dona Inocência (Zezé Macedo), where they share their stories. Zizi, who ran away from an arranged marriage to try to become a radio star, blackmails radio producer Charlô (Ivon Curi) while avoiding his jealous girlfriend Ninon Ervilha (Berta Loran). Didi is a country girl who, due to family pressure, comes to the city to work on the radio as a singer and accordion player. In the course of the film, Didi is tricked by Belmiro Cheiroso (Jece Valadão) and saved by the *mocinho* Sérgio Carlos (Francisco Carlos). The third protagonist is Naná, a gold digger of unknown origin. Naná becomes involved with millionaire Memé (Zé Trindade), married to the frightful Jocelina (Suzy Kirby) and the father of Sérgio Carlos. The film ends with the three couples formed during the film: Zizi and Charlô, Didi and Sérgio Carlos and Naná and Zizi's abandoned husband (played by actor Pituca), after he inherits a large family endowment. As implied by the title, the focus of the film is on the female characters, the *garotas*. Touching on two crucial issues during the historical moment the film was shot, namely migration (to the then capital Rio de Janeiro) and the resignification of gender roles, the story of three female migrants seems to have caught the public's attention. Although official box office figures are not available for the

138. Günsberg 2005, p. 62.

period, *Garotas e Samba* was recorded by the press as having had a record-breaking audience, making more than seven million *cruzeiros* at its opening.¹³⁹

Garotas e Samba is loosely based on Jean Negulesco's *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), also about three women — mastermind Schatze Page (Lauren Bacall), intrepid Loco Dempsey (Betty Grable) and scatterbrained Pola Debevoise (Marilyn Monroe) — with the common mission of finding a wealthy husband. Led by Schatze, they rent a penthouse in New York City and make a living by selling the flat's furniture. After several frustrated attempts at getting engaged to oil barons and bankers, Loco and Pola end the film with far from affluent men: mountain ranger Eben (Rory Calhoun) and IRS-indebted Freddie Denmark (David Wayne), respectively. Schatze pursues their original plan further, but abandons multi-millionaire J.D. Hanley (William Powell) at the altar, as she too has fallen in love. The recipient of her affections is Tom Brookman (Cameron Mitchell), whom Schatze believes to be penniless throughout the film. The film ends with the three couples in a diner eating hamburgers, when Brookman finally reveals to his new wife that he is in fact a multi-millionaire. The three women faint and the men celebrate the victory of love over money.

There are several similarities between the two films, starting with the fact that they are both set against the backdrop of major urban centres and present a tribute to the big cities where they take place. *How to Marry a Millionaire*'s opening sequence consists of long shots of New York City underscored by Ken Darby's lyrics: "Glorious, glamorous wonderland, New

139. Andréa Zenaide's *Cinelândia* article cited in Dias 1993 (p. 14).

York." While *Garotas e Samba* does not make explicit reference to Rio de Janeiro,¹⁴⁰ it nonetheless taps into the mystique of the city as the country's picturesque *Belacap*,¹⁴¹ well illustrated in the scene where Naná goes to a country club (filmed at the glamorous Hotel Glória) with Memé.



Memé and Naná in Rio

As the footage shows, not only is Rio de Janeiro present as background scenario, but it is also referenced in Naná's swim suit, which resembles the pattern of the Copacabana promenade. The connection between women and the city echoes the metaphors of women as the nation, as discussed in the introduction, and suggests that both are sites of desire, open for exploration.

140. As seen in several Atlântida *chanchadas*, such as *Os Dois Ladrões* (Carlos Manga, 1960) in which Oscarito revels in the beauty of the city or *Esse Milhão é Meu* (Carlos Manga, 1959) with a long drive with Rio as background, to name a few.

141. Short for 'Bela Capital,' as Rio de Janeiro was the capital of Brazil from the proclamation of independence in 1822 until the construction of Brasília in 1960.

Another similarity between the two films is the fact that the female protagonists take their destinies into their own hands in order to achieve their goal. Although all the female protagonists in the two films are shown to be independent, this is presented to varying degrees of agency, from extremely determined characters such as Schatze and Naná to the passive Didi, who seems to be mostly driven by other characters (such her family who pressurise her to go to the city, and Zizi, Belmiro and Sérgio Carlos in Rio). The differences in the ethos of the female characters across the two films arise as the dream the women pursue in Negulesco's film is strictly related to matrimony. As Schatze phrases it, getting married is "the biggest thing you can do in life." In *Garotas e Samba*, marriage is, for Naná, a means to achieve social status and financial security. Furthermore, the other women have different aspirations, i.e. Zizi wants to be a radio star and Didi wants to be a professional singer and accordionist. Women's presence and their demands to be present in the public arena, as well as in the employment market, are thus reflected upon in the film: "[a]s chanchadas souberam captar muito bem esses dois aspectos da mulher carioca da década de 1950. Uma mulher que precisava trabalhar fora como doméstica, manicure, artista, mas que continuava carregada dos valores domésticos, privados, onde a busca do par é supervalorizada."¹⁴² The *chanchadas* in general illustrate this ambiguity regarding the public and private spheres, as they portray numerous working women¹⁴³ (albeit in a limited range of professions seen as acceptable) while maintaining the role of housewife as a woman's

142. Dias 1993, p. 89.

143. To cite a couple of examples, Dalila (Eliana Macedo) is a manicurist in *Nem Sansão Nem Dalila* (Carlos Manga, 1955), not to mention a number of singers and performers, such as Mara (Sônia Mamede) in *De Vento em Popa* (Carlos Manga, 1957) and the characters mentioned in *Garotas e Samba*.

preferred choice in life, as Renata Fronzi's character implies in the particularly conservative *Treze Cadeiras* (Francisco Eichhorn, 1957):

Yvonne: [...] e agora volto para a cidade, para o meu trabalho.
 Bonifácio: Sim, mas uma moça tão bonita precisa trabalhar?
 Yvonne: É que eu ainda não encontrei o meu príncipe encantado.

2.2.1 Masculinity in Crisis: Infantilisation

Also contrasting in *Garotas e Samba* and *How to Marry a Millionaire* is the stance of the male characters; in the North American film they seem to be construed in rather Manichean terms with sympathetic morally righteous characters (J.D. Hanley, Tom Brookman and Eben) and unsympathetic morally devious characters (the Fred Clarke character, a millionaire who wants Loco to be his mistress, and the fake millionaire who courts Pola).¹⁴⁴ The Brazilian characters, on the other hand, do not rely on a straight-forward distinction between good and bad: the humour of the plot relies heavily upon Memé's attempts to deceive his wife Jocelina, in spite of the fact that he is not portrayed as an unsympathetic character. Unlike the Fred Clarke character, who is frank regarding his marital status (he is constantly complaining about his family), the *malandro* played by Zé Trindade does not tell Naná that he is married in order to enjoy her attention. With the exception of Belmiro, who is portrayed in a completely unsympathetic light, the other male characters in the Brazilian film also blur the distinction between virtue and licentiousness. Another example is Sérgio Carlos, the film's *galã*; although ready to help Didi both when she is being attacked by Belmiro and later by

144. The character of Freddie Denmark slightly complicates this distinction due to his questionable relationship with the IRS, but there does not seem to be anything reproachable in his actions toward Pola.

orchestrating to unmask Belmiro and guarantee Didi a job at the radio station, he does not exactly behave commendably either. He certainly seems pleased to catch a glimpse of Naná's bare legs while under the bed to hide from Dona Inocência.¹⁴⁵



Sérgio Carlos roguishly takes advantage of his privileged hiding spot

As argued in regard to *Matar ou Correr*, traits of *malandragem* are incorporated into the Brazilian male characters. At its best, this stance blurs the positivist (and often exclusionary) distinction between right and wrong; at its worst, it naturalises oppressive practices at the expense of women, as violence against women is deemed acceptable through naturalisation, particularly in the scene with Sérgio Carlos and Dona Inocência analysed below. In relation to masculinity, *malandragem*, as in *Matar ou Correr*, continues to play an important part. Examples of this are Sérgio Carlos's roguish attitude as well as Memé's portrayal as an infantilised man, signalled both by actor Zé Trindade's stature and the name of his character.

145. Most notably, it is also Sérgio Carlos who abuses Dona Inocência in a scene which will be further explored below.

The *malandro* is an inherently playful figure,¹⁴⁶ and his work-evading playfulness is directly linked with capitalism. As David Treece has argued, "[a]t the heart of both *jive* and *malandragem* is the ludic instinct, as a strategy for survival as well as an existential alternative to the alienated world of capitalist labour."¹⁴⁷ The *malandragem* as well as the infantilisation of characters in *Garotas e Samba* further the argument proposed in the previous section, whereby the gender model established by the Brazilian films offers an evasion from the demands of a new consumerist culture on masculinity.



Infantilised Memé

As Dennison and Shaw have argued, "[f]aced with the mounting demands of modern life, the male anti-heroes of these popular films tend to shy away from their patriarchal responsibilities in favour of handing over the reins of domestic power to the ambitious, go-

146. In David Treece's words, "the *malandro* has been a heroic (or anti-heroic) icon of popular and cultural life, particularly of the 1930s and '40s, expressing dissent from the official values of family, work and deference to authority, and representing a countercultural ethos of playfulness, the circumvention of social rules, a defiance of discipline, matched by verbal wit and dexterity" (Treece 2013, p. 36).

147. Treece 2013, p. 41.

getting females of the 1950s."¹⁴⁸ In contrast with the infantilised men, *Garotas e Samba* portrays a considerable number of active, strong-willed female characters.

2.2.2 Transgressive Femininity and Violence

In addition to the three female protagonists, there are four other prominent female characters in *Garotas e Samba*: Dona Inocência, the boarding house owner; Minervina, the maid; Ninon Ervilha, a famous radio star and Charlô's girlfriend; and Jocelina, Memé's wife. The latter two portray the stock character of the *megeira* (shrew). Both women of large stature, Ninon and Jocelina have control over their partners, who are visibly afraid of them. As a secondary character points out regarding Charlô and Ninon's relationship, "infelizmente, aqui quem manda é a vedete." As the use of the word *infelizmente* indicates, this arrangement is clearly threatening, resulting in Charlô's friend quitting his job with the justification that "fica essa menina botando banca, bancando a vedete. Eu não dou mais pra isso não." He also offers Charlô a piece of advice that combines paternalism and violence: "pega essa menina, dá umas palmadinhas nela, tira esse ciúminho bobo, depois eu volto aqui."

As a consequence of this unsettling inversion of gendered power relations, Jocelina and Ninon are arrested and rely on their partners to release them. In prison, the two men pretend not to know them. According to the men, the women suffer from "esquizofrenia em alto grau" and "cachaça." Punished for the disturbance of the established gender order, their behaviour

148. Dennison and Shaw 2004, pp. 98-99.

is explained, albeit jokingly, as alcoholism and by means of the long-standing association between women and mental illness. Susan K. Besse argues that, "warned that they would suffer 'bitterness' and risk 'embarking' on a 'glissade' into the 'abyss,'" women were indoctrinated not to rival their spouses during the first decades of the 20th century in Brazil.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Jocelina and Ninon seem to exemplify the undesirable, laughable "taciturn, unkempt matrons," which columns in popular magazines such as *Gente de Agora* announced as unacceptable.¹⁵⁰

The other secondary female character, Dona Inocência, personifies a witch-like spinster. As other characters mention during the course of the film, she speaks of men "sem conhecimento de causa" (as her Christian name suggests), and more pejoratively, they say that because she did not marry in 'due time,' she "secou" or "mofou." As the film develops, *galã* Sérgio Carlos's intervention causes a transformation in Dona Inocência, which suggests that i) her intense hatred of men hints at what turns out to be a kind of unsatisfied repressed desire, and ii) a genuine lack of interest in men is impossible to imagine (implying that once such "conhecimento de causa" is gained, there is only one possible outcome: interest in men). Although it is never overtly suggested in the film that Dona Inocência is homosexual, Judith Butler's exposition on homophobic logic regarding lesbian desire is transferrable to this context:

a lesbian is one who must have had a bad experience with men, or who has not yet found the right one. These diagnoses presume that lesbianism is acquired by virtue of some failure in the heterosexual machinery, thereby continuing to install heterosexuality as the 'cause' of

149. Besse 1996, p. 73.

150. Besse 1996, p. 76.

lesbian desire; lesbian desire is figured as the fatal effect of a derailed heterosexual causality.¹⁵¹

By the same token, Dona Inocência's celibacy and misandry are construed as failures in the heterosexual machinery rather than the effective questioning of the premise of heterosexual normativity. As Butler concludes, "in this framework, heterosexual desire is always true, and lesbian desire [or in this case, misandry] is always and only a mask and forever false."¹⁵²

The scene in which Dona Inocência transforms clearly illustrates Butler's point. Although Sérgio Carlos occupies the role of the charming, benevolent *mocinho*, it is he who shoves Dona Inocência, indicating that acts of violence against women — more precisely, against unattractive, older women (as Didi is spared from Belmiro's attack) — are not condemned in the universe of the film. As Dona Inocência is having what appears to be a hysterical attack due to Sérgio Carlos's (male) presence in the boarding house, he shoves her down onto a chair, yelling "Cala a boca aí, urubu, e não chateia."



The hero attacks the spinster

151. Butler 2011, p. 86.

152. Butler 2011, p. 86.



Dona Inocência remains static until the scene's conclusion



Upon exiting, Sérgio whispers in Dona Inocência's ear: "Obrigado, boneca, por ter ficado quietinha," and kisses her forehead in a paternalistic attitude that is appreciated by all characters, including Dona Inocência

The violence that is hinted at in passing in the scene with Charlô's friend is explicitly depicted here. Also not to be deemed as condemnable, the scene functions as a catalyst for change in Dona Inocência's character's final development; in her words, "ai, como é bom, eu nunca pensei que fosse assim. De hoje em diante...".



Dona Inocência appears happy for the first time in the film. Misandry is restated as "forever false" and heteronormativity is restored as the only alternative

Dona Inocência's sentence remains unfinished as the maid declares, "pode deixar por minha conta" and turns the sign on the wall. Previously stating "Pensão Inocência — Exclusivamente para solteiras — Homem, não!", the sign now reads "Pensão Inocência — Exclusivamente para homens — Mulher, não!". The same carnivalesque inversion that allows women to be domineering and powerful in a carnivalesque spirit of joyful relativity¹⁵³ is easily reverted back to its opposite, reflecting the dominant patriarchal culture. The new sign on the wall reiterates not only the myth of female competition, but also promotes women's exclusion, both literally and symbolically.

The last female character of prominence is the maid at the boarding house, Minervina. Her name is significant, as two years later Dercy Gonçalves would star in a movie entitled *Minervina Vem Aí* (Hélio Barroso and Eurídes Ramos, 1959). The fact that the same (unusual) name is used for both characters with the same occupation suggests the opposite of the process of individualisation common to heroes. The proper name, by definition a unique

153. Bakhtin's phrase, which is replicated by critics, is "gay relativity," e.g. "The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity" (Bakhtin 1984, p. 11).

sign of individuality, becomes a marker of the character's social position and occupation. The only black character in *Garotas e Samba*, Minervina is stereotypically depicted as highly sexualised by means of her clothes and body language (see figure above). Her colourful trousers and the scarf around her head reiterates stereotypes associated with her race while her tight, brightly-patterned clothes also make her blend in with the couch and curtains (see figure above), further objectifying her as part of the background. Her sexuality could be perceived as transgressive were it not always portrayed in relation to men. It is she who turns the sign at the end of the film, thus reinforcing the idea of black sexuality as continuously 'ready' — in this case, ready to 'receive' men at the hotel.

Thus the secondary female characters of *Garotas e Samba* constitute an array of rebellious women, either in relation to conventional gender norms or due to their sexuality. The shrew and the spinster are transgressive figures in essence, but the film's ending re-establishes male dominance, and it is telling that the use of force is sanctioned in order to secure conformity to ageist and heteronormative gender norms. Their punishment or reformation negates models of femininity that are either independent from men (Dona Inocência) or domineering in relation to them (Ninon and Jocelina). Minervina's sexuality could be seen as transgressive, were there any signs of agency or independence. On the contrary, the film only seems to reinforce the classist and racist myth "of the natural immorality and promiscuity of women of

color."¹⁵⁴ The model of femininity promoted by the film is one that includes men and consumerism, as will be analysed below in relation to the female protagonists. By privileging the material aspect of heterosexual relationships, the film rejects a construction that is crucial to the maintenance of gender inequality: that of heterosexual romantic love.¹⁵⁵

2.2.3 Femininity: "Vive l'Argent"

A univocal perspective in relation to love can be observed in *How to Marry a Millionaire*, where the three female protagonists end up with the men with whom they fell in love during the film. Essentially, *How to Marry a Millionaire* (in which the three female characters serve to prove the same point) is about the vindication of love over wealth, even for extremely ambitious women like Schatze. Initially troubling, Schatze's determination and Loco's audacity ultimately function to reinforce the overwhelming power of love, even over apparently indomitable women. The fact that Schatze ends the film with someone who at last

154. Hertzman 2010, p. 613. It should be noted that Manga fostered a rather progressive stance in regard to race, at least in relation to the mainstream culture of his time. He acknowledges the racial discrimination faced by Grande Otelo and script-writer and set designer Cajado Filho (see Augusto 2005 [p. 131-132], where Manga calls Cajado Filho the true father of the *chanchadas*). Manga's liberal view on race can also be found in a scene in *Garotas e Samba* where a black boy fixes Naná's car horn amidst dozens of struggling white men. However progressive his intention, Manga does not seem to succeed in truly destabilising the racial status quo in this case; the figure of the black male child (which is at once unthreatening and redemptive) is still present in movies that are far from unsettling, as seen in the recent animation *Rio* (Carlos Saldanha, 2011), in which a black boy repents of his criminal acts and is adopted by the white couple of protagonists.

155. Francesca M. Cancian argues that "[t]he dominant definition of love in our culture is feminized. Love is identified with women and with qualities seen as feminine, such as tenderness and expressing feelings. [...] The feminization of love encourages women to focus their lives on love and family, and implies that strong family bonds depend on maintaining traditional gender roles" (Cancian 1987, p. 5). Duncombe and Marsden problematise the relationship between love and exploitation further, arguing that "people experience feelings of love as powerfully 'real' in ways which have very real consequences for their lives," but acknowledge that "romantic imagery may often disguise exploitation" (Duncombe and Marsden 1993, p. 237).

reveals himself to be a millionaire serves two points: that "[t]he couple's cross-class union thus affirms the U.S. ideology that class doesn't matter,"¹⁵⁶ and the implicit message of the film, that love is more important than money.

In *Garotas e Samba*, on the other hand, the importance of romantic (heterosexual) love is significantly diminished. Naná accomplishes what the protagonists in *How to Marry a Millionaire* set out to do but fail to achieve (with the exception of Schatze, who does so unintentionally), thus asserting money over love. Although Naná is the character who illustrates this point most clearly (the adulteration of the expression "vive l'amour" into "vive l'argent" is performed by her), bourgeois sentimentality is debunked in the film as a whole. The film generally downplays the importance of love, also in relation to other characters. For example, in spite of the fact that Didi ends the film holding hands with Sérgio Carlos, not much emphasis is given to their relationship during the course of the film, with the exception of the final romantic musical number featuring the two. Zizi uses Charlô to achieve her goal (quite overtly by blackmailing him), and at the end it is not clear whether or not she has actually fallen in love with him. In their last scene alone, Zizi says, "Não se preocupe. Amanhã eu vou embora e arranjaréi outro lugar. Vocês [i.e. Charlô and Ninon] farão as pazes e tudo continuará como antes. Está bem assim, Charlô?" The apparent demonstration of love is downplayed by Zizi, whose stance during the film is invariably tongue-in-cheek. Her sassy attitude, also clear in this scene, suggests that the sentimentally loaded line ought to be taken with reservations.

156. Rowe 1995, p. 118.



Zizi's sassy stance when announcing she will leave

Zizi and Naná are the most vibrant female characters in *Garotas e Samba*. They take control over men not through coercion (unlike Ninon and Jocelina), but rather via assertiveness and sexual attractiveness, thus introducing the problematic idea¹⁵⁷ of sexuality as empowerment. The power they exert over men is suggested in several scenes, such as when Zizi arrives in the boarding house claiming to have "um pistolão deste tamanho." Whereas the reference is to Charlô (*pistolão* meaning an inside contact), the gesture insinuates her own phallic power. Her marked Northeastern accent also resonates with the figure of the (also phallic) 'mulher-macho'.¹⁵⁸

157. Problematic to the extent that this type of so-called empowerment still relies on the fact that they are women and on their female bodies. As contemporary popular culture critics have pointed out, "Even when women are sold the story that their beauty is power over men, it is a deceptive and temporary truth. It's baseless power. It is the kind of power that only exists in relation to a man's desire" (Foscolos 2013, n.p.).

158. As epitomised by Luiz Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira's 1952 song *Paraíba* ("Paraíba masculina, mulher-macho, sim senhor"). The song was the consolidation of the representation of Northeastern women as masculinised in popular culture. The rationale behind this conventional image, which has become one of the signs of *nordestinidade*, is that "em um lugar como o sertão nordestino, onde os homens eram escassos e existiam muitas mães solteiras e viúvas, as mulheres precisavam ir para o roçado plantar o que comer e pegar em armas para defender a família. Na ausência do marido, elas tinham que conduzir e alimentar os filhos e essa imagem acabou sendo consagrada" (Paiva 2013, pp. 265-266).



Zizi shows the size of her *pistolão* to the discomfort of Dona Inocência

Zizi's daring attitude is depicted in the scene where she waits for Didi, outside Belmiro's flat:

Man on the street: Onde é o baile hoje, hein, minha linda?

Zizi: Em pouco tempo, eu já repeli 32 propostas. Com a tua, 33. Fora daqui, se tu não quer levar um bolacha.

Man: Tá nervosa, é?

Zizi: Ah, e eu que deixei a minha peixeira em casa.

Notwithstanding the obvious fact that the scene naturalises street harassment, Zizi's audacity, which includes a reference to her capacity for physical violence, is relativised by subsequent scenes where she effectively would have the chance to use her physical prowess to help Didi, who is on the verge of being sexually assaulted by Belmiro. As Didi is unable to resist Belmiro's coercion into drinking to the point of unconsciousness, female agency is disavowed — not only does Didi need saving, but Zizi also needs a man's (Sérgio Carlos's) help to rescue her friend.

Similarly to Zizi, Naná is presented repeatedly throughout the film as an ambitious, driven woman, determined to achieve her goal of marrying a millionaire. As Rowe argues, "[l]ove is

one of the few areas where Hollywood [i.e. popular cinema] allows women to take charge."¹⁵⁹

Her strength of character is reinforced by her physical appearance, and indeed Renata Fronzi's stature, particularly in contrast with the diminutive Zé Trindade and Pituca, is outstandingly imposing.

Like Mae West in Kathleen Rowe's account, Naná exemplifies the motifs associated with the unruly woman, such as

a carnivalesque openness toward sexuality; the presentation of her self, especially her gendered self, as visual construct or image, created through a performance of femininity that exaggerates its attributes and thus denaturalizes it; and a comic gender inversion that reduces men to interchangeable sexual objects while acknowledging [...] that men make the rules of the game [...].¹⁶⁰

Like the shrew characters (Ninon and Jocelina), Naná's power signifies the subjugation of the male characters. However, as Rowe argues, "[l]ike film noir, romantic comedy often subjects a weak male to a predatory woman, but within a comedic frame that mutes the threat of male chastisement."¹⁶¹ Indeed, Naná's cigarette holder is at once a symbol of power and a harmless gag.

159. Rowe 1995, p. 27.

160. Rowe 1995, p. 119.

161. Rowe 1995, p. 118.



Naná's phallic cigarette holder

However limited by comedy their power might be, Zizi and Naná contradict the ideology of the 'well-adjusted' woman as

silent, static, invisible — 'composed' and 'divinely' apart from the hurly-burly of life, process, and social power. [The unruly woman,] [t]hrough her body, her speech, and her laughter, especially in the public sphere [...] creates a disruptive spectacle of herself. The tropes of unruliness are often coded with misogyny. However, they are also a source of potential power, especially when they are recoded or reframed to expose what that composure conceals. Ultimately, the unruly woman can be seen as prototype of woman as subject — transgressive above all when she lays claim to her own desire.¹⁶²

Similar to the unruly woman described by Rowe, Naná's carnivalesque stance is repeated throughout the film, from explicit references (Zizi calls her "rainha moma")¹⁶³ to symbolic ones, such as references to the bodily lower stratum:

Naná: Já tive uma [pele] dessas. Os pêlos caem.
Salesperson: Mas isto é legítima raposa da Sibéria. Os pêlos não caem.
Naná: Ah, então deve ser sífilis porque os pêlos caem.

Also carnivalesque is Naná's symbolic marriage to Memé. With no apparent narrative motivation, the wedding march is played as Naná and Memé enter a night club, in a

¹⁶².Rowe 1995, p. 31.

¹⁶³.In the carnival tradition, *Rei Momo* is considered to be the king of carnival.

communal act that makes reference to the "perpetual crowning and uncrowning"¹⁶⁴ of carnival whilst also mocking the institution of marriage.



The carnivalesque wedding of Naná and Memé

Naná's transgressive stance in relation to marriage is accepted because, like Mae West two decades before her, she is "a larger than life cartoon, and her gold-digging is so over the top that it becomes a kind of parody of itself."¹⁶⁵ In other words, Naná is a parody of herself or, in Rowe's words, a 'female-female impersonator.'¹⁶⁶ Through the self-conscious use of her image, Naná demonstrates that "femininity is a masquerade, a costume like any other, which she can relish [...] but discard in an instant. Feminine passivity and weakness are artificial ploys, tools to utilize toward her own ends."¹⁶⁷ The artificiality of Naná's masquerade is constructed by the use of glamorous clothing and a French accent, affected mannerisms,

164. Shohat and Stam 1994, p. 306.

165. Briggs 2005, p. 58.

166. Rowe 1995, p. 30.

167. Rowe 1995, p. 30.

high-pitched exclamations, which are all used with the aim of seducing and manipulating her male suitors to her own financial benefit.

The focus given to Naná's clothing and shopping sprees is significant as it is indicative of a particular moment in the development of consumerist culture, as mentioned previously. The 1950s was a decade of consolidation of consumer values in the US, with ramifications for the West more broadly.¹⁶⁸ The character of Naná, in particular, overtly promotes consumerism and enacts the triumph of money over wealth, in stark contrast to *How to Marry a Millionaire's* ending. Although Naná does not stand in her own right as a comic character — as did Chaplin, for example —, the interchangeability of her male suitors subtly undermines the importance of romantic love in the film, and significantly it is not Memé (with whom she has shared most of her comic scenes) who appears in the final scene as her romantic partner.

2.2.4 Unruliness

Rowe suggests that, as women began to pose a real threat to male authority by the end of 1950s, the unruly woman disappeared from Hollywood. In Brazil, although Dias affirms that the housewife role continued to be questioned, and more intensely so in the 1950s,¹⁶⁹ increased female participation in the labour market did not seem to be significant. In 1950,

168. As Maggie Günsberg argues in relation to Italy, "[p]laying on the centrality of women to Catholic family ideology, market competition for consumers in 1950s and 1960s Italy targeted the woman in the household (wife or mother) as the 'angel in the household' able to divert the man's spending power to goods for the home (refrigerators, washing machines, furniture)." Günsberg 2005, p. 68.

169. Dias 1993, pp. 82-83.

female labour represented only 14.7% of the country's workforce, with little growth during the decade as, by 1960, it was at 17.90%.¹⁷⁰ Besse also shares in this theory, arguing that the anxieties apparent during the turn of the 19th century were largely resolved by the end of the 1940s with a restructuring of patriarchal values that ultimately did not serve women's liberation.¹⁷¹ This makes space for female unruliness to be presented on film, as less regulation is necessary when the status quo is, in effect, unchallenged.

This does not mean that *Garotas e Samba* should be readily dismissed as a univocally conservative film for it pushes the boundaries of gender roles in ways that are uncommon in the *chanchadas* as well as in Hollywood, at least in comparison to *How to Marry a Millionaire*. As the transgressive secondary female characters are punished or reformed in their independence or domination over men, Naná, Zizi and Didi succeed in embracing heterosexual relationships and their sexuality as a source of empowerment (as opposed to coercion, as in the case of Jocelina and Ninon, or the exclusion of men, as in the case of Dona Inocência). However, although they are still "limited to the single narrative of a woman's life: that of her relation to men,"¹⁷² they effectively do what *How to Marry a Millionaire* suggests (but ultimately denies with its traditional ending), i.e. de-romanticise romance and expose "the relation between sexuality and a woman's financial security."¹⁷³ *Garotas e Samba* thus negates the underlying message of *How to Marry a Millionaire* — in Brookman's words,

170. Dias 1993, p. 85.

171. Besse 1996, p. 9.

172. Rowe 1995, p. 124.

173. Rowe 1995, p. 117.

"it's all an act. Money isn't everything." In *Garotas e Samba*, however, money is the main priority and love is an act that Naná and Didi perform very well.

According to Rosângela Dias, the 1950s was a decade "marcada pela ideologia de modernização e desenvolvimento e por um projeto de industrialização voltado para a produção e consumo de bens materiais."¹⁷⁴ Ideals of consumerism are clearly reflected in the *chanchadas*, and *Garotas e Samba* illustrates this point particularly well. In a typically carnivalesque stance, materialism prevails over spiritual values, just as the body gains supremacy over the mind. Furthermore, by announcing that "o amor é mesmo uma grande invenção," *Garotas e Samba* exposes love as a carefully crafted and culturally enshrined construction. Undermining love consequently undermines the gender division, as love is a fundamental part of gender politics. As Rowe argues, "a book on radical feminism that didn't deal with love would be a political failure."¹⁷⁵

How to Marry a Millionaire almost ends with three couples, as Brookman reveals to his wife and friends that he is a millionaire, the three women faint, leaving only the men standing in what appears to be a triumph of love/truth over materialism/act, and, as the film construes it, the first is coded masculine and the latter as feminine. The toast, "gentlemen, to our wives," not only excludes women as interlocutors but also states the primacy of their social role as wives over their individual or collective identity as women. Furthermore, while in *How to Marry a Millionaire* men stand¹⁷⁶ in the privileged position of knowing better than women

174. Dias 1993, pp. 82-83.

175. Rowe 1995, p. 116.

176. As the women faint, they literally stand in a better position.

what women want, in *Garotas e Samba*, men seem to function (particularly in the case of Naná and, with the exception of the last scene, also of Zizi as well) as a vehicle for achieving individual desires that women do not relinquish.

In spite of the fact that the sign in the boarding house at the end of the film reinstates female competition and exclusion, the film should be considered as a whole, having seen that, as Rowe has argued, "most narrative endings are problematic from a feminist point of view, and that a feminist criticism that is unwilling to bracket the conventional ending, at least temporarily, in order to consider what precedes it will be a discouraging project."¹⁷⁷ Whilst *Garotas e Samba*'s message in the boarding house reinforces the exclusion of women, the bulk of it relies heavily upon sisterhood and female solidarity. On an individual level, in line with Rowe's argument, by exposing their bodies, their speech and their laughter, Naná and Zizi represent "[t]he image of the woman on top in the world of play [and therefore make] the 'unruly option' a 'more conceivable' one."¹⁷⁸

The Brazilian film also leaves certain loose ends (such as the interchangeability of Naná's millionaires and the accomplishment of her goal) that can potentially deny closure and "escape the oppressive totalizing of dialectal reasoning."¹⁷⁹ This is a vital difference in relation to *How to Marry a Millionaire*, where closure is provided by all three characters serving to reinstate the same (fundamentally oppressive) dichotomy of money vs. love. The Brazilian film complicates this dichotomy by inserting female professional ambition

177. Rowe 1995, p. 237.

178. Rowe 1995, p. 44.

179. Rowe 1995, p. 46.

(embodied by the character of Didi) and, with Naná, it inverts the hierarchy of the dichotomy by privileging the materiality of money over romantic love. The privilege of money over love makes sense against the film's historical backdrop, which combines the promotion of consumerism and the relatively insubstantial threat real women posed to a largely male-dominated labour market.

2.3 The *Chanchada*: Conclusion

Although Dennison and Shaw rightfully argue that "[m]ale authority and control were threatened by industrial society and the new freedoms enjoyed by women,"¹⁸⁰ the 1950s marked just one of the cycles of crisis in relation to masculinity, and perhaps the least threatening of all of the three periods analysed here, as will be discussed in the following chapters. The unruliness of the characters of Naná and Zizi is permissible precisely because it is set against a relatively unthreatening backdrop. The association of women with consumerism made rather explicit in these films sets up a trend that continues up to the present day in Brazilian popular comedies, as will be considered further in Chapter 4.

The association of masculinity with childhood and *malandragem* in these comedies — in itself a form of infantilisation —, "especially in its propensity for play rather than work, and in its toying with consumerism,"¹⁸¹ can be seen as an index of the difficulty of adjusting to a rapidly expanding consumer culture. These films show men who ultimately fail — the failed copies that the Brazilian cowboys in *Matar ou Correr* represent — to catch up with the new demands and the increasing pressures on masculinity. This subtle, embryonic male powerlessness resurfaces in the next popular upsurge of Brazilian cinema, the *pornochanchada*, in much more obvious ways, as men are literally portrayed as impotent. As the environment becomes more authoritarian and women become increasingly liberated, the

180. Dennison and Shaw 2004, p. 100.

181. Günsberg 2005, p. 71.

trends observed in this chapter escalate, and men come across as increasingly out of control while women continue to be cast in objectified, secondary roles.

3 THE *PORNOCHANCHADA*

After the carnivalesque films of the 1950s and 1960s, the next wave of popular cinema to dominate in Brazil was the *pornochanchada*. Its name a clear reference to the *chanchada*, the *pornochanchada* was equally dismissed by the status-conferring elite of the time as bad taste. A genre of erotic comedy that enjoyed immense success in Brazil during the 1970s, the *pornochanchada* is not a homogeneous body of films, but what many critics describe as a label encompassing comedies and other sub-genres of soft-core porn such as crime, horror, prison films, etc. Although Hollywood continued to exert direct influence on Brazilian popular cinema,¹ another type of film that had developed around the same time as the *chanchadas* gained recognition. Conceived in direct antagonism to the *chanchada*,² the avant-garde new cinema movement (Cinema Novo)³ became a benchmark in Brazilian cinema history. Despite the fact that there is no overlap in the production of the *pornochanchadas* and Cinema Novo, Cinema Novo is worth of mention in relation to the *pornochanchada* as critics usually compare these two bodies of films, setting Cinema Novo as a model against

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1. For example, *Bacalhau* (Adriano Stuart, 1975) is loosely based on *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) and *A Banana Mecânica* (Braz Chediak, 1974) borrows part of its title from *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971), officially translated into Portuguese as *A Laranja Mecânica*.
 2. There was, in fact, an anti-*chanchada* sentiment among the *cinemanovistas*, and Glauber Rocha, Cinema Novo's most influential filmmaker, was outspoken in his condemnation of the type of cinema made by *chanchada* directors (Simonard 2003, p. 10-11).
 3. Both locally and internationally, where it is seen as part of the politically-motivated Third Cinema movement.

which the *pornochanchada* was — and still is — judged, virtually always to the latter's disadvantage.

The *pornochanchada* developed in 1969,⁴ precisely when Cinema Novo was proclaimed dead,⁵ and its development is concurrent with the military dictatorship (1964-1985). The year 1969 also marked the beginning of the Médici mandate (1969-1974), emblematically known as *os anos de chumbo*. In December 1969, the dictatorial regime became fiercer with the promulgation of the Institutional Act number 5, which overruled the Constitution, closed the National Congress, and considerably restricted freedom of speech through intense censorship and political persecution. The 1970s was also a time of rapid economic growth. Part of the military regime propaganda, this phenomenon was dubbed *milagre econômico*, the miracle in question consisting of a bottom-to-top wealth transfer thus widening the inequality between rich and poor. The trope of masculinity in crisis introduced in the previous chapter continued as the consumerist culture developed,⁶ but in the 1970s other elements, far more threatening to a *macho* culture, emerged.

4. The *pornochanchada* is considered to have begun in 1969 with *Os Paqueras* (Reginaldo Faria) and *Memórias de um Gigolô* (Alberto Pieralisi). Although both films were produced in Rio de Janeiro, the main pole of production moved to São Paulo, to a specific geographical location (the neighbourhood of Luz, around Rua do Triunfo) called Boca do Lixo. The terms *pornochanchada* and *Cinema da Boca* are often conflated and at times confused (Dennison 2009, p. 231). In this chapter the term *pornochanchada* will be used, as it is more generic, encompassing films produced both in São Paulo and Rio. Most films analysed in this chapter were made in Rio, since, perhaps due to their closer connection with the *chanchadas* of the Atlântida Studios, they are more illustrative of the carnivalesque stance that links the corpus of this study.

5. Dennison 2009, pp. 230-231.

6. This is observed in the ostentation presented in the *pornochanchadas* in the form of fashion shows, cars, trips, parties and so on.

Amidst cultural and social turmoil, the movement for women's rights — now referring to itself as feminism — reemerged in Brazil after it had lost momentum since suffrage was won in 1932. In addition to the general repression of the regime, until 1962 married women were considered permanent minors and a change of consciousness was slow to take place. Divorce, for example, was only legalised in 1977.⁷ Basic reproductive rights were not enshrined in law, such as the right to terminate unwanted pregnancies (which remains illegal to date), and legal "defence of honour" pleas were commonly (and successfully) used to justify femicide⁸ until the early 1980s.⁹ With the repercussions of May 1968 and the effervescence of counterculture movements, the civil rights and feminist movements in the United States and Europe on the one hand, and the local authoritarian regime on the other,¹⁰ the political and social environment in 1970s Brazil was tense. Gender roles were being questioned as a result of a number of factors, including the so-called political 'vacuum' generated by the defeat of the left resistance to the dictatorship¹¹ as well as international influences and women's marked participation in the urban guerrilla movements, including current President Dilma Rousseff. According to Cynthia Sarti, "os grupos feministas estavam articulados às diversas organizações de influência marxista, clandestinas à época, e nasceram fundamentalmente comprometidos com a oposição à ditadura."¹² In spite of women's presence in the armed

7. Morgan 1984, pp. 77-78.

8. Femicide refers to gender-motivated murder, e.g. following a sexual attack or as escalation of domestic violence. In Brazil, the equivalent term is *feminicídio* and there is currently a law bill proposal framing it as a new type of crime with specific agents and a specific penalty (*Portal de Notícias do Senado Federal* n.d., n.p.).

9. Morgan 1984, pp. 78-79.

10. Soihet 2005, p. 594.

11. Pinto 2003, pp. 50-51.

12. Sarti 2001, p. 31.

guerrilla groups, however, there was a realisation that they were not seen as equals, even within the revolutionary movement.¹³

Feminists as well as critics of the *pornochanchada* have pointed out the misogynistic stance of these films, which invariably treat women as sexual objects onscreen and behind the scenes.¹⁴ While the *chanchadas* were produced with the family as target audience, the *pornochanchadas* were directed by males for a largely male audience. With rare exceptions,¹⁵ they were films made by men for men and they approach female desire from a completely masculine perspective.¹⁶ They predominantly focus on (in an attempt to stave off) anxieties experienced by men: female sexuality and female infidelity, male homosexuality, impotence and castration.¹⁷ Critics of the genre often refer to the films' machismo-infused stance, and while this is certainly true, they fail to acknowledge that this was the rule rather than the exception as the left displayed equally sexist attitudes. Rachel Soihet's analysis of the antifeminist stance of *O Pasquim*, one of the strongest voices against the dictatorial regime, shows the magazine's conspicuous, caustic misogyny and entrenched attitudes: "Causa uma

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13. Sarti 2004, pp. 37-38. Teles 1993 offers a more idealised account on the participation of women in the guerilla movements (pp. 70-73). For an overview of the resistance to feminism among the militant groups in exile (see Pinto 2003, pp. 54-55).
 14. Mario Vaz Filho cites director Ody Fraga's reaction when actress Ariadne de Lima asked to give her opinion about a scene; Fraga responded that she was there to 'give' something else, not suggestions (Abreu 2006, p. 130). In the autobiography of David Cardoso, *pornochanchada* actor and director, there abound instances of sheer machismo and misogyny, including an act of non-consensual sex (p. 60), and the 'humorous' account of actor Ney Latorraca's aggressive behaviour towards actress Sandra Bréa (closing a door on her foot on purpose), apparently because she was considered *antipática* (Cardoso 2006, p. 65).
 15. Here I am referring to Dilma Lôes, scriptwriter of several *pornochanchadas* (including successful ones, such as *Quando as Mulheres Paqueram*, 1970, and *Essa Gostosa Brincadeira a Dois*, 1973) and documentary director (see *Mulheres do Cinema Brasileiro* n.d., n.p.).
 16. Examples of this biased viewpoint are idealised or exaggerated ideas of female sexuality, as seen in the case of the nymphomaniac and the femme fatale (see Da Silva 2009, n.p.).
 17. Da Silva 2009 offers an elucidating categorisation of the *pornochanchadas*'s titles, dividing the films into the following categories: 'betrayal', 'virginity', 'fear of sexual impotence', 'fear of castration', 'female sexuality as dangerous and sinful', and 'references to violence.'

tremenda indignação dizer que as mulheres, em média, são menos inteligentes do que os homens, mas acontece que isso é verdade."¹⁸ This kind of statement had a particularly profound effect as they were defended by leading intellectuals and artists who have shaped Brazilian consciousness until the present day.

Problematising the notion of the *pornochanchada*'s complete corroboration with the authoritarian regime — often dubbed 'daughter of the dictatorship' — is long overdue in Brazilian academia. In her article 'Sex and the Generals,' Stephanie Dennison argues for a reading of the *pornochanchadas* as sexploitation films,¹⁹ defining them as "bad mannered, sluttish, utterly stupid, [promoting] individualism and a rejection of the work ethic."²⁰ She also mentions in passing that the *pornochanchada* displays a carnivalesque stance.²¹ Although the connection between the carnivalesque and the *chanchada* is largely acknowledged, its relationship with the genre that is seen as the continuation of the *chanchada* remains relatively unexplored. Perhaps it is precisely because the influence of the carnivalesque is rarely noticed by Brazilian critics that they tend to see the *pornochanchada* as fundamentally complicit with the dictatorship. In the light of the carnivalesque, the authority-defying nature

18. Millôr Fernandes cited in Soihet 2005 (p. 599). Similar statements can be found in texts by Henfil, Paulo Francis, Jorge Benjor, Waldick Soriano and Erasmo Carlos, to name a few.

19. Dennison 2009. Part of the international wave of exploitation films that dominated many national cinemas — in Europe, exploitation films created the so-called Eurocult (Shipka 2011, pp. 5-7) —, Latin American exploitation cinema spanned from the 1950s until, at least, the 1990s (Ruétalo and Tierney 2009, p. 1). Academic interest in the topic, however, is more recent, dating from the 2000s onwards. Although exploitation is not a production category used in Brazil (Ruétalo and Tierney 2009 observe the same in regard to Latin American cinema in general [p. 4]), Dennison's argument is compelling due to its comparison with other exploitation cinemas worldwide. By placing it in a wider global context, its shared characteristics are brought to the fore, such as the complex relationship with the censor and the techniques and marketing strategies used (Dennison 2009, p. 232).

20. Dennison 2009, p. 241

21. "[I]t is possible that audiences started going to see these films because they knew they were bad — when you cannot deal rationally with your own reality, you (in good Bakhtinian fashion) turn to the absurd." Dennison 2009, p. 241

of the *pornochanchada* emerges, given that carnivalesque texts fundamentally diverge from "discursos autoritários, graças à polêmica narrativa, à polifonia, [...] recursos pelos quais se obtém a visão do direito e do avesso do mundo e se mantém a polifonia interna das vozes que dialogam no texto."²² Indeed, the *pornochanchada* thrived by promoting transgression through *avacalhação* and *esculhambação*, both adjectives commonly used to describe the genre. José Carlos Avellar described the *pornochanchada* as "[u]m cinema que se avacalha,"²³ borrowing a line from Cinema Marginal director's Rogério Sganzerla: "Quando a gente não pode fazer nada, a gente avacalha. A gente se avacalha e se esculhamba." According to the Houaiss dictionary, *avacalhação* means "estado de desordem, de anarquia; confusão, bagunça" and *esculhambação* is defined as "estado de desordem, de anarquia; confusão, bagunça, avacalhação" or "repreensão ou censura áspera, rude, ofensiva." As the latter reveals, to *avacalhar/esculhambar* someone also means to critique them fiercely. Both words therefore hint at the chaotic transgression promoted by the *pornochanchada* as a critical response to the changes of its time.

José Carlos Avellar, or simply JC Avellar, was indeed a pioneer, recognising the *pornochanchadas'* carnivalesque stance as early as 1979.²⁴ As the carnivalesque aspect of these films is essential to the understanding of their political positioning, this chapter aims at advancing JC Avellar's claim, demonstrating that carnivalesque devices are at the very heart of the *pornochanchada*, often transgressing the reactionary status quo. The focus on gender not only provides clues to the changing gender roles of the time, but also provides insights

22. Diana Luz Pessoa de Barros cited in Guerreiro 2007, p. 36.

23. Novaes 2005, p. 346.

24. Bernardet 1979, pp. 84-85. Also cited in Dennison 2009, p. 241.

into the relationship between filmmakers and the repressive regime. Challenging the "hegemonic narrative of Brazilian culture in the 1960s, which allows one cinema (Cinema Novo) to dominate over others,"²⁵ this chapter demonstrates, through the analysis of five films, the importance of the *pornochanchada* in revealing and shaping gender relations at a time of radical changes in Brazilian history. As democracy fails and so does the intellectual elite, films of this period reveal, with a marked carnivalesque stance, feelings of disenfranchisement and powerlessness and it is perhaps not surprising that they so often portray male impotence.

Firstly, through the lenses of carnival, the films *Berenice* (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1971) and *Árvore dos Sexos* (Silvio de Abreu, 1978) will be analysed with a focus on the relationship between the *pornochanchada* and Cinema Novo, to prove that the view of the *pornochanchadas* as politically disengaged is, at the very least, reductionist. Particular attention will be given to the ways in which the *pornochanchada* can destabilise the ideological pillars of the military regime, therefore complicating the usual interpretation as complicit with the dictatorship. Secondly, focusing on gender, the analysis of *A Viúva Virgem* (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1972) and *A Banana Mecânica* (Braz Chediak, 1974) demonstrate that the carnivalesque enables a humorous account of yet another cycle of masculinity in crisis, now in relation to the authoritarian regime and women's empowerment. Finally, the case study of the film *A Super Fêmea* (Aníbal Massaini Neto, 1973) offers an innovative depiction of the grotesque, whilst also giving insights on the changing gender relations in 1970s Brazil.

25. Tierney 2009, p. 116.

3.1 *Pornochanchada* vs. Cinema Novo

The *pornochanchada* remains a relatively overlooked cinematic genre, particularly in relation to Cinema Novo, its critically acclaimed counterpart. In general, there seem to be two widespread ideas among Brazilian academic circles that need undermining: first, the apparently unproblematic divide between these two cinematic movements; secondly, that the *pornochanchadas*, often dubbed ‘daughters of the dictatorship,’ were part of the mechanism through which the authoritarian regime functioned. Instead, a more complex view will be proposed, according to which the *pornochanchada* is not seen as fully partaking in the worldview of the military regime but rather as a critical response to it. This section will therefore problematise the unilateral view of the *pornochanchadas* as intrinsically connected with the authoritarian military government and in line with Hollywood modes of production, beyond the binary of Cinema Novo/avant-garde/revolutionary versus *pornochanchada*/conventional/authoritarian.

The Cinema Novo movement started during the 1950s as a reaction of middle class filmmakers from São Paulo, who, committed to social change, saw cinema as a means to foster revolutionary ideas. Breaking with classical cinematic conventions, Cinema Novo created a revolutionary aesthetic recognised in festivals worldwide and exponents of the genre include *Rio 40 Graus* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos 1955), *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (Glauber Rocha, 1963) and *Terra em Transe* (Glauber Rocha, 1967). Although the *pornochanchada* is often accused of exploitation of the female body, *Os Cafajestes* (Ruy

Guerra, 1962), directed by one of the fathers of Cinema Novo,²⁶ was actually the first film to show a full frontal nude (of a woman, of course). Two years after *Os Cafagestes*, Ruy Guerra would direct *Os Fuzis*, containing all the elements (in terms of form and content) of a Cinema Novo film, such as engagement with social themes and the denial of a happy ending that was seen to provide cathartic closure. Other points of contact between Cinema Novo and the *pornochanchada* are the directors who circulated in both genres, such as Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and Roberto Santos with *Contos Eróticos* (Eduardo Escorel, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Roberto Palmari, Roberto Santos, 1977), and Rogério Sganzerla, also one of the main figures of Cinema Marginal, with *A Mulher de Todos* (1969). Finally, films such as *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (Bruno Barreto, 1976) and *A Dama do Lotação* (Neville de Almeida, 1978) are critically acclaimed (thus not labelled *pornochanchadas*, but what Dennison calls *pornochique*, borrowing Jean-Claude Bernadet's 1978 term),²⁷ yet undeniably rooted in the *pornochanchada* tradition. Finally, both *cinemanovistas* and *pornochanchada* filmmakers explored topics such as the decadent, hollow middle class; however, where the former did so seriously and poignantly, the latter indulged in, and comically exploited, the image of the existentially empty playboy.

Although most critics set Cinema Novo in opposition to the *pornochanchada*, evidence suggests that they are both part of the same stream, at least in its very basic principle: that of a creative, transgressive impulse in a time of repression. Cinema Novo is usually divided into

26. *Os Cafagestes* is only rarely defined as a Cinema Novo film, but Ruy Guerra's role in the movement cannot be underestimated. Here the use of the word 'father' is intentional, as *cinemanovistas*, although committed to social change, were less concerned with gender equality (Alves 2010, p. 2).

27. Dennison 2002, p. 197.

three phases: an idealistic first phase, which uses the revolutionary idea of the "aesthetics of hunger" as creative motor; a second phase that acknowledges the failure of the initial political project, morphing, in 1968 with the military coup-within-the-coup, into Tropicália in what became to be known as its third phase.²⁸ Concurrent with the third phase, Cinema Marginal is seen as the formal radicalisation of the dystopian reality verified in its second phase.²⁹ The *pornochanchada* therefore can clearly be located as a continuation of the process of dealing with a dystopian reality with an equally radical treatment of form. As a nonsensical film with avant-garde aspirations and considerable amount of exploitation of the female body, *O Pornógrafo* (João Callegaro, 1970) is illustrative of the connection, as well as the tipping point, at which Cinema Novo, Cinema Marginal and *pornochanchada* meet. Born out of the failure of Cinema Novo's political project, *pornochanchada* directors who, unlike the *cinemanovistas* were not part of the cultural elite, reflect the people's sense of complete powerlessness in the face of the increasingly repressive regime. The *pornochanchada*'s insistence on the motif of male impotence is therefore not a coincidence. With no commitment to utopia or revolution, these films have a down-to-earth approach, aiming simply to deal with contemporary issues and probing societal tensions, as exploitation cinema usually does.³⁰ Instead of fighting the arbitrariness of the authoritarian regime, they revel in the absurdity of reality, which can also be seen as a form of resistance.

28. Johnson and Stam 1995, pp. 30-40.

29. Johnson and Stam 1995, pp. 39-40.

30. Tierney 2009, p. 121.

Critics of the Cinema Novo movement argue that its filmmakers had no contact with the people they were addressing in order to incite a revolutionary upheaval and, indeed, Cinema Novo films' audiences were not made up of the general public:

[t]here is no doubt that Cinema Novo alienated the first audience that Brazilian cinema had conquered, that is, the popular audience of the chanchada. This audience simply does not see Cinema Novo films. When it sees them it neither accepts nor understands them. Cinema Novo conquered a whole, vast, new sector of more intellectualized spectators, principally young people and students. Unfortunately, it was unable to combine the two audiences. I sometimes doubt that it intended — despite certain declarations, some sincere and others demagogical — to reach large sectors of the public."³¹

The *pornochanchadas*, on the other hand, were phenomenally popular, leaving a somewhat disconcerting impression of a divide between an idealistic middle class making films that did not resonate with the masses they were trying to address, and a down-to-earth, energetic film production — indeed, one of the few moments in the history of Brazilian cinema when film production resembled a film industry —, connected and responding to the market. Responding to people's taste is not, in itself, revolutionary; on the contrary, in the case of the *pornochanchadas*, it has been demonstrated that critics are right when they argue that the films widely reflect certain traditional and misogynistic views on gender roles. Greater interest, however, lies in the boundaries — in the frictions and breaches that can be identified within this vast and diverse corpus of films. In order to demonstrate the wealth of possibilities opened up by close analysis of the *pornochanchadas*, two films are particularly elucidating: *Berenice* (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1971), the second episode of a film entitled *Lua de Mel e Amendoim* (Pedro Carlos Rovai and Fernando de Barros, 1971), and *A Árvore dos Sexos* (Silvio de Abreu, 1977).

31. De Andrade and Viany 1995, p. 75.

3.1.1 *A Árvore dos Sexos* and *Berenice*

While Brazilian critics seem almost unanimous³² in regarding the *pornochanchadas* as governed by "an absolute moralism" as a means of circumventing censorship,³³ Stephanie Dennison, furthering JC Avellar's argument, breaks new ground in arguing that the *pornochanchada* transgresses the worldview of the military dictatorship.³⁴ Although Dennison does not mention specific films, the two films analysed here offer a starting point to support this argument.

Brazilian critic Jairo Ferreira argues that the moralism in the films is upheld through the punishment of adulterous characters.³⁵ These two films, however, show precisely the opposite; in *Berenice* the adulterous mother ends the film dancing with her lover, together and with the approval of her son. In *A Árvore dos Sexos*, all the women in town appear to get pregnant not through the usual method but from eating the phallic-shaped fruit from a magic

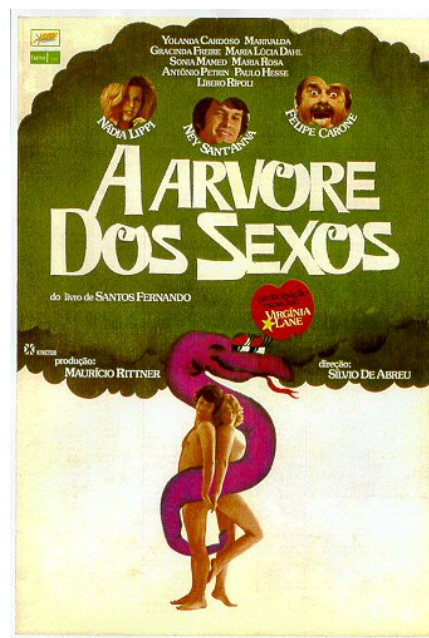
32. Even when critics see instances of transgression in specific *pornochanchada* films or filmmakers, they tend to qualify them as exceptional, setting them in opposition to the general *pornochanchada* trend, which is virtually always portrayed in a negative light. As an example of this stance, see for example Uchôa 2011 (n.p). Freitas 2002 goes further to argue that one should not discuss the "qualidade ou moralidade desta ou daquela obra" (p. 1), but fails to offer a regenerating interpretation of the genre.

33. Ferreira n.d., p. 3.

34. Dennison 2009, p. 236.

35. Ferreira n.d., p. 3.

tree.³⁶ At the end only one, Santinha,³⁷ has a real baby, a fact that motivates the last sentence of the film, identifying "o verdadeiro filho da fruta." The ending is undoubtedly constructed as happy, but is not necessarily moralistic,³⁸ as the sentence has several layers of meaning. Whilst "filho da fruta" connotes 'filho da puta' and therefore could be seen as a sign of disapproval of Santinha's unfaithfulness, the word 'legítimo' plays on spectators' suspicion that the child is illegitimate. The word 'fruta' refers to the fruit that she ate both literally and symbolically — the forbidden fruit of adulterous sex — and therefore implies transgression of the religious tradition, as seen in the film poster.



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36. The film's plot could be seen as an echo of fears around unwanted pregnancies, a topic which was very current at the time, considering the contraceptive pill was being introduced in Brazilian society. See Chapter 3.3 for another, more elaborate depiction of anxieties involving the contraceptive pill.
37. Her name is obviously meant to be ironic, as she is shown being unfaithful to her husband several times.
38. There are surely moralistic moments, such as a long sequence that shows daughters being sent away from home in disgrace for having gotten pregnant. The argument here is not that the film is progressive, but rather than the moments of extreme moralism, which do exist, does not account for the ambivalence presented in these films.

The line could also be seen as undermining her husband's heterosexuality, as "fruta" is a slang term for homosexual. With such a wide variety of meanings, defending a univocal moralistic ending would be reductionist, to say the least. Furthermore, the overall tone of the scene is jocular and light-hearted, and in no way seems to constitute a punishment for Santinha or anyone else.

The "antiwork ethic and celebration of laziness,"³⁹ essentially contrary to the values of the dictatorship, are clearly posed in *Berenice* with its *bon vivant* protagonist (played by Carlo Mossy) being supported financially by his mother (Beatriz Lyra). The absent father, an ambassador living in Africa, is mocked and scorned, as both wife and son wish he were kidnapped. The wishful thinking of the characters discloses a subtle association with the kidnapping of U.S. ambassador Charles Burke Elbrick by the Brazilian guerrilla movement in 1969. In *Berenice*, the association between the absent father and the idea of *Pátria*⁴⁰ gives another dimension to the scorn directed at the father/ambassador in the 1971 film. In *Árvore dos Sexos*, in typical carnivalesque style, all figures of authority are portrayed in a comic light: the *comandante* is an *habitué* of the city's brothel; the doctor is more adept to magical charms than to lab tests; the puritanical female teacher succumbs to the power of the fruit and seduces a handyman in the classroom; the priest is a forever smiling, clownish figure; bureaucrats are unreasonable and violent. Other characters challenge their authority

39. Dennison 2009, p. 231.

40. In 1973, musician Chico Buarque wrote the song *Cálice* addressing a symbolic father that is widely accepted as a metaphor for the military regime. The lyrics read "Cálice, afasta-se de mim este cálice, pai." The word 'cálice' (chalice) is a homophone of 'cale-se' (shut your mouth). "Cálice, pai" is repeated out of context a few times, resonating the plea 'shut up, father.' The song was immediately censored and was only released in 1978.

overtly with remarks such as "a lei fica sentada e não faz nada" and "a moral se ajeita conforme a conveniência."

Carnavalesque elements abound in the film. The Bakhtinian notion of the upside-down world is central to the *pornoanchada* and can literally be seen in *Berenice*, where the first medium shot of the powerful, lascivious mother is inverted in a point-of-view shot of the protagonist Serginho doing a headstand.



Rich, powerful and lascivious women:
a clear sign that the world is upside-down

Although celebrated critics such as Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes set the *malandro*⁴¹ of the *chanchadas* in opposition to the protagonists of the *pornochanchadas*,⁴² there is virtually no difference between them and the protagonist of *Berenice*. Serginho is averse to work and an inveterate womaniser, using skilful tricks to seduce women and get money from his parents.

Whereas defending the *pornochanchada* as liberating would be an exaggeration, it is equally inaccurate to efface the dissenting voices that abound in these films. Instances of sheer machismo and violence against women are widespread, but a different picture is painted when looking at the breaches, the slips, the voices that are raised even if to be refuted moments later. In classical Hollywood cinema, all plotlines are resolved in the end, usually in the form of a climactic happy ending of the main plot and an epilogue that resolves secondary plotlines, where only minor issues might be left hanging.⁴³ Due to the *pornochanchadas*' unpolished finish, characters' motivations often go unexplained and dangling plotlines remain unresolved, resulting in the polyphonic⁴⁴ sustainment of diverging voices. While the films overall reveal a crisis in masculinity that reflects the repression of the dictatorial regime as well as fears and anxieties associated with women's increasing empowerment, attention to the marginal moments reveal the instances in which new representations emerge. Similar to

41. The *malandro* is one of the quintessential carnivalesque figures. For a definition and analysis, see Chapter 2.1.4.

42. "Existia na chanchada a figura do malandro que engana a mulher, o patrão, e se sai bem, figura irreverentemente que não existe agora. Na pornochanchada o mocinho sempre sai ganhando, a mocinha se casa, e nesse sentido ela seria muito moralista. Isso talvez porque a chamada pornochanchada tenha muito mais necessidade de se justificar, de compensar as audácias no terreno sexual com um moralismo sociológico mais geral. Além disso, a chanchada é mais espontânea, o que a torna socialmente muito mais crítica que a porno[chanchada]. (...) Existia na chanchada uma relativa contestação enquanto a pornochanchada em termos ideológicos é conservadora. A chanchada ridicularizava as posições sociais, a porno endossa" (Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes cited in Adamatti 2011, p. 7).

43. Bordwell 1985, p. 159.

44. The Bakhtinian concept of 'polyphony' entails an "orchestration of a textual plurality of unmerged voices and consciousnesses" (Stam 1989, p. 136).

Rowe's conclusion regarding the unruly woman,⁴⁵ regardless of whether the rich, powerful and adulterous women are shown to illustrate anxieties associated with masculinity, they nonetheless expand the horizon of expectations, offering an embodiment as well as a means of conceptualising this new liberated woman.

45. See Chapter 2.2.4.

3.2 *A Viúva Virgem* and *A Banana Mecânica*: Hysterical Men

Close analysis of the *pornochanchadas* contradicts the critics who claim that it is a univocally reactionary genre not only in general, but also in relation to gender since they offer a far from flattering portrayal of masculinity. Animated by the carnivalesque spirit of debasement, men are usually depicted as out of control, revealing yet another cycle of masculinity in crisis, now owing to the repression of the State and the threat posed by the budding feminist movement.

Under the totalitarian regime, Brazilian cinema in the 1970s was mediated by intense censorship. The impotence that arose from this repressive mood is illustrated by director David Cardoso's testimonial in the documentary *Boca do Lixo: A Bollywood Brasileira* (Daniel Camargo, 2011): "todo filme meu tinha que ir para Brasília. Tira a bunda daquela mulher, tira isso, esse palavrão não pode. Era uma castração." Although Cardoso's mention of castration is strictly in reference to censorship, the overall analysis of the corpus demonstrates that he inadvertently echoes a wider sense of disenfranchisement experience by men at the time. It seems that the feeling of powerlessness, translated strictly in sexual terms as emasculation, was therefore felt and articulated by these directors. In relation to the fears associated with women's sexual liberation, a symptomatic illustration is provided by the female protagonist (played by Helena Ramos) of the popular *Mulher Objeto* (Silvio de Abreu, 1981). The insult she uses to offend her husband (played by Nuno Leal Maia) is revelatory:

"machão incompetente, não sabe dar prazer para uma mulher." With the repressive regime and the increased visibility of the feminist movement combined, the films of this period reflect a general feeling of powerlessness experienced by men. This section looks at the way in which two films of the period — *A Viúva Virgem* (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1972) and *Banana Mecânica* (Braz Chediak, 1974) — portray a masculinity that verges on hysteria. Humour enables such a debasement, as the carnivalesque continues to exert a powerful influence in Brazilian cinema up to the present, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

A Viúva Virgem and *A Banana Mecânica* were hugely popular films seen by over 2.6 million and 1.1 million spectators, respectively. *A Viúva Virgem* is in fact the 55th most watched film in Brazil since 1970, when official records were first collected by the National Cinema Agency.⁴⁶ *A Viúva Virgem* tells the story of newly-wed bride Cristina (Adriana Prieto) whose powerful husband Colonel Alexandrão (Carlos Imperial) dies on his wedding night while attempting to consummate their marriage. Cristina moves to Rio de Janeiro and meets *malandro* Constantino (Jardel Filho), who is keen on marrying into her fortune. His advances continually fail due to the recurring appearance of the Colonel as a ghost whenever Cristina desires Constantino. Trying out a number of con tricks, Constantino introduces her to Paulinho (Marcelo Marcello), his sister's boyfriend, who is instructed to pretend to be gay in order to gain Cristina's sympathy and somehow cures her from her trauma. Cristina and Paulinho fall in love, and the film ends with them and several other couples having sex in the same hotel, until the police arrive and arrest them.

46. Ancine-Agência Nacional de Cinema 2013, n.p.

In *A Banana Mecânica*, the acclaimed psychoanalyst Dr. Ferrão (also played by Carlos Imperial) uses his status to gain access to his patients' beds.⁴⁷ He also spends a portion of the film trying to 'cure' a male homosexual (Frederico, played by Miguel Carrano), the main treatment consisting of a relentless repetition of the phrase "Eu gosto de mulher." Whilst Dr. Ferrão is irresistible to his patients, he fails to convince his fiancée Cristina (Rose di Primo) to sleep with him before their wedding. In a gesture of pure *malandragem*, Dr. Ferrão invents an experiment in a desperate attempt to seduce Cristina. In the continuous reversals of carnival, the plan goes wrong and the film ends with Cristina losing her virginity to Frederico, thus 'curing' him and transforming Dr. Ferrão into the humiliated figure of the betrayed husband, the archetypal *corno* (cuckold).

As these brief summaries disclose, there are various similarities between the two films: from the name of the female protagonists to the chaotic 'bedroom farce' ending involving various couples. The fact that Carlos Imperial plays the protagonist in both films is also significant. As the actor's name — Carlos Eduardo da Corte Imperial — coincidentally suggests, Imperial offers an ideal embodiment of the Rei Momo, "the burlesque lord of the revels from Brazil's carnival."⁴⁸ Probably better than any other carnivalesque figure, the Rei Momo encapsulates the typical crownings and uncrownings of carnival. Both Imperial's characters are gluttons whose excess extends to their sexual appetite. They are also figures of authority; in addition

47. The name of the film capitalises on the popularity of *The Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971, in Portuguese translated as *Laranja Mecânica*), banned for its disturbing banalisation of sex and violence. Although there is absolutely no connection with the film the title parodies, as Abreu explains (Abreu 2006, p. 118), the titles of the *pornochanchadas* often had little to do with the actual plot of the film, as the main objective was to appeal to the public and therefore generate good revenue. For more on the name of the film, see Dennison and Shaw 2004 (p. 166).

48. Stam 1997, p. 242.

to their titles, the names themselves reinforce masculine power: the augmentative of the Colonel's name (Alexandrão) reiterates his superlative bodily size and large paunch whilst the insinuation of rigidity and penetration contained in Ferrão's name⁴⁹ hints at his voracious sexual appetite. In *A Viúva Virgem*, the Colonel's gluttony leads to his demise, passing away from indigestion while trying to have sex with his new wife. The scene indeed unfolds as an attempted marital rape, which is prevented only by the Colonel's death.⁵⁰ The fact that there is an audience outside the door urging him on emphasises the masculine culture of virility and the spectacular nature of the carnivalesque.

The similarity of the two films' endings is worthy of note to the extent that they show the *malandro* being punished by losing the *mocinha* to the (genuine or not) homosexual character. His punishment, however, does not seem to be symptomatic of the *pornochanchada*'s moralistic stance suggested by critics, as it is strictly related to their masculinity. It rather seems to signal a failure that is strictly associated with their masculinity, not their code of conduct or morals. Rather than enforcing a moral message that disavows their behaviour, the punishment of these characters reveals the crisis in masculinity precipitated by the social turmoil of the time.

49. Ferrão is also a noun that translates as 'sting' or 'prickle.'

50. *A Banana Mecânica*'s Dr. Ferrão uses less coercive, but equally disreputable methods to have sexual access to his patients, as his theories and treatments are devised mainly with this objective.

3.2.1 'O Carnaval Vive, Viva o Carnaval'

The communal nature of the carnivalesque is emphasised by the characters' lack of psychological depth, which can be clearly observed in the films' endings, as both *A Viúva Virgem* and *A Banana Mecânica* end in chaotic orgies. In the final sequences of *A Viúva Virgem*, the screen is filled with half-naked people running from the police in different directions. The police arrest them and take them away in an open truck that resembles a carnival float.



Police car as carnival float at the end of *A Viúva Virgem*

By shifting the focus to the community's vibrant and disorderly plurality, it relegates individualism to a secondary plane. In Bakhtinian terms, these manifestations "refer not to the isolated biological individual, not to the private, egotistic 'economic man,' but to the

collective ancestral body of all people."⁵¹ Chaotic gatherings of people are indeed a commonplace in the *pornochanchadas*, e.g. *Cada Um Dá o Que Tem* (Adriano Stuart, Silvio de Abreu and John Herbert,⁵² 1975, in all the boarding house sequences); *Luz, Cama, Ação* (Cláudio MacDowell, 1975), like *A Banana Mecânica* and *A Viúva Virgem*, ends in a myriad of couples in the same physical location; dozens of teenagers are shown in the swimming pool scene in *Oh Dúvida Cruel* (an episode in *Já Não se Faz Amor Como Antigamente*, Anselmo Duarte, John Herbert and Adriano Stuart, 1976); in *A Árvore dos Sexos* (Silvio de Abreu, 1978), mice are released during a politician's speech creating pandemonium. These scenes suspend the films' narrative development and therefore represent the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque as the suspension of life, hierarchy and prohibitions, where there is "no distinction between actors and spectators,"⁵³ extras and stars, and all are equal.⁵⁴ The crowds involved in such scenes also demonstrate that carnivalesque laughter is not an individual or isolated comic event, but rather the laughter of all people. It is festive, universal (directed at everyone, including carnival's participants) and ambivalent (joyful, triumphant and deriding).⁵⁵

A carnivalesque festivity is enacted in *A Banana Mecânica* at Dr. Ferrão's feast, which is in fact very similar to the Gigante Piaimã's party in the critically-acclaimed *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1969), thus highlighting *A Banana Mecânica* as a significant example of a modern depiction of the carnivalesque in film.

51. Bakhtin 1984, p. 19.

52. John Herbert was once the *galã* in the *chanchadas*, in the *pornochanchadas* he played the 'silver fox' older lover and also worked as a writer and director.

53. Bakhtin 1984, p. 7-10.

54. Bakhtin 1984, p. 9.

55. Bakhtin 1984, pp. 11-12.



Carnival in *A Banana Mecânica* (left) and *Macunaíma* (right)



Dr. Ferrão (left) and Gigante Piaimã on the throne in *Macunaíma* (right)

In addition to the carnivalesque, popular cinema's swift reaction to the cultural trends of its time is seen in in *A Banana Mecânica*'s carnivalesque response to the new age philosophies of the 1970s.



Dr. Ferrão, the Alchemist

The last sequence of the film shows Dr. Ferrão's experiment. Initially appearing to be a reference the Ku Klux Klan or religious cults or processions, it may also hint at the wave of occultism that had reached Brazil in that decade, particularly influenced by Aleister Crowley's cult popularised by singer Raul Seixas and Paulo Coelho. The carnivalesque appropriation transforms the dark satanist cult into a colourful orgiastic party.



The participants of an experiment called 'sex-surprise'

A Banana Mecânica was released in the same year that Seixas wrote the widely popular song *A Sociedade Alternativa*, which called for an anarchic society⁵⁶ and resulted in Seixas's prosecution by the military government. The film ending visually reinforces the carnivalesque idea of life as a continuous circle through the incongruous couples: an old woman with a young man, an old man with a young woman, a black man and a white woman. Completely attuned to the cultural environment of the time, *A Banana Mecânica* cannibalises occultist practices and transforms Crowley's dark cult in a colourful celebration of sex and life as, in Bakhtin's words, "death is entirely drawn into the cycle of life."⁵⁷

3.2.2 The Carnavalesque and Race

Carnival has been largely associated with African culture, with the scantily-dressed *samba* dancing *mulata* (a mixed-race woman) as one of its best-known symbols. The depiction of an objectified — indeed presented as a dish standing on a plate — nude *mulata* is introduced in *A Banana Mecânica* in 1974 and persists in Brazilian media until the present.⁵⁸

56. The chorus exhorts, "faça o que tu queres pois é tudo da lei."

57. Bakhtin 1984, p. 359.

58. Since the early 1990s, prior to and during carnival, Globo, the largest TV station in Brazil, presents regular clips of the *mulata* *Globeleza*, who is shown dancing the *samba* wearing nothing but bodypaint. The vignette is shown during commercial breaks several times a day, with no time restriction.



Carnival then and now: *A Banana Mecânica* (left) as the prototype for the 1990s *Globeleza* (right)

In *A Banana Mecânica*, the *mulata* appears as part of a Pantagrueian banquet. A quintessential element of the grotesque style,

[i]n the banquet images [...] we have seen gross exaggeration and hyperbole. Such exaggeration is also inherent in other images of the body's life but is most strongly expressed in picturing the body and food. Here we must seek the deepest source and the creative principle of all other hyperbole of the Rabelaisian world, the source of all that is excessive and superabundant in it. [...] Exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style.⁵⁹

During the feast, various courses take the form of near-naked women, who are served up concurrently with dishes, thus echoing the association of the verb 'comer' and sex. Whilst the racist associations are clear in relation to the women and the origin of the dishes — e.g. an indigenous woman as the (also indigenous) *pato no tucupi* and the *mulata* announced as *feijoada* —, it also reveals more entrenched preconceptions. In popular culture, *feijoada*'s origin is rooted in the colonial period and it is said to have been invented by slaves using pork leftovers discarded by the masters. Gilberto Freyre furthers the association between

59. Bakhtin 1984, p. 303.

black women and food in his *Casa Grande and Senzala*, a highly influential, though heavily romanticised account of the social relations in colonial Brazil:

trazemos quase todos a marca da influência negra. Da escrava ou sinhama que nos embalou. Que nos deu de mamar. Que nos deu de comer, ela própria amolegando na mão o bolão de comida. [...] Da mulata que [...] nos iniciou no amor físico e nos transmitiu, ao ranger da cama-de-vento, a primeira sensação completa de homem.⁶⁰

Ignoring the power relations and the violence inherent to the interracial sexual relations in colonial Brazil, Freyre reinforces the normalisation of the objectification of black women, whose identity is described mainly in relation to the young, white colonial master, his nurturing and his sexual initiation.

A Banana Mecânica picks up on this founding myth that includes the reduction of black women to objects for the satisfaction of white men. The maid in *A Banana Mecânica* (played by Zezé Motta)⁶¹ welcomes the *patrão* to her bed, thus reenacting the same power relations at play in Freyre's description. The fact that the maid has no name or any line in the film, in addition to the interchangeability of her male partners (her boss and the detective played by Ary Fontoura) underscores the reduction of the character to her sexuality as well as the idea, which was already hinted at in passing with the maid character in *Garotas e Samba* (see Chapter 2.2.2), of female black sexuality as always available.

As these examples illustrate, the carnivalesque can also reveal a racist stance that legitimises the exploitation of black women and their sexuality. While this mechanism is particularly

60. Freyre 1992, p. 331.

61. Motta later became famous in more reputable (but equally sexualised) roles, such as the protagonist in *Xica da Silva* (Carlos Diegues, 1976).

detrimental to black women, the reduction of women to sexual objects, regardless of their race, was widespread in the *pornochanchada* as many critics have argued. Rarely mentioned, however, is the fact that this objectification has been instrumental in reasserting macho ideals while at the same time signalling their complete failure.

3.2.3 Masculinity in Crisis: Hysteria

The 1970s in Brazil saw the reemergence of women's movements, for the first time embraced as feminism. There was increased awareness of feminist issues with the visits of Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan (in 1960 and 1970, respectively)⁶² and Brazilian feminist historians consider the year 1975 as a turning point in the history of feminism in Brazil given the impact of the promulgation of the UN's International Women's Year.⁶³ They argue that this was a symbolic marker that stirred the until then closed and intellectualised groups into mobilising collectively.⁶⁴ Again completely attuned to their times, many *pornochanchadas* mocked feminism explicitly, signalling the perceived threat to male authority. Combined with the repression of the State, the threat of feminism resulted in men depicted as out of control.

Released a year prior to the promulgation of UN's International Women's Year, *A Banana Mecânica* was swift to react to these changes, as feminism is explicitly mocked in Pedro Aguinaga's visit to the psychoanalyst. Voted the best-looking man in Brazil in 1970,

62. Prado 1984, p. 82.

63. Ferreira 1995, pp. 171-172; Sarti 1998, p. 3; Sarti 2001, p. 31; Pinto 2003, p. 56.

64. Pinto 2003, p. 56.

Aguinaga plays himself as a patient of Dr. Ferrão's whose complaint is that he has been turned into a sexual object by women. The phrases used ("estou cansado de ser objeto sexual, já é hora dos homens se libertarem") echoes feminist claims and, although the tone of mockery is clear, similar discourses are still used in Brazil in more serious contexts, defending men's oppression and discrimination.⁶⁵ The camera echoes his words, moving increasingly closer to his face. This is the only close-up of a man in the entire film, and it has overtly sexual overtones. Despite the mockery, the scene is an interesting example of the double standards at play in the cinematic treatment of men and women in the *pornochanchada*. By placing a man in the object position usually reserved for women, the film dislocates the pattern and makes the objectification of women, as well as the lack of objectification of men, even more apparent.



Man as fetish: the camera lingers and zooms in on the face of Pedro Aguinaga, dubbed 'the most handsome man in Brazil'

Furthermore, the view of feminism as the pursuit of equal rights is generally debunked as women's emancipation equates to 'tirar a roupa,' in Dr. Ferrão's words. Liberation is therefore

65. A famous recent example is regarding the use of the Maria da Penha law, a specific law against domestic violence. Considered one of the greatest achievements in Brazilian feminist history, it has been verified that the law was not being used by judges under the allegation that it was discriminatory against men (*Globominas.com* 2008, n.p.). Contradictorily, it has also been used to favour male victims of domestic violence (Aranda 2013, n.p.). In 2012, a Joint Congressional Investigating Committee (CPMI) was organised to analyse the actual implementation of the law (*O Globo* 2012, n.p.).

ascribed a very restricted sexualised role, and implied is the fact that it is exclusively for the benefit of men.⁶⁶ This is not exclusive of comedies or to the Brazilian comedy, considering that

[t]he cultural transformations involved in the sexual revolution were primarily led by men, and largely reproduced the unequal relations of power between men and women while celebrating a normative promiscuity which, feminist critics suggested, benefited men more than women. [...] The rhetoric of sexual liberation legitimized male control of women's sexuality and make it impossible to 'say no' to sexual advances, they claimed.⁶⁷

The scene with Pedro Aguinaga unfolds as he reveals his addiction to sex (and the various victims of his condition), and tries to seduce Dr. Ferrão, once again mobilising anxieties around male homosexuality. Homosexuality is in fact so significant in the two films that it functions as a plot development device. In *A Viúva Virgem*, Paulinho masquerades as gay as part of a gold-digging con plan. Fake as well as genuine homosexuals are portrayed as caricatures, and homosexuality is seen as a pathology requiring cure or rescue. In addition to Dr. Ferrão's 'treatment' to cure Frederico, in *A Viúva Virgem* Cristina's interest in Paulinho stems from pity as well as a desire to make him 'normal,' i.e. heterosexual. It should also be noted that homosexuality in the context of these films equates to male homosexuality, as lesbianism is neither mentioned nor hinted at at any point. As Dennison observes, the visual gags representing homosexual rather than heterosexual sodomy reveal the threat presented by

66. Some famous dramas complicate this arrangement, particularly when the protagonist is female. *Pornochique* films such as *A Dama do Lotação* (Neville de Almeida, 1978) and *Mulher Objeto* (Silvio de Abreu, 1981) focus on married women searching for sexual satisfaction outside marriage, eventually causing their husbands' demise. *Quando As Mulheres Paqueram* (Victor di Mello, 1971) also revolves around three sexually liberated girl friends. The film ends with one of them in bed with two men, one of whom is black. A remarkably transgressive ending, the film was written by only one of the few women working in the creative side of the *pornochanchada*. Dilma Lôes was the scriptwriter and also acted as one of the film's protagonists.

67. Mottier 2008, pp. 57-58.

male homosexuality.⁶⁸ Operating within a strictly heteronormative matrix according to which there are only two conceivable possibilities in relation to gender, sodomy (being penetrated) equates to feminisation. As feelings of emasculation were widespread, as articulated by David Cardoso, the overwhelming number of references to effeminate men and male homosexuality is not surprising.

Carnavalesque references to the bodily lower stratum abound in the film, painting the picture of men's loss of control of their basic bodily functions. In *A Viúva Virgem*, a secondary character is in constant need of urinating at unusual moments (leading to comedy as he searches for an appropriate receptacle in which to relieve himself), and in *A Banana Mecânica* there is a four-minute sequence in which Dr. Ferrão is desperate to find a bathroom. At the end of a senseless chase in fast-forward motion, he utters "meu reino por um banheiro." Upon relieving himself, the metaphor is furthered as the soundtrack plays *2001 — A Space Odyssey's* motif, Richard Strauss's majestic *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. The exchange of his wealth for a place to satisfy such a basic human need is a perfect metaphor for the carnivalesque basic principle of degradation, in addition to hinting at the reversal of high and low culture through the appropriation of one of Shakespeare's lines.⁶⁹ Bakhtin indeed locates degradation as "the essential principle of grotesque realism, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity."⁷⁰ These depictions of the expulsion of

68. Dennison and Shaw 2004, p. 163.

69. "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" Richard III, Act 5, Scene 4, 10.

70. Bakhtin 1984, pp. 19-20.

bodily detritus also represent the pleasure in breaking taboos and the carnivalesque notion of life as a continual cheerful cycle of life and death, eating and excreting.⁷¹

Referring to that which is ejected from the body, the act of excreting also implies excess and, in this particular context, lack of control of the body, both of which are associated with the carnivalesque. Furthermore, the body out of control refers to hysteria and, not by chance, carnival has been described as hysterical crisis.⁷² Hysteria in these films is almost exclusively associated with men, despite the fact that the macho models cited by Ferrão as examples for Frederico to emulate are contained and stiff.⁷³ Male hysteria, Barbara Creed argues, is a response to male anxieties and fears related to the womb, defined as a "central signifier of difference and symbolic castration."⁷⁴ Indeed, Creed sees "the representation of male hysteria as a defence against the possibility of *symbolic* castration."⁷⁵ In *A Banana Mecânica*, sexual difference also poses a threat to male identity in a time of radical societal changes regarding gender roles. It is no wonder that director David Cardoso uses the word *castração* to describe the period in question.

71. "The image of feces and urine are ambivalent, as are all the images of the material bodily lower stratum; they debase, destroy, regenerate, and renew simultaneously. [...] On the one hand, these images are closed linked to laughter. When death and birth are shown in their comic aspect, scatological images in various forms nearly always accompany the gay monsters created by laughter in order to replace the terror that has been defeated" (Bakhtin 1984, p. 151).

72. Russo 1988, p. 222.

73. Dr. Ferrão mentions Jece Valadão and Marlon Brando, both known for playing macho characters. Valadão was known for playing villains since the *chanchadas* of the 1950s (see Chapter 2.2 on *Garotas e Samba*).

74. Creed 1990, pp. 125 and 127.

75. Creed 1990, p. 129 (italics in the original).

Whilst in horror films woman is the subject who bears the burden of displaced castration so that the male subject "may maintain an illusion of his own completeness and superiority,"⁷⁶ in these films it is the male characters who are debased. While heterosexual men are made to look like fools, in both films the male characters who end up with the *mocinhas* are (genuinely or pretending to be) gay. According to a heteronormative matrix whereby gender and sexuality are strongly connected and heterosexuality is one of the attributes — if not the main attribute — that traditionally defines masculinity, the fact that homosexual characters end up 'on top' suggests the failure of the masculine model portrayed throughout the film. Along the lines of Creed's argument, "hysterical images of masculinity [...] point out to the impossible nature of the phallic ideal, made even more so by the demands of the patriarchal cult of masculinity."⁷⁷ At a time when the patriarchal State was extremely repressive and authoritarian, the act of mocking the male characters underscores the derision of ideals associated with masculinity. As these ideals are the pillars for the notion of *Pátria* itself, these films indirectly offer a critique of the political moment in which they were made.

76. Creed 1990, p. 139.

77. Creed 1990, p. 133.

3.3 *A Super Fêmea*: The Faces of the Grotesque

The concept of the grotesque is so inextricably connected with the carnivalesque that critics often refer to it as the "carnival-grotesque"⁷⁸ or "carnavalesque-grotesque."⁷⁹ The notion of the carnivalesque includes the literary genre of 'grotesque realism' and is centred on the grotesque body⁸⁰ — the body of excess, the protruding body of becoming which illustrates the cyclical nature of the carnivalesque. The grotesque nature of the *pornochanchadas* often goes amiss among critics who dismiss them as bad taste. This attitude in itself illustrates how, "from the point of view of these [classical] canons[,] the body of grotesque realism was hideous and formless. It did not fit the framework of the 'aesthetics of the beautiful' as conceived by the Renaissance."⁸¹ Often flouting the rules of classical cinema and the principle of continuity editing,⁸² the *pornochanchadas* are, at varying degrees depending on the film, careless and nonsensical. Focusing on the body according to an unpretentious trashy aesthetics, these low-budget, unpolished, poorly finished and usually badly-lit films, in general convey a *grotto-esque* feel, as the following analysis of *A Super Fêmea* highlights.

A Super Fêmea (Aníbal Massaini Neto, 1973) is a particularly illustrative example of the grotesque at play. From the initial scenes, spectators see a relatively old woman who is heavily pregnant (as discussed in detail below) and an obese couple having sex in a lab room,

78. Michael Holquist in prologue to Bakhtin 1984 (p. 34).

79. Danow 2004, pp. 35-38.

80. Vice 1997, p. 149; Edwards and Graulund 2013, pp. 21-25.

81. Bakhtin 1984, p. 29.

82. Bordwell 1985, pp. 156-164.

both examples of "the extended, protruding, secreting grotesque body resisting and destabilising the monumental, static, classical body due to its openness."⁸³



Grotesque bodies in *A Super Fêmea*

A Super Fêmea was the third most watched film in its year of release with over 1.2 million spectators. It became a recognisable source of inspiration, as seen in later references such as *O Super Manso* (Ary Fernandes, 1974), and it still stands at position 147 of the 200 most popular films in terms of box-office receipts in the recorded history of Brazilian cinema.⁸⁴ Directed by Aníbal Massaini Neto in 1973, *A Super Fêmea* portrays contemporary anxieties associated with female empowerment and male impotence overtly. One of the first sequences creates a science fiction feel,⁸⁵ as it enacts an alleged scientific discovery — the creation of a male contraceptive pill — and its potential consequences. The 'masculine pill,' called 'No No Baby', is received with great suspicion by Brazilian men, who fear it will diminish their

83. Wills 1989, p. 136.

84. Ancine-Agência Nacional de Cinema 2013, n.p.

85. The film combines aspects from a variety of genres: comedy, science fiction, horror (as will be shown below). In encompassing a various cinematic 'languages,' it illustrates well the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia or 'many-languagedness' (see Chapter 1.2.3 for details).

virility. An advertising guru called Onan Della Mano (played by Perry Salles) is hired to create a publicity campaign in order to ease such fears. The campaign consists of finding the perfect female specimen, labelled the Super Fêmea⁸⁶ (played by Vera Fischer). The Super Fêmea is opportunely called Eva, highlighting her role as the primordial woman, the source of all life — and all sin —, through her sexuality. The advertising campaign consists of awarding Eva's virginity to its winning customer, and creates some complicating factors, such as Eva's romantic involvement with the guru and her desire for freedom. The film then poses the binary of virginity vs. sexual activity, thus re-establishing the virgin/whore dichotomy. The main plot is framed within a prologue composed of two sequences: one depicting a convention of militant feminists and a series of fictional interviews with the public, both of which will be discussed below. The closing sequence is a news report which includes scenes from the hospital where Eva gives birth, and from a carnival parade through the city streets in order to celebrate her achievement — bearing a hundred babies.

Although the carnivalesque focuses on the community rather than the constitution of subjectivity at the level of the individual, psychoanalytical concepts contribute to further the understanding of the cultural and political context of these films. Indeed, the connection between these two interpretative levels promoted by the grotesque is furthered by Mary Russo:

the grotesque is related most strongly to the psychic register and to the bodily as cultural projection of an inner state. The image of the uncanny, grotesque body as doubled, monstrous, deformed, excessive, and abject is not identified with materiality as such, but

86. The word 'Super' might be an ironic reference to the superhero comic book figure of Superman while the scientific terminology — the Super Female — contrasts with the alternative 'Super Mulher,' which would rather emphasise female empowerment.

assumes a division or distance between the discursive fictions of the biological body and the Law.⁸⁷

Furthermore, it is almost impossible to resist the utilisation of psychoanalysis when issues such as impotence, castration and anxieties related to female sexuality are so widely mobilised in the corpus. Psychoanalysis *per se* is a recurrent motif in the *pornochanchada* in general, as many films have a male psychoanalyst as protagonist (*A Viúva Virgem*) or as secondary characters trying to help the (troubled) female protagonist (e.g. *A Dama do Lotação* [Neville de Almeida, 1978] and *Mulher Objeto* [Silvio de Abreu, 1981]), reflecting the "psychoanalytical boom" in Brazil in the 1970s.⁸⁸

Some specific psychoanalytical tools seem particularly relevant to the study of *A Super Fêmea*. Barbara Creed's concept of the monstrous-feminine is of use as an interpretative key for fears associated with female sexuality in combination with Kristeva's notion of the abject as "the place where meaning collapses."⁸⁹ *A Super Fêmea* is particularly suitable for the investigation of the abject, as, due to the censorship's twenty-three cuts,⁹⁰ it became almost incomprehensible.⁹¹ Even discounting the censorship's intervention, *A Super Fêmea* can be accurately described as "on the edge of non-existence and hallucination,"⁹² as it completely and overtly subverts the norms of classical cinema: foreign languages (Italian and English)

87. Russo 1994, p. 9.

88. Russo 2012, pp. 166-168.

89. Kristeva 1982, p. 2.

90. Abreu 2006, p. 45.

91. Although this was probably not the filmmaker's intention — which was presumably to find as many creative ways as possible of displaying naked female bodies —, the film in toto, as received by spectators, is exemplary of the abject (i.e. the collapse of meaning).

92. Kristeva 1982, p. 2.

are spoken without subtitles; actors play more than one character without transition or explanation;⁹³ scenes involving the male protagonist invariably feature some type of unexplained magic⁹⁴ and fancy dress.⁹⁵ Following the tradition of the music hall, also strongly referenced in the *chanchada*, and the episodic *commedia all'italiana*, the sketches are often only loosely connected to the main plot. The film moves from one set piece to another, relying heavily on parody (of US films and the advertising world). The film's parodic stance combined with a *mélange* of tropes (Pygmalion, the genie in the bottle) and genres (comedy, horror, fairy tale, sci-fi) makes it a typical example of the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia.⁹⁶

Creed writes in the context of horror and although at first horror and comedy may appear diametrically opposite genres, there are in fact fruitful associations between the two. Like horror, comedy in "its brutal simplicity exposes a mainspring of popular culture."⁹⁷ Horror and the *pornochanchada* in particular, are both fecund corpora to explore the "material bodily lower stratum"⁹⁸ — horror in its grotesque depiction of faeces, urine, menstrual blood, etc, and the *pornochanchada* in its playful approach to scatology and its emphasis on sex. Both genres appeal to the lower body of the spectator, as seen in metaphors such as "it scared the

93. Geórgia Gomide is the feminist leader in the prologue sequence, the wife of a businessman and finally a production assistant in the publicity firm, all of whom are unnamed.

94. Similar to Robert Stam's argument in relation to *Macunaíma*, this could be seen as "a product of a hemispheric 'magic realism' that thrives on real-life cultural disjunctions coexisting in the same time and space" (Stam 1997, p. 351).

95. There are also several examples of reference to hippie culture through colourful, fashionable clothes.

96. For more on heteroglossia, see Chapter 1.2.3. In film theory it can be utilised to identify hybrid films like *A Super Fêmea*, which does not sit squarely in any generic formula.

97. Clover 1992, p. 116.

98. Bakhtin 1984, pp. 368-436.

shit out of me"⁹⁹ in regard to horror, and the association between urine and laughter or the intended real effect of sexual arousal in the case of sexploitation films.

As the Bakhtinian concept of grotesque realism connects the carnivalesque and Freud's conceptualisation of the uncanny,¹⁰⁰ this section will examine these two possibilities of the grotesque in relation to the same film. The combination of the carnivalesque with the uncanny, as that which is repressed through abjection, casts new light onto the view of gender against the wider scope of the *pornochanchada's* political, cultural and historical context.

3.3.1 Feminism: Empowerment as Threat

The carnivalesque appears under various guises throughout the film. Cannibalism in the de Andradean sense of appropriation of foreign cultural production¹⁰¹ is presented in the film's explicit references to Marlon Brando and *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972), and Fischer's costumes and hairdos influenced by Jane Fonda's *Barbarella* (Roger Vadim, 1968), to whom Eva is likened.¹⁰² A further indicator of the carnivalesque, as in most *pornochanchadas*, is that characters are not fully-developed individuals but rather archetypes.¹⁰³ The film's prologue scene is particularly revealing in that sense, as it frames the

99. Creed 1986, p. 68.

100. Mary Russo draws this parallel in a section entitled 'Two Kinds of Grotesque: Carnival and The Uncanny' (Russo 1994, pp. 7-10).

101. As discussed in Chapter 2.1.

102. Petermann n.d., n.p.

103. Dennison 2002, p. 201. The use of archetypes is also a characteristic of the *chanchadas*, the pantomime and the revue theatre traditions that influenced the *pornochanchadas*.

plot as well as the film's cultural and historical moment. The character played by Geórgia Gomide in this sequence is, to all effects, a feminist,¹⁰⁴ notwithstanding the fact that the words 'feminist' and 'feminism' are never used.¹⁰⁵ The militant feminist in *A Super Fêmea* is another illustration of the connection between the carnivalesque and the uncanny that the grotesque entails. Studies of the representation of feminists in the media of the 1970s and 1980s reveal a strong backlash against feminism that reinforced negative stereotypes, such as the self-righteous intellectual¹⁰⁶ and the man-hating woman (not unlike Dona Inocência),¹⁰⁷ who instigates war between the sexes.

104. This is understood in the light of the history of Brazil's feminist movement, which until the mid-1970s was known as the *movimento de mulheres*. The speech given by Geórgia Gomide's character nonetheless has a marked feminist tone, as her demands concern not only women's rights but reproductive rights in particular, a key issue for feminism. The fact that the film dates from 1973 shows its responsiveness to the social changes of its time, which is a common trait of popular cinema in general, and of the *pornochanchadas* in particular due to their mode of production — low-budget films produced *a toque de caixa*, i.e. hastily. For more information on the production of the films of this period, see Abreu 2006 (pp. 43-44).

105. There is only one direct reference to feminism in the film. In a press conference, Eva is asked what her view on feminism is, to which she quickly retorts: "É coisa de mulher." Reinforcing 'women's issues' as petty and unimportant, this example resonates the general mocking tone toward feminism, as will be discussed below.

106. Ferreira 1995, p. 185.

107. See Chapter 2.2.2.



Geórgia Gomide's unnamed feminist only appears in the prologue sequence

In a feminist reading, the "reintroduction of the body and categories of the body (in the case of carnival, the 'grotesque body') into the realm of what is called the political" is central.¹⁰⁸ This is particularly relevant in the case of the feminist leader, whose grotesque body is the medium for demanding political and social change. Her pregnant body — itself one of the embodiments of the grotesque — in combination with her bizarre clothes offer a prototypical depiction of the grotesque. The character's pregnancy adds to the image of the grotesque body as a body that is open, protruding, extended ("the body of becoming") in opposition to the classical body, which is static and closed, an aspiration of bourgeois individualism.¹⁰⁹

Painted on her robe over her prominent stomach, the female symbol is upside-down, with an arrow that is the incorporation of the, also upside-down, male symbol. The result is a body

108. Russo 1988, p. 214.

109. Russo 1988, p. 219.

that is both carnivalesque and uncanny. The return of that which was once home (the *unheimlich*) is symbolised by her pregnant body, the primordial *heim*.¹¹⁰ The uncanny as the surfacing of the repressed also appears in the exposure of fears related to female empowerment (the inverted gender symbols) and of foreign influence (her clothing and feminism itself), at a time when patriotism was central. The object of laughter and fear, the feminist's body depicts the "ambivalent redeployment of taboos around the female body as grotesque (the pregnant body, the aging body, the irregular body) and as unruly when set loose in the public sphere."¹¹¹ With a high visual impact that is reinforced by its separation from the main plotline, the effect generated by this opening sequence is clearly grotesque.

Ambivalence is at the core of the carnivalesque, and the feminist leader's speech is illustrative of the concoction of avant-garde topics and commonsensical conceptions:

Feminist leader (Geórgia Gomide): Abaixo o poder do homem!

All: Abaixo! [downward hand gesture]

Feminist leader: Está na hora de ficarmos por cima. Em todos os métodos de controle de natalidade os homens procuram tirar o corpo fora. Por que nós, mulheres, temos que arcar com as responsabilidades da gravidez?

[All scream]

Feminist leader: Chega! Os homens também têm que suportar esta carga [gets up and holds her pregnant stomach]. Não mais a igualdade de direitos, não mais a luta por uma posição já conquistada há muito tempo, mas a implantação definitiva do poder que faz reis e mendigos, a guerra e a paz, o poder que move o mundo, o poder feminino. Viva a supremacia das mulheres!

All: Viva!

Feminist leader: A partir deste momento, declaro a nossa assembleia em permanente estado de vigília para exigir a criação da pílula anticoncepcional masculina. Precisamos obrigar o homem a tomar a pílula, até por decreto se preciso for. Mulheres do mundo todo, uni-vos contra a pílula feminina, a favor da pílula masculina. Sigam-me as que forem brasileiras!

[Change of location — street — credits rolling]

All marching: Abaixo o poder do homem

110. Freud 2003, p. 15.

111. Russo 1988, p. 214.

Whilst the speech is bold in its focus on women's reproductive rights and shared responsibility in pregnancy, a topic that is still contemporary,¹¹² its depiction of feminism is nonetheless unsophisticated: it portrays the movement as based on man-hating, stemming from the cliché of the war of the sexes ("Está na hora de ficarmos por cima"), and ultimately suggests that feminists fight for supremacy rather than equality ("Viva a supremacia das mulheres!"). Common misconceptions presented in reactionary depictions of feminism, this stance also includes a denial of gender inequality ("Não mais a igualdade de direitos, não mais a luta por uma posição já conquistada há muito tempo"). This commonsensical portrayal of feminism inevitably functions to corroborate the undermining of the movement and its dismissal as hysterical and ultimately superfluous.

Fears over women's empowerment are revealed in a reference to emasculation contained in the slogan "Abaixo o poder do homem," which is repeated several times during the feminist speech and written on one of the placards at the march. The power in question is understood first and foremost as phallic power, as illustrated by the downward hand gesture that usually accompanies the phrase, and by one of the signs of the march — "Projeto de lei da gravidade", which is both a pun on the expression *projeto de lei* and a reference to flaccidness. The first placard seen on the march reads "Women's power" (in English), making

112. In Brazil abortion is still illegal except in cases of rape or mental or physical risk for the mother. The discussions regarding the Brazilian Supreme Court's recent decision to extend the right to terminate pregnancies of anencephalic fetuses have been a surprising reminder of the retrograde groups that remain active (and outspoken) in the country.

explicit the cultural influence of the North American feminist movement.¹¹³ The 'masculine pill' therefore refers to the re-appropriation of (phallic) power in the face of a threat as great as women's taking control over their bodies. The fact that the 'masculine pill' is saluted to the detriment of the 'feminine pill' is thus not surprising.

Another source of anxiety disclosed in the militant's speech is regarding the authoritarian State. The call "sigam-me as que forem brasileiras!" refers to the patriotic discourse that exhorted citizens to love — or leave — Brazil.¹¹⁴ In the following scene, the reporter reinforces ideas associated with national as well as state identity: "Um acontecimento, gente, um marco decisivo na conquista dos direitos da mulher. Toma as ruas a mulher paulista, como sempre, a dar um exemplo ao país. Desta vez, empunhando a bandeira da revolução dos sexos." These references to patriotic motifs in a genre that otherwise attempts to destabilise the main pillars of the military regime¹¹⁵ can be seen either as involuntary repetition or as sarcastic mockery. The former seems improbable, as the last sentence of the reporter's monologue suggests: "Dentro do nosso espírito democrático, vamos ouvir a opinião do povo." Eleven years into the military regime, in the penultimate of the *anos de chumbo*, any affirmation of the Brazilian democratic spirit can only be interpreted as mockery — a perfect illustration of the sort of euphoric *esculhambação* the *pornochanchadas* promoted.

113. Several articles on Betty Friedan can be found in the left-wing the newspaper *O Pasquim*, illustrating what the writers picture as the negative influence of North American feminism in Brazil in the early 1970s (see Soihet 2005).

114. Copied from the North American slogan (America, love it or leave it), the Brazilian version was formulated during the Médici regime, during which *A Super Fêmea* was made. This slogan was part of the paraphernalia of propaganda devised at the time, which also included the still famous "Pra frente, Brasil!" celebratory song supporting the efforts of the 1970 World Cup football team (Aguiar 2006).

115. Dennison 2002, p. 199. Dennison also cites the short propaganda films that obligatorily preceded the films at the time, with whom these instances of irony dialogue.

The ending of Gomide's character's speech ("uni-vos contra a pílula feminina, a favor da pílula masculina") is also infused in irony and mockery, as revealed by the phrases "contra a pílula feminina" and "a favor da pílula masculina." The contraceptive pill has been one of the greatest achievements concerning women's independence and reproductive rights. In Brazil, contraception had been an issue of increasing importance since the military coup in 1964.¹¹⁶ In addition to bringing to the fore a trendy topic at the time, the fragment "contra a pílula feminina" also echoes the view of military as well as church members, whose anxieties regarding women's empowerment, particularly in relation to their sexuality and reproductive rights, were surfacing at the time. The salutation of the masculine pill triggers the film's main plot and, as the film construes it, the medicinal function that is most strongly emphasised is not contraceptive, but rather the pill's interference with male sexual potency. The main plot line is precipitated by a fictional survey revealing that 83% of interviewees thought the male pill would cause impotence. As the film later shows, however, it in fact makes men more potent in what, to all effects, is *Viagra avant la lettre*.

Read against its wider historical context, the phrase "a favor da pílula masculina" therefore demonstrates an (unsurprising) alignment with a masculine stance, against the contraceptive pill — more broadly standing for female empowerment — and in favour of the resignification and reinforcement of male domination. Never truly challenging the spectators,

116. The so-called *anticoncontrolistas* (those against contraceptive control), among whom were the military and the Church, were averse to artificial methods of contraception and the idea of sex for pleasure and argued that Brazil needed to populate its territories in order to grow. The second group (*antinatalista*) was formed by certain politicians and economists who favoured the birth rate as a means to develop the country. These opposing groups could not reach an agreement, which made the creation of a unified official position regarding birth control in the country unfeasible (Petersen 2004, p. 137).

A Super Fêmea demonstrates well the Protean nature of the carnivalesque as it constantly oscillates between virility and impotence, fear and mockery. In yet another cycle of masculinity in crisis, the film illustrates attempts to solve the problem by exposing the anxieties associated with feminism while at the same time scornfully debasing it.

3.3.2 Masculinity in Crisis: Emasculation

The trope of masculinity in crisis continues in the *pornochanchada*, now exacerbated by the perceived threat posed by feminism. The trend observed in Chapter 2.1.2 is also present in *A Super Fêmea* as men are portrayed as hysterical and infantilised, continuing the ever earlier model of depiction of masculinity established in the *chanchadas* (see Chapters 2.1.3 and 2.2.1). It is often the case that in the *pornochanchadas* in general, and certainly in *A Super Fêmea*, such metaphors for disempowerment are taken further and men are portrayed as emasculated symbolically, and often literally as impotent.



Even babies laugh at a man who cries like a baby:
A metaphor in cross-cut in *A Super Fêmea*

In her seminal *The Monstrous-feminine*, Barbara Creed interprets *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) based on the association between women and the monstrous, with the support of Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection. Here understood as "all those things which threaten society's established boundaries, disturbing order or identity,"¹¹⁷ the abject also connects horror and humour, particularly in the comic use of scatology: "[a]bjection may explain why 'sick', morbid or scatological humour, or comedy that involves violence and pain, are so popular. Such examples go straight to the worry, addressing the inescapable bodily facts that are elided by manners."¹¹⁸ The abject then refers to the threatening, unsettling, borderline elements that are repressed ("elided") to reassert boundaries and enable the self to maintain his/her boundaries. The return of the repressed, i.e. the uncanny, is therefore a useful index of that which has had to be suppressed for the self to remain in control. In the case of the *A Super Fêmea*, the uncanny exposes the repression of female sexuality as well as of blackness — and attempts to suppress women and black people.

Although women are not construed as abject in the film (unlike blackness, as will be discussed below), abjection is a useful concept for understanding the role of women in the *pornochanchadas*. While some sub-genres of the *pornochanchada* connect women and abjection more directly (as is the case of prison films and films involving zoophilia)¹¹⁹ even in films like *A Super Fêmea* there is a resonance of this stance insofar as woman is excluded in

117. Jermyn 1996, p. 254.

118. Stott 2005, pp. 82-83.

119. For a comprehensive analysis of the Women in Prison genre, see Da Silva 2009.

order for male subjectivity to reassert itself.¹²⁰ As suggested by Mary Russo, the "grotesque returns as the repressed of the political unconscious, as those hidden culture contents which by their abjection had consolidated the cultural identity of the bourgeoisie."¹²¹ In *A Super Fêmea*, although Vera Fischer's image is far from abject,¹²² it is precisely Fischer's nationally-recognised beauty that is construed as abnormal through her association with a life-like doll. The familiar made unfamiliar, the uncanny is established with the introduction of the double¹²³ of the dummy or inflatable doll. The life-like dummy is one of the quintessential incarnations of the uncanny, as presented in Freud's original essay of 1919.¹²⁴ The film draws from an even older topos, the Pygmalion myth from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, in which the sculptor falls in love with his own work of art which then comes to life. Fischer's unearthly beauty signifies the return of repressed fears of emasculation — and indeed, annihilation of the male subject, as will be discussed below.

120. There is also enough evidence of a stance that verged on sadism towards women in the backstage of the *pornochanchada*. In *Boca do Lixo: A Bollywood Brasileira* (Daniel Camargo, 2011), actor Neide Ribeiro describes appalling situations, one that involved her vomiting in disgust after a sex scene with actor and director Jean Garrett and another in which she was buried alive. These examples demonstrate a not-so-hidden desire to suppress women through violence. See Chapter 3 n. 14 for more examples.

121. Russo 1988, p. 9.

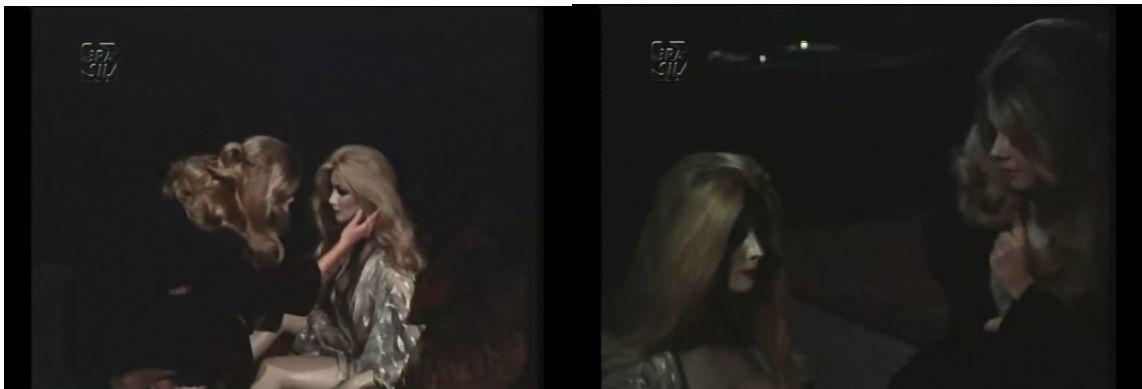
122. In fact, Fischer personifies ideal female beauty. Crowned Miss Brazil in 1969, Fischer's is an acknowledged and long-standing personification of beauty as she became a established television star and has remained so up to the present. Shaw and Dennison analyse Fischer's professional longevity as a blonde bombshell in Shaw and Dennison 2007 (pp. 167-173).

123. Russo 1994, p. 9.

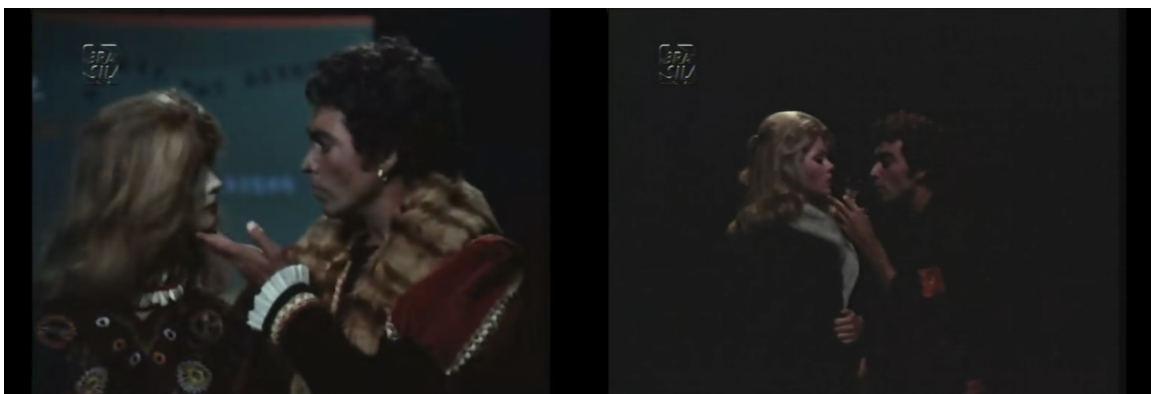
124. In 'The Uncanny,' Freud bases his theory on E. T. A. Hoffmann's character Olympia in the short story 'The Sandman' (Freud 2003, p. 5).



A rare close-up to emphasise Vera Fischer's plastic beauty



Eva's encounter with her doppelgänger



The film shows the male protagonist's inability to differentiate between human and non-human, reinforced by the similar mise-en-scène

The uncanny also comes into play with the complete fetishisation of Eva's body — to the point of it being conflated with an actual object. Like the mythological Medusa whose

powers are turned against her, the Super Fêmea's doppelgänger is petrified. Like the Medusa's hair, which Freud argues is a substitute for the phallus and therefore a fetish that helps reassure the existence of the phallus in the face of castration anxiety, the Super Fêmea's body as a whole is a fetish. Her body becomes the penis-substitute and the doubling of the penis-symbol functions as an attempt to stave off castration anxiety.¹²⁵ By becoming a doll with which the protagonist has sex, fetishism is literally enacted. Furthermore, Onan does not realise that he is having sex with a flesh-and-blood woman, thus reinforcing the narcissism involved in the creator-creation dynamics. In the case of Fischer's character, fetishism is clearly posed as she actually becomes a stiff object, but the argument could be extended to other female protagonists in the *pornochanchada*. Woman as phallic object could be seen not only as mere sexist objectification, but as a means to reappropriate masculine power at a time when sexual difference had become clear and threatening.

According to Creed, the monster as fetish does not represent a fantasy of the male fetishist, but the monstrosity of women's desire to have a phallus.¹²⁶ *A Super Fêmea* is a particularly interesting example as it conveys both: by being the fetish herself, Eva is the fantasy of the male fetishist (protagonist and spectator) and, through fetishisation, poses and denies women's desire to have phallic power, thus referring back to the wider framework of the film illustrated by the prologue sequence. Monstrosity therefore lies in the very possibility of women's sexuality — the "source of all evil"¹²⁷ — both to herself and to men, reviving castration anxiety. In Hélène Cixous's words, "[w]ho, surprised and horrified by the fantastic

125. Creed 1986, p. 67.

126. Creed 1986, p. 68.

127. Creed 1986, p. 52.

tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well-adjusted normal woman has a... divine composure), hasn't accused herself of being a monster?"¹²⁸ Cixous's quote aptly combines the monstrous and the divine, much in the same fashion as in *A Super Fêmea*, with Fischer's divine appearance juxtaposed with her threatening sexuality. Indeed, the name 'Super Fêmea' itself hints at her monstrosity, albeit attractive, through her dehumanising, beastly connection with nature. Appealing to the phallus and becoming the replacement of the phallus, Fischer's beautiful body in this context is, as Creed argues in relation to the sight of Ripley at the end of *Alien*, the "reassuring image of 'normal' acceptable female form"¹²⁹ in the face of the threatening monstrosity of female sexuality and women's emancipation. As the monster is fetishised, so is the Super Fêmea in her control over her sexuality and in the framing of her story in the wider narrative of female empowerment.

The threat of symbolic castration, here understood as the loss of male power in the public sphere at a collective level, is repeatedly shown in the film in the form of uncanny imagery.

According to Freud,

[d]ismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, feet which dance by themselves — all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them, especially when, as in the last instance, they prove able to move of themselves in addition. As we already know, this kind of uncanniness springs from its association with the castration-complex.¹³⁰

128. Cixous 1976, p. 876.

129. Creed 1986, p. 69.

130. Freud 2003, p. 14.

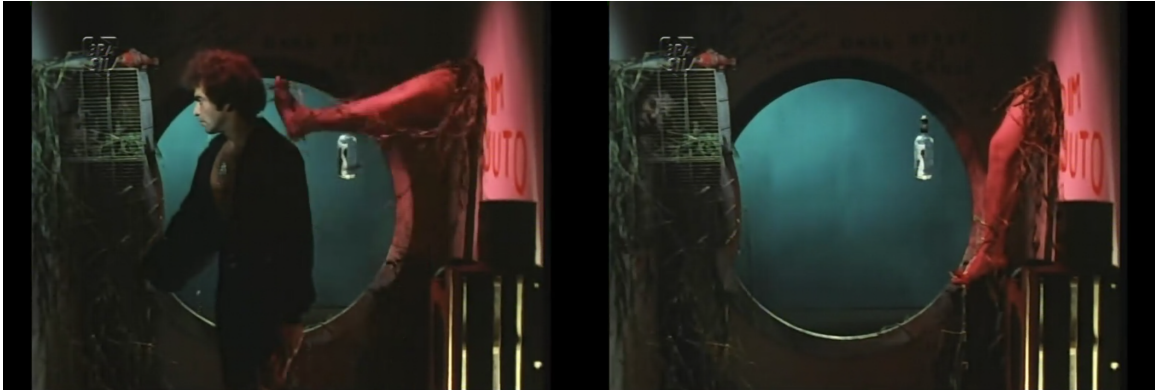


Severed male heads

Freud's citation provides an explanation for the unmotivated sequence depicting the moving severed heads found in Eva's flat. Like the Biblical Eva, the Super Fêmea's threatening independence is punished by persecutory, unwanted male attention, which in turn symbolises (through the severed heads) the anxiety her sexuality causes. The following scene shows Eva trying to escape this kind of harassment by driving her car aimlessly. The car, a commodity associated with masculinity¹³¹ that usually signifies freedom and individuality, is linked here with the female character and her pursuit of liberation.

Another example of the dismembered limbs symbolising castration anxiety appears toward the end of the film, when Onan goes back to the advertising agency to meet his boss (aptly named the Godfather) and is confronted with a moving head and leg, unattached to any body:

131. Usually connoting *arrivismo* and virility, the car constitutes "a primarily masculine fetish object" (Günsberg 2005, p. 77).



The entrance to the Godfather's office:
a dismembered leg (right) and a head in a cage (left)

The entrance to the Godfather's office is, as Creed points out in relation to the ship in *Alien*, a 'vaginal' opening, i.e. "an extreme primal scene fantasy where the subject imagines travelling back inside the womb."¹³²



Onan standing before the 'vaginal' opening

132. Creed 1986, p. 57.

This is the most grotesque sequence in the movie (culminating in a gruesome murder) and one that comes close to being horrific. The sequence develops with Onan confronting the Godfather, who, by pronouncing his name with a pause (God-father) emphasises his identity both as father figure and as animist omnipresence. Onan affirms his dominance as the real creator, illustrating the envy and narcissism mobilised as part of the fantasy of the male creator. The scene ends with Onan destroying the Godfather: in a psychoanalytical reading, a clear reenactment of the Oedipus complex. This scene takes place after Onan had sex with Eva, highlighting its Oedipal dimension.

Not recognising the difference between the doll and the real woman, Onan deflates the doll, therefore excluding the mother figure.¹³³ Exclusion is, according to Creed, "necessary to guarantee that the subject take up his/her proper place in relation to the symbolic."¹³⁴ By suppressing the mother figure, Onan is able to confront the father figure to reinforce his own identity: according to Kristeva, abjection is "a precondition of narcissism."¹³⁵ The desire to annihilate the woman, male narcissism is reassured and reinforced. References to Pygmalion follow, emphasising Onan's role as Eva's 'creator,' at least in his fantasy. Finally, Onan's name, a clear reference to masturbation, is revealing of narcissism, which also elucidates the supernatural phenomena in the film.

Our analysis of instances of the uncanny has led us back to the old, animistic conception of the universe, [...] and by the narcissistic overestimation of subjective mental processes (such as the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts, the magical practices based upon this belief

133. Furthermore, the confusion between Eva and the doll hints at Eva's crossing the border between the fully constituted subject and the partially constituted subject, between human and non-human, which is also an appropriate metaphor for the position of women in the *pornochanchada*.

134. Creed 1986, p. 46.

135. Kristeva 1982, p. 13.

[...]), as well as by all those other figments of the imagination with which man, in the unrestricted narcissism of that stage of development, strove to withstand the inexorable laws of reality.¹³⁶

Male narcissism is also iterated throughout the film, most notably in a montage sequence where Onan appears as the teacher figure in a number of different situations, and at the end of each Eva utters a series of compliments ("como você é inteligente/diferente/interessante/forte"). The sequence illustrates well woman's role as, in Virginia Woolf's apt metaphor, "looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size"¹³⁷ and what appears to be a infantile need for positive reinforcement at a time of a profound crisis in masculinity.

After destroying the father figure, Onan buries what one infers to be the deflated doll and he self-destructs. Although Hélène Cixous mentions the Siren in relation to men,¹³⁸ the mermaid is a fitting allegory for the position of woman in the *pornochanchada*: both beautiful and tempting, her seductive attraction poses the threat of engulfing (male) subjectivity.¹³⁹ In *A Super Fêmea* we see the enactment of this fear, as the male protagonist is engulfed into nothingness.

136. Freud 2003, pp. 12-13.

137. Woolf 2000, p. 35.

138. Cixous 1976, p. 885.

139. The Iara — the native Brazilian folk version of the Siren —, who destroys Macunaíma at the end of Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's film, is another example of such figure. Perhaps not accidentally, Vera Fischer's character is first spotted jumping into a swimming pool. Whilst in the movie this possibly serves as another opportunity to see her body unclothed, water is nonetheless a dual symbol that can be associated with life and birth (both references to the mother figure) and annihilation of the self, as in the case of the Sirens. Unlike horror and in typical carnivalesque fashion, the sequence lacks seriousness with its Benny-Hill-style chase and the clumsiness generated by the fast-forward and rewinding effects.



Onan 'deflates' and vanishes into nothingness

The failed attempt to destroy Eva — symbolised by Onan's deflation of the doll —, which can be seen as an attempt to suppress feminism (and ultimately, women), leads to his own demise. *A Super Fêmea* is perhaps one of the most radical examples of fears associated with female empowerment being enacted. While a myriad of *pornochanchadas* portray these fears and anxieties in the form of impotence and female betrayal, *A Super Fêmea* goes as far as enacting the literal annihilation of its all-powerful, narcissistic male protagonist.

Before this sequence, however, another — considerably more radical — exclusion takes place, when the only African-Brazilian (unnamed and very minor) character in the film is violently murdered.



Another doppelgänger is introduced, now functioning as a voodoo doll...



...to kill the only black character in the film

The only gruesome scene in the film posits racial difference as abject, i.e. that which, in Kristeva's words, "disturbs identity, system, order."¹⁴⁰ Otherness is objectified and destroyed for the reaffirmation of the self to take place. Pushing the argument to its limit, the film suggests that black people are to be "radically excluded" by being "deposited on the other side of an imaginary border which separates the self from that which threatens the self."¹⁴¹

140. Kristeva 1982, p. 4.

141. Creed 1986, p. 46.

Aligned with the whitening ideals present at least since the First Republic,¹⁴² in order to reinstate order and (white) identity, racial difference is negated and eliminated.¹⁴³

The last sequence of the film shows Eva returning to the city to give birth to a hundred babies. Although the primordial woman lives, and therefore prevails over the masculine figure (symbolising father and God), it is only so that she can perform her 'natural' maternal role, here posed as a patriotic duty (elevating Brazil to the status of *campeão de natalidade*). Once again, women are associated with the nation, in this case embodying the figure of "La buena madre," who, in María Donapetry's words, is "asociada con el principio de la vida, nacimiento, calidez, nutrición, protección, fertilidad, crecimiento, abundancia, etc."¹⁴⁴ The scene's comic tone also serves ambiguously — as the carnivalesque always is — to mock such patriotic ideals.¹⁴⁵ The orderly carnival-like parade, which Roberto DaMatta argues is contained as a form of State-sanctioned festivity as to encompass the authoritarian values of order and progress,¹⁴⁶ reiterates the father figure contained in the very idea of *Pátria*.

142. Dos Santos 2002, p. 72.

143. Forty years later, *O Som ao Redor* (Kleber Mendonça Filho, 2012) offers exquisite examples of the return of the repressed, here understood in terms of race. There abound uncanny moments where the fleeting figures of black young men appear in the movie, and a revealing nightmare sequence shows a mob of black children invading the household of a middle class family. The final scene suggests the murder of the white *senhor do engenho* by poor men he once wronged inside his own house.

144. Donapetry 2006, p. 34.

145. Another example of the nationalist motif is the several references to the "mito brasileiro da mulher, café e jogo."

146. DaMatta 1997, p. 55.

The nationalistic motif is recurrent in the film¹⁴⁷ and reintroduced, more markedly at the end, when Eva gives birth to one hundred babies. The surreal number of babies reflects other fears of the time, as in the 1960s and 1970s there was a

[...] preocupação de uma "explosão demográfica", que acabou legitimando uma série de programas de "planejamento familiar", destinados às camadas baixas, visando a redução da natalidade. O Estado mesmo, até a década de 80, não tomou nenhuma atitude controlista. Todavia, abriu espaço para que as entidades civis internacionais atuassem, como a IPPF — International Planning Parenthood Federation — Órgão financiador de programas de controle de natalidade como a BEMFAM, que distribuiu gratuitamente, pílulas para milhares de mulheres pobres neste país.¹⁴⁸

Enacting a literal *explosão demográfica*, the film is highly responsive to contemporary concerns and discussions. Furthermore, offspring of what is construed in the film as the creator and the primordial woman (Eve or, in Creed's analysis, the maternal figure), the babies make Brazil *campeão de natalidade*, echoing the military regime's obsession with ideals of progress and modernity as well as with the country's international image and reputation. The final carnivalesque parade held to celebrate Brazil's 'achievement' mocks the military regime's repressive appropriation of the positivist ideals of order and progress that since the proclamation of the Republic have been inscribed on the national flag. Furthermore, the tone and vocabulary of the animated female reporter counting the babies as they leave the surgery resemble the narration of a football match — perhaps not unwittingly, as Brazil had won its third World Cup title only two and a half years prior to the film's release. As

147. Another example is the several references to the "mito brasileiro da mulher, café e jogo."

148. Petersen 2004, p. 137.

epitomised in the football anthem "Pra frente, Brasil,"¹⁴⁹ ideals of progress, unity and patriotism were an essential part of the propaganda discourse during the dictatorship and this scene illustrates well how the mocking stance of the *pornochanchada* can provide "alternative filmmaking strategies expressing topics of interest that did not necessarily coincide with the military government's worldview."¹⁵⁰

There are instances, however, in which this process is momentarily disrupted and the possibility of female agency and protagonism (even if in the form of lack of punishment) is posed. In *A Super Fêmea*, up to the point where the doll is deflated, it could be argued that the film modernises the role of women in order to exclude them once again. As Creed argues, this device relocates woman to recuperate and control her — that which threatens the (male) subject is also what (re)defines him in his position of power. In Barbara Creed's words:

We can see its ideological project as an attempt to shore up the symbolic order by constructing the feminine as an imaginary 'other' which must be repressed and controlled in order to secure and protect the social order. Thus, the horror film stages and re-stages a constant repudiation of the maternal figure.¹⁵¹

"[S]imultaneously transgressive and 'recuperative,' the film reclaims the dominant cultural values it seems to violate,"¹⁵² only to deny them again, in a continuous cycle where no Manichaeian logic or definitive interpretation is applicable.

149. "Noventa milhões em ação / Pra frente, Brasil / Do meu coração / Todos juntos vamos / Pra frente, Brasil / Salve a Seleção / De repente é aquela corrente pra frente / Parece que todo o Brasil deu a mão / Todos ligados na mesma emoção / Tudo é um só coração / Todos juntos vamos / Pra frente, Brasil, Brasil / Salve a Seleção"

150. Stephanie Dennison paraphrased by Ruétalo and Tierney 2009 (p. 11). For the original article, see Dennison 2009.

151. Creed 1986, p. 70

152. Barry K. Grant cited in Ruétalo and Tierney 2009 (p. 6).

A Super Fêmea is an exemplary film of the operations in process in the *pornochanchadas* more broadly, with Eva as paradigmatic of the representation of women at the time. Conceived in an act of narcissism by the male protagonist, Eva escapes from his control and becomes an individual, overtly demanding freedom and emancipation. Male dominance attempts to reassert itself by destroying her, which precipitates the enactment of fears of emasculation and annihilation. While the attempt to suppress women/feminism fails, it is successful in relation to race and the black man is eliminated while a European-looking woman — whose beauty was officially sanctioned by the Miss Brazil contest, thus revealing the racist beauty standards of a largely black country — populates the country. *A Super Fêmea* enacts the racial anxieties of the time as the uncanny resurfacing of desires relative to the whitening of the country. Finally, the female character is associated with the authoritarian regime, an operation that was in fact performed also by the left, who felt it was legitimate to disqualify feminism as they saw women as culprits in the military *coup*.

3.4 The *Pornochanchada*: Conclusion

As with any carnivalesque text, the *pornochanchadas* occupy a "complicitous place in dominant culture."¹⁵³ However, whether or not it is true that spectators are never too challenged, either emotionally or intellectually, it is also true that dismissing these widely popular films as mere bad taste is, at best, reductionist. More fruitful than the putatively elitist stance upheld by critics is understanding the film as operating within the status quo whilst pushing its boundaries. This is often the case with the carnivalesque, as Russo argues:

the carnivalesque [...] has translocated the issues of bodily exposure and containment, disguise and gender masquerade, abjection and marginality, parody and excess, to the field of the social constituted as a symbolic system. Seen as a productive category, affirmative and celebratory (a Nietzschean gay science), the discourse of carnival moves away from modes of critique that would begin from some Archimedean point of authority without, to models of transformation and counterproduction situated within the social system and symbolically at its margins.¹⁵⁴

There is no one better than the producers of these films — essentially people "within the social system and symbolically at its margins" — or, in Bakhtin's thought, the idealised folk — to problematise and dialogue with the issues of their time. The analysis of *A Super Fêmea* demonstrates the wealth of meaning expressed in these films in the form of negotiations, reappropriations, reaffirmations and transgressions, always from a carnivalesque standpoint.

153. Russo 1988, p. 214.

154. Russo 1988, p. 214.

This type of analysis focuses less on the ideological intention of the films and more on the process of which they are part, and the reasons why they came into being — and thriving. As demonstrated in the close analyses of the films selected for this chapter, there is room, as well as a need, for a line of enquiry that addresses these films as cultural artefacts that are as complex as the Cinema Novo productions, regardless of their aesthetic value or political leaning. Such a line of enquiry allows not only for the identification of the uncanny as a major component in *A Super Fêmea*, but also for the establishment of a link between the uncanny and the repressive regime of the time in the form of "a generalized *alienation* from the-world-which-has-become-strange."¹⁵⁵ Indeed, the aim of this chapter has been to propose a reading that does not dismiss these films as *alienados*,¹⁵⁶ but, instead, analyses the reasons for their alienation and the ways in which they are, in fact, engaging politically, albeit not in the same way as the avant-garde films.

In 1960s Brazil, utopia, which emerged with Cinema Novo, was a response to a nonsensical reality. When that too failed, *avacalhação* became the only conceivable reaction — fighting absurdity with nonsense. From the failure of the elite's utopian aesthetic project, the people then created their own; a carnivalesque utopia where (real politically-motivated) torture and death gave way to absurd laughter, a hysterical laughter that disclosed a failed model of masculinity embodied by the violent, repressive *Pátria*.

155. Russo 1994, p. 9 (my italics).

156. A word which, in Portuguese, is pejorative and strictly associated with political disengagement.

The close analyses of *A Árvore dos Sexos*, *Berenice*, *A Banana Mecânica*, *A Viúva Virgem* and *A Super Fêmea* shows that the connection with the carnivalesque, already established in relation to the *chanchada*, continues in the *pornochanchada*. The instances in which the carnivalesque operates as the main framework and driving force are not isolated cases chosen for this study, but rather a generalised trend in the cinema of the time:

By foregrounding the functions of what Bakhtin calls the 'lower bodily stratum,' the genitals, the anus, urine, excrement, and excrescences, and invoking the abject body as a risible concept to be laughed at rather than feared, its power of horror may be lifted and our fear of decay and degeneration alleviated. But the comedy of abjection is also a confirmation of the frail foundation of civility, locating subjectivity within material existence, acknowledging the weakness of the body and the omnipotence of filth, and raising themes that are impermissible elsewhere.¹⁵⁷

The carnivalesque therefore offers a relevant paradigm to understand at once the process of *avacalhação* as a means to sublimate fears into laughter and the discontent with the foundation of civility, which is particularly relevant in a period where civil life was fundamentally permeated by repression and violence.

As the main objective of the *pornochanchada* directors and producers was generating profit rather than political statements, these films did not attempt to radically subvert the values of the dictatorial regime. However, they are constantly transgressing the boundaries, be it by breaking with the classical Hollywood narrative or by mocking the ideals on which the regime was built. Whereas classical Hollywood cinema implies passive consumption of a set of norms internalised as natural and seamless, this type of 'imperfect cinema' "shows the conditions of technical impoverishment and awakens the audience to critical consciousness"

157. Stott 2005, p. 82.

as "the transparent surface of classical cinema becomes a way of lulling the audience into passive consumption."¹⁵⁸ Although these films never quite challenged spectators in an overt way, they nonetheless forced them to be confronted with their powerlessness in the face of the authoritarian regime and the feminist demands for emancipation. The representation of masculinity is self-deprecating — in a typically carnivalesque way, laughing at everyone including oneself¹⁵⁹ —, but still operating within a *machista* framework. By literally portraying men as impotent and by enacting their annihilation, by portraying women's empowerment (through money or their sexuality), these films pushed the boundaries of the horizon of expectations, making these representations more conceivable and consequently more viable.

This is not to argue that the view of the *pornochanchada* in relation to women is benevolent, progressive or empowering. Virtually all films of the period portray women as sexual objects and often with sadistic overtones. Rather, this line of enquiry proposes regarding this essentially oppressive representation of women as a way to cope with a crisis in the contemporary model of masculinity. As David Cardoso clearly expressed, there was a palpable feeling of emasculation experienced by these directors and the constant objectification of women comes as a means to compensate for a sense of failed masculinity, both in the face of women's increased empowerment and in the face of the authoritarian regime.

158. Tierney 2009, p. 118.

159. Stam 1989, p. 87.

As titles such as *A Viúva Virgem* suggest, the conventional binaries of femininity, particularly the virgin-whore dichotomy, continued to be posed and reinforced. As the plots of the films demonstrate (*A Viúva Virgem*, *Berenice*, *A Banana Mecânica*, *A Super Fêmea*), virginity is consistently portrayed as a prize or currency for exchange. They are nonetheless expanded to encompass and contain cultural change such as the sexual revolution and women are portrayed as independent, either financially (*A Viúva Virgem*) or sexually (*A Super Fêmea*, *Árvore dos Sexos*). As the carnivalesque displays "a common social body which is endlessly regenerating itself,"¹⁶⁰ this regenerating cycle is also observed in relation to masculinity. As Susan Besse's central thesis proposes in *Restructuring Patriarchy*,¹⁶¹ the patriarchal discourse is revamped to accommodate for social changes without significantly disturbing power relations.

As the examples in this section have demonstrated, the carnivalesque can serve to transgress the status quo while also perpetuating oppressive myths, such as those related to black women's sexuality. As has been delineated in the previous chapter and as this analysis confirms, a Manichean categorisation of these films as subversive or reactionary seems, at best, limited to the understanding of the carnivalesque and its inherent ambivalence.¹⁶² This is not to say that these films are revolutionary or that they had revolutionary aspirations (as Cinema Novo did), but rather that through *avacalhação*, they offer a chaotic form of critique. It is therefore probably not surprising that representations of hysterical men abound in this

160. Minogue and Palmer 2006, p. 103.

161. Besse 1996.

162. Bakhtin goes as far as saying that carnival is "not an impediment to revolutionary change, but revolution itself." Michel Holquist in prologue to Bakhtin 1984 (p. xviii).

period. As Clair Wills has argued in reference to Luce Irigaray, men depicted as out of control signify that "the 'unconscious' of bourgeois (and fascist) identity is a historically repressed femaleness."¹⁶³ In the case of the *pornochanchada*, this repressed femaleness indicates the feelings of disenfranchisement and powerlessness in the face of the authoritarian State on the one hand, and women's empowerment on the other. If in the *chanchada* masculinity as excess was restricted to the comic characters, who overtly displayed fear and cowardice and counterbalanced by the normative behaviour of the *mocinho*, in the *pornochanchada* no counterbalance was offered, and spectators were left with a strident outburst of laughter, fear, sexual arousal, urine and faeces of a Rei Momo of sorts.

163. Wills 1989, p. 138.

4 THE GLOBOCHANCHADA

After the mid-1980s, the Brazilian soft-core porn industry was no longer able to compete with foreign hard-core films and local production eventually went stale.¹ The last decade of the 20th century witnessed the dismantling process of the Brazilian industry, which culminated in President Fernando Collor de Mello's shutdown of cinema incentives and crucial funding bodies such as Embrafilme.² Brazilian cinema reemerged in what came to be known as the *Retomada* ('revival') in the mid-1990s. It is against this backdrop that, in 1998, the Globo conglomerate, the second largest multimedia network in the world, formed its film division, Globo Filmes. By 2007, Globo Filmes had co-produced and/or distributed all of the national top 20 grossing films since the *Retomada*.³ This represents a shift in the production of popular cinema in Brazil, moving from an almost artisanal mode of production towards more refined and highly professionalised production involving partnerships with international bodies. Also distinctive is the fact that the Globo conglomerate constitutes a monopoly in the

1. Abreu 2006, p. 12.

2. Nagib 2003, pp. 5-8.

3. Donoghue 2011, p. 56.

Brazilian media due to its clear conservative political agenda.⁴ Indeed, Globo has been defined as "an economic, political and ideological institution."⁵

In 2009,⁶ during a debate at the fourth Mostra de Cinema de Ouro Preto, director Guilherme de Almeida Prado coined the term *Globochanchada* to refer to the comedies produced by Globo Filmes.⁷ The term, which remains untheorised, clearly situates this body of films within the carnivalesque tradition of Brazilian cinema, following on from the *chanchada* and the *pornochanchada* cycles. While the carnivalesque cinematic lineage continues with the *Globochanchada*, there are also crucial differences and shifts in comparison to the previous decades. Whereas *chanchada* directors parodied the polished films produced by Hollywood and *pornochanchada* directors embraced the national cinema's technical constraints in a rebellious stance of *avacalhão*, the *Globochanchada* reaches the same glossy standards of Hollywood movies, and partly due to the giant Globo's own technical know-how (derived from their telenovela production), partly due to partnerships with US production companies such as Total Entertainment and Twentieth Century Fox.⁸ Instead of the trashy aesthetics of

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4. The British documentary *Beyond Citizen Kane* (Simon Hartog, 1993) offers a remarkable overview of the political leanings of the Globo Group, comparing its founder Roberto Marinho to the fictional media tycoon Charles Foster Kane. The documentary, which was banned in Brazil, shows the editorial manipulation of the 1989 presidential debate, favouring the then candidate Fernando Collor de Mello to the detriment of his opponent, Lula da Silva. In 2011 it became clear that Globo had a pivotal role in electing Collor, as José Bonifácio, then director of the group, admitted they fabricated evidence against Lula da Silva in the same debate (*Pragmatismo Político* 2011, n.p.).
 5. Sinclair et al cited in Donoghue 2011 (p. 55).
 6. Since the films being discussed in this chapter were made in the last six years, the majority of critical appreciations have been in newspaper reviews or on the internet, and it is this body of criticism to which I will make reference.
 7. Alpendre 2009, n.p.
 8. As in previous cycles, however, there is an increasing trend of films of this period being made *a toque de caixa*, to echo the expression used by Nuno César Abreu in reference to *pornochanchada* production. Roberto Santucci directed two hugely popular *Globochanchadas* in 2012, *De Pernas pro Ar 2* and *Até que a Sorte Nos Separe*, resulting in a substandard final product, as attested by *De Pernas pro Ar 2* with its poorly executed chroma-keys and mismatched angles.

the *pornochanchada*, there is now a valorisation of what is often referred to as the *padrão Globo de qualidade*.⁹

Executive Director Carlos Eduardo Rodrigues divides Globo Filmes production into three phases:

[t]he first three years were learning, working with three or four features per year. Most of them were great brand names associated with TV, such as Xuxa or Renato Aragão, or adaptations of some of Globo's TV series, such as *O Auto da Compadecida*. Our second phase was marked by a strong development period and a greater participation of Globo Filmes in movies not associated with TV... Finally, in our third period, from 2005 to date, we are trying to put to use those long years of experience to improve our actions, always looking for new ways to support and invest into Brazilian cinema.¹⁰

According to Rodrigues's description, the third phase entails more than technical development and experience, implying new stylistic choices and an approximation with US cinema. While the two initial phases encompassed a significant number of films with regional flavours such as *O Auto da Compadecida* (Guel Arraes, 2000), *Lisbela e o Prisioneiro* (Guel Arraes, 2003) and *Deus É Brasileiro* (Cacá Diegues, 2003), the third phase arguably focuses on the Rio-São Paulo axis as denoting a kind of homogeneously national experience. Furthermore, as in previous cycles, the *Globochanchada* continues the close connection to Hollywood, but now in a fundamentally different way — on equal terms. As producer and director Daniel Filho assertively argued when *Se Eu Fosse Você 2* (2009) broke audience records,

[é] a vitória contra o "derrotismo" que paira sobre as artes brasileiras. Ser a quinta bilheteria do Brasil, atrás de *Titanic* e dos três *Homem-Aranha*, mostra que temos fôlego e que o

9. Donoghue 2011, p. 55.

10. Cited in Donoghue 2011 (p. 61).

público brasileiro está pronto para receber o que é nosso cinema popular bom e sem legendas.¹¹

If on the one hand there is a concern to make films that speak to the Brazilian public, on the other the *Globochanchadas* approach Hollywood less critically than the *chanchada* and the *pornochanchada*. Against the backdrop of Brazil's economic development, Globo Filmes appears confident in its use of Hollywood formulae, adapting its cinematic style to a local market strongly influenced by TV:

They represent a new variety of commercial filmmaking that has emerged since the *retomada*. Their work, which blurs the traditional lines between these [TV and cinema] industries, exhibits the shifting nature of Brazilian film-making towards more transnational, market-driven and cross-national practices combined with culturally specific themes and narratives.¹²

The shift in the third phase of the *Globochanchadas* roughly coincides with the political, social and symbolic changes since the beginning of President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva's mandate in 2003, later followed by Dilma Rousseff's government in 2012. The end of the military dictatorship in 1984 was followed by the processo de abertura, which crucially did not equate to redemocratisation in terms of representation. With the Lula government, the first left-leaning mandate since the beginning of the authoritarian regime in 1964, effective social changes began to take place as a number of measures aiming at wealth distribution and

11. Arantes 2009, n.p.

12. Donoghue 2011, p. 60.

historical retribution for minorities have been implemented.¹³ As a consequence of this increased awareness and tackling of social and racial issues, this was perhaps the first time since the development of mass media in Brazil that minorities such as indigenous peoples, women and people of colour were effectively seen and heard.¹⁴ These unprecedented symbolic changes, an index of the climax of the process of redemocratisation, have shaped, more or less subtly depending on the film, the way movies represent reality. The *Globochanchada*, inherently connected with the conservative agenda of the Globo conglomerate, reacts to these changes in the form of backlash, often with an overt promotion of traditional institutions such as the family and the Church, as will be discussed below.

The trope of masculinity in crisis discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 continues in this period. Threatening to the 'bourgeois (male) ego' in the *Globochanchada* are the increased demands on masculinity through consumerism in a time when the *classe trabalhadora*¹⁵ has been

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13. To cite the most relevant examples, the Secretaria de Políticas para as Mulheres and the Secretaria de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial were created in 2003; *Bolsa Família*, a conditional cash transfer programme, was implemented targeting over 13 million families under the poverty line (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social n.d., n.p.); racial quotas at higher education level started being implemented by some universities in 2004, and in 2012 President Dilma Rousseff signed a law reserving the remarkable number of 50% places at state-funded universities — the most prestigious in Brazil — for students from state-funded schools; since 2009 gender quotas in politics have been instituted, albeit less successfully (for more on the shortcomings of gender quotas in politics, see Frayssinet 2012, n.p.).
 14. The results of these policies in terms of representation are palpable. The 2012 elections broke a historic record in numbers of elected female mayors (see Frayssinet 2012, n.p.). Additionally, in the 2010 census, for the first time in Brazilian history, more than 50% of the population officially self-declared black or brown (in Brazil, the criterion for race is self-identification), which is also a historic record, making Brazil for the first time a majoritarily black country. IBGE — *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística 2011*, n.p.). Finally, in April 2013 over 300 indigenous people occupied the chamber of deputies to protest against detrimental measures regarding the demarcation of indigenous territories (Costa 2013, n.p.).
 15. Because the UK class system diverges from the Brazilian, the phrase in Portuguese will be used in order to avoid the connotations associated with 'working class' and 'middle class' in British English.

expanding rapidly and in unprecedented numbers.¹⁶ As Marilena Chauí argues, the *classe média* has experienced what she calls the "pesadelo da proletarização," i.e. a hysterical fear of downward mobility:

os programas sociais dos últimos dez anos do Brasil balançaram a classe média. [...] Ela está completamente em pânico porque tem o sentimento de que o seu espaço foi invadido e é por isso que [...] não tem uma nova classe média, [o que houve foi] uma bruta expansão da classe trabalhadora [...]. [Trata-se de um] equívoco achar que foi a classe média que se expandiu. [...] Ela se sente completamente ameaçada porque o poder do Estado infelizmente, por enquanto, não está totalmente nas mãos da burguesia [...] e o poder social não está nas mãos da classe média. Então ela se sente ameaçada, acuada, como se o mundo tivesse posto em risco todos os seus valores.¹⁷

Chauí further argues that, considering that the *classe dominante* holds the means of production and the *classe trabalhadora* detains the work force and social power (when mobilised in unions, for example), the *classe média* exerts its power in the field of ideology. As a main promoter of the ideal of the *classe média*, it is with this 'crisis in values' that the *Globochanchada* dialogues and against which it reacts.

Chauí raises an additional concept relevant for this chapter. She argues that "a classe média opera com signos de prestígio."¹⁸ Indeed, the Lula government has been criticised by promoting citizenship through consumerism¹⁹ and while the nature and consequences of the

16. The Secretaria de Assuntos Estratégicos da Presidência da República noted that "entre 2004 e 2010, 32 milhões de pessoas ascenderam à categoria de classes médias (A, B e C) e 19,3 milhões saíram da pobreza" (Secretaria de Assuntos Estratégicos da Presidência da República — SAE n.d., n.p.). In terms of participation in the economy, "[e]nquanto os 50% mais pobres da população aumentaram sua participação na renda nacional de 10,07% em outubro de 2002 para 12,24% em outubro de 2005 e os 40% da faixa intermediária o fizeram de 39,83% para 41,45%, os 10% mais ricos tiveram sua participação reduzida de 50,10% para 46,31%" (De Souza 2008, p. 321).

17. Chauí 2012, n.p. (video).

18. Chauí 2012, n.p. (video).

19. Safatle 2012, (video).

wealth distribution measures implemented by the Lula and Dilma governments are more complex than this reductive comment suggests, the topic of consumerism has always been a staple of Brazilian popular comedies. Whilst "[c]omedy as a genre has long been linked to sex and materialism" and "sexual and material desires have inevitably been twinned,"²⁰ in the *Globochanchada*, particularly in its third phase, the coupling of the two has been done rather consciously as cinema, like the telenovelas,²¹ became a promoter of lifestyles irrevocably linked with conspicuous consumption. The emphasis on consumerism, particularly as strictly related to women, serves not only to reinforce the gold-digger stereotype already present in the character of Naná in *Garotas e Samba* in 1957 (see Chapter 2.2.3) — it reveals a much more complex mechanism that associates consumption with identity. Describing the evolution of the focus group, the documentary *The Century of the Self* (Adam Curtis, 2002) explains the profound consequences of the lifestyle-based consumerist culture:

The original aim of the focus group has been to find ways to entice people to buy a limited range of mass produced goods. But now focus groups were used in a different way to explore the inner feelings of lifestyle groups and out of that invent a whole new range of products which would allow those groups to express what they felt was their individuality. And the generation that once rebelled against the conformity imposed by consumerism now embraced it because it helped them to be themselves.

A lifestyle-based consumerist culture finds its echo in films that are intrinsically driven by and focused on the individual. Against this backdrop, social demands that have been historically mobilised around the collective, such as feminism, are relocated towards the individual, as hinted at by the citation from Curtis above, and sexuality acquires a central

20. Günsberg 2005, p. 60.

21. For further reading on the Brazilian telenovelas and their social impact, see for example Gorney 2001, where the author argues that the telenovelas played a pivotal role in helping decrease the fertility rate in Brazil.

role. In popular cinema, sexuality has always been employed to elaborate on gender-related anxieties of the changing times, as seen in the case of Naná's independence in *Garotas e Samba* (Chapter 2.2) and anxieties around female emancipation, control and fertility as analysed in *A Super Fêmea* (Chapter 3.3). Consumerism and identity become closer than ever in the *Globochanchada*, a telling example of which is the remarkable number of characters in the *Globochanchadas* playing advertising executives.²² Similar to a trend recognised in the US — particularly relevant to this chapter given that contemporary Brazilian popular comedies rely heavily on the Hollywood tradition —, sexuality and the self have become so inextricably linked that "[s]exuality, in all its guises, has become a kind of lightning rod for this generation's hopes and discontents (and democratic vision) in the same way that civil rights and Vietnam galvanised [a previous] generation in the 1960s."²³ As will be discussed in this chapter, this relocation can acquire reactionary tones and serve to demobilise, delegitimise and neutralise progressive demands.

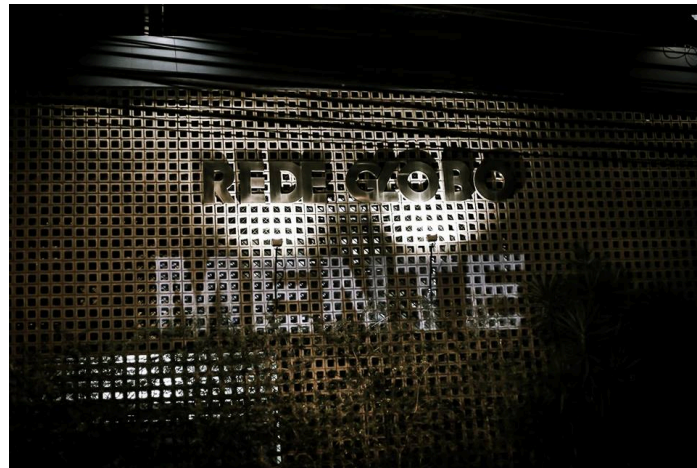
As the protests that began in June 2013 attest, there is a discernible political crisis in contemporary Brazil, at the core of which is representation. The population is outspoken in its discontent with a coalition government in which the division between left and right is blurry and which has gradually distanced itself from social movements.²⁴ Although the discussion around the media in broader terms is outside the scope of this thesis, the research into the

22. Although there were advertising executive characters prior to the current period (like Onan in *A Super Fêmea*), just in the small corpus of this study all the protagonists are in the advertising business (Cláudio in *Se Eu Fosse Você*, Alice in *De Pernas pro Ar* and Pedro in the TV spin-off series of *A Mulher Invisível*). More information on the corpus of this chapter will be given below.

23. Henry 2004, p. 75.

24. This is seen in an increasing anti-partisanship feeling (see *O Povo* 2013, n.p.). Regarding the distancing of the current government from the social movements, see Takata 2013, n.p.

Globochanchada, which is produced by the epitome of the conservative media in Brazil, offers an enlightening perspective on the traditional discourses that on the one hand promote a backlash to this emerging outcry for popular representation and on the other co-opt socially progressive — including feminist — demands.



Protest in front of the Rede Globo headquarters in Rio on 7 August 2013
Photo by Mídia NINJA (Narrativas Independentes, Jornalismo e Ação)

The three films analysed in this chapter are *Se Eu Fosse Você* (Daniel Filho, 2006), *A Mulher Invisível* (Cláudio Torres, 2009) and *De Pernas pro Ar* (Roberto Santucci, 2011). All remarkably popular with audiences, these films serve to explore various facets of the genre in relation to the representation of gender. *A Mulher Invisível* retells the myth of Pygmalion, which has a long tradition in Hollywood and dialogues well with *A Super Fêmea* (see Chapter 3.3). It also presents an updated version of an old-fashioned model of femininity, as will be discussed in detail in section 6.1. *De Pernas pro Ar*, one of the few *Globochanchadas* with a female protagonist,²⁵ focuses on the dilemma of working women and the unequal

25. Other examples include *Divã* (José Alvarenga Júnior, 2009), *Muita Calma Nessa Hora* (Felipe Joffily, 2010) and *Avassaladoras* (Mara Mourão, 2002).

division of labour, and offers relevant insights on the stance on female emancipation in popular culture and the co-opting of discourses around female emancipation. Finally, *Se Eu Fosse Você*, the most successful *Globochanchada* to date, inaugurates in Brazilian cinema a premise that is largely popular in Hollywood — that of the body swap. The division between body and mind promoted by the film suggests a crucial shift in relation to the carnivalesque, a shift which has a noticeable influence on the representation of the intersection between class and consumerism.

Although director Kleber Mendonça Filho has argued in a much-publicised argument with Globo Filmes Executive Director Carlos Eduardo Rodrigues that the success of the *Globochanchada* relies on cross-platform promotion, scholars note that the popularity of films produced by Globo is not guaranteed, as more and more films made outside the Globo system are seen by over one million spectators.²⁶ Therefore, the three films analysed in this chapter are understood as part of a system that facilitates their success, but that are also particularly efficient at speaking to spectators. Although box office success is the main criterion for selecting the films analysed in this chapter, the fact that these three movies are part of the third phase of the *Globochanchada* is also relevant as they provide an overview of this crucial phase of representation of minorities — when minorities are more visible if not allowed to speak —, with focus on gender.

26. Donoghue 2011, p. 57.

4.1 *A Mulher Invisível*: From Feminisation to *Malandragem*

A Mulher Invisível (Cláudio Torres, 2009) was the second most watched Brazilian film of 2009²⁷ with over 2.3 million spectators and its success generated a homonymous spin-off series on television with the same core actors (Luana Piovani and Selton Mello). *A Mulher Invisível* tells the story of Pedro (Selton Mello), a traffic controller who is unconditionally in love with his wife, Marina (Maria Luisa Mendonça). In the first sequence of the movie, however, Marina leaves him for a German man. After he has undergone a period of complete isolation, Amanda (Luana Piovani) knocks on his door and introduces herself as his neighbour. They fall in love and all goes well until Pedro's best friend, Carlos (Vladimir Brichta), proves to him that Amanda is a creation of his imagination. Throughout the film, Pedro's real neighbour Vitória (Maria Manoella) nurtures platonic feelings towards Pedro, until, rejected by him (thinking Vitória is also imaginary), she starts a relationship with Carlos. When confronted with the truth regarding her two suitors, Vitória decides to leave both and moves to the countryside. In the film's epilogue, Pedro, now recovered from his illness, publishes a book entitled *Vitória* and decides to go in search of his muse. The final scene consists of a kiss between Pedro and Vitória, with Amanda reappearing beside them, implying that she has always been around — and will continue to be.

27. It was only superseded by *Se Eu Fosse Você 2* (Daniel Filho, 2009).

Tales of man as magic creator of live beings are part of an ancient Judeo-Christian tradition, as seen in the depiction of the Golem in the Talmud, the Jewish set of learnings second to the Torah. A popular version of the story of the animated creature created from inanimate matter dates from the late 16th century, and more recent incarnations continue to populate both highbrow and popular cultures, from Pinocchio to Frankenstein's monster. A twist in the tale makes it markedly gendered when the creature in question is a woman, and in particular a woman whom the creator desires. Ovid's 8 AD tale of Pygmalion and Galatea in *Metamorphoses* is perhaps the most familiar example of such a slant. The story has inspired an equally overwhelming number of artistic expressions, from painting to popular film. However, while the plot of *A Mulher Invisível* is far from original, there are peculiarities to the Brazilian film that offer useful insights for the investigation of the hegemonic discourse around masculinity and femininity in 21st century Brazil.

4.1.1 Masculinity in Crisis: Pygmalion as a Deranged Narcissist

The retellings of the Pygmalion myth can roughly be divided into two established variants and a third, more contemporary one. In the most traditional version, as in Ovid's Pygmalion, a woman is conjured up or brought back to life. Examples in film are *One Touch of Venus* (William A. Seiter, 1948), *My Fair Lady* (George Cukor, 1964), *Weird Science* (John Hughes, 1985), *Mannequin* (Michael Gottlieb, 1987) and, most recently, *Ruby Sparks* (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 2012). The second category is an abstraction derived from the first,

in which an already-existing flesh-and-blood woman is metaphorically brought to life by means of a personal transformation, usually in order to pass for someone of a higher social class, as George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* paradigmatically illustrates. Reinterpretations in popular film also abound, e.g. *Pretty Woman* (Gary Marshall, 1990), *Mighty Aphrodite* (Woody Allen, 1995) and *She's All That* (Robert Iscove, 1999). *A Mulher Invisível* presents a third category consisting of a further twist in the genre by displacing the creation as product of the creator's imagination with no real presence in the world or for others. In all variants, the male protagonists are socially or emotionally inept — they often are or become isolated (*A Mulher Invisível*, *Ruby Sparks*), they talk to inanimate objects (Ovid's *Pygmalion*, *Mannequin*), they are eccentrics (*My Fair Lady*), underachievers (*Mannequin*) or social outcasts (*Weird Science*) —, but it is only in the third that the creator's eccentricity is pushed to the limit. Whereas the first variant presents the creator as god-like and the second as someone who is superior in education, social class or wealth, in the third he is — in good carnivalesque tradition — degraded to mentally ill.²⁸ From infantilised (in the *chanchada*) to hysterical (in the *pornochanchada*), in 21st century Brazilian cinema the male protagonist now becomes literally sick and unstable, thus acting out the trope of masculinity in crisis more evidently than ever.

As the teenagers in *Weird Science* exemplify, at the basis of all incarnations of *Pygmalion* is male narcissism:

28. Examples of this type are considerably more unusual in Hollywood, but can still be found in alternative films such as *Lars and the Real Girl* (Craig Gillespie, 2007), in which the delusional protagonist believes a sex doll is a real human being.

Gary (Anthony Michael Hall): Women everywhere, naked bodies everywhere, they all know my name...

Wyatt (Ilan Mitchell-Smith): Gary, nobody likes us. Nobody.

Gary: Why are you messing with the fantasy? We know about the reality, don't mess with the fantasy. [...] We are revered, we are studs.

The myth of Pygmalion goes beyond narcissism though. As Martin A. Danahay argues, "[t]his is not simply Narcissus gazing on his own reflection but Pygmalion using art to create an image in his own likeness."²⁹ In *A Mulher Invisível*, just as in *Ruby Sparks*, the art in question is significant: Paul (Paul Dano) is a writer and Pedro becomes a writer. Like the Golem that is brought to life and deanimated by the literal power of words, the source of Paul's and Pedro's power is in writing. Amanda first appears to Pedro as he finishes writing a letter addressed to his ex-wife that clarifies, "eu não te vi porque você nunca existiu." Similarly, the only way to make Amanda disappear is through writing, and what finally brings Pedro and Vitória together is his book. While in *Ruby Sparks* the protagonist moves from being a fictional woman to being a real one, in *A Mulher Invisível* the male protagonists conquers the real woman (Vitória) through her fictionalisation and appropriation. Beyond the love for their own image, these (male) characters are put in the position of God-like creators, capable of generating and ending the life of the (female) other. Whereas earlier examples in Brazilian cinema such as *A Super Fêmea* (see Chapter 3.3) show the destruction of the God-like creator, in *A Mulher Invisível* women serve as a means of empowerment for the male protagonist, as will be discussed in the next section.

29. Danahay 1994, p. 42.

As discussed in the chapter on *A Super Fêmea*, in creating the ideal woman, narcissism can be literally enacted through the allusion to masturbation. What differs in *A Mulher Invisível* is the blatant way in which it deals with masturbation. Outside the puritanical framework of Hollywood, the Brazilian film is freer to use more straight-forward references to 'the solitary vice'.³⁰ In the scene in the movie theatre, where Pedro, thinking he is canoodling with Amanda, sticks his tongue out in pleasure and makes lone passionate caresses — providing the type of physical comedy so appreciated by Brazilian audiences —, a spectator spells it out: "o lugar de fazer isso é no banheiro." In all the Hollywood films cited on the same theme, none is as explicit about masturbation as *A Mulher Invisível*. Even in the more recent ones, the taboo of the topic is bypassed by making the woman real, with the exception of *Lars and the Real Girl*, in which Lars's piety avoids the foregrounding of sex. The references to masturbation add complexity to *A Mulher Invisível*, divulging the century-old association between masturbation and mental illness³¹ and blindness. *A Mulher Invisível* clearly portrays the typical isolation of the male protagonists before the creation of the ideal woman as a "masturbatory fantasy that has changed his perception of the world around him and obscured reality."³² The overt disclosure of the sexual content of the Pygmalion myth is in line with Brazilian popular cinema's historical openness toward sexuality.

Like Ovid's Pygmalion, the cause for the male protagonist's distress is real women; more specifically, in the Brazilian film and in *Ruby Sparks*, the creation of the ideal woman is part

30. For more on the myth of Pygmalion and onanism, as well as the link between masturbation and artistic creation, see Guy-Bray 1998.

31. Guy-Bray 1998, pp. 448-449.

32. Guy-Bray 1998, p. 464.

of the process of overcoming a previous heartbreak. What differs from the older versions is the fact that in both films spectators become acquainted with the real women's demands, which are strikingly similar, as encounters with the ex-girlfriend/wife reveal: "You couldn't see me," "You were in love with the idea of me" and "Você olhava para mim e só via o que queria ver. [...] Eu me sentia só, como se nada do que eu fizesse importasse, como se eu fosse invisível." As Martin A. Danahay argues, "the artist paints the woman 'not as she is, but as she fills his dream.'"³³ When confronted with the narcissism that leads to the end of their real relationships, the male protagonists' solution is to literally enact their narcissism — in order to finally overcome it in *Ruby Sparks* or to confirm it, as will be discussed in the next section in relation to *A Mulher Invisível*.

4.1.2 The Binaries of Femininity Revamped

Issues of control, subordination and social adequacy are at the core of the ideal woman *topos*. In *A Mulher Invisível*, Pedro is initially a traffic controller, introducing the issue of control which is at stake throughout the movie in the oscillation between controlling/inability to control the other, and getting hold of oneself/losing control. The inability to control his wife, who leaves him in the first scene of the movie, leads to the creation of a woman he can effectively control. Freud's postulation of the unconscious is often alluded to as a narcissistic

33. Danahay 1994, p. 41

wound since it displaces 'man' from the centre of 'his' own being.³⁴ Indeed, Amanda symbolises Pedro's lack of control over his own mind as he is unaware that she is the fruit of his imagination until half way through the film. Furthermore, Amanda is, more obviously than Ruby Sparks, both a mirror of masculine desire and a "threat to the imaginative unity and coherence of the masculine subject."³⁵ In order to cope with this threat, the binaries of femininity, particularly the other that separates the private from the public sphere (one which has been present since the *chanchadas*, see Chapter 2.1.1) are reasserted and the female character is placed into a more traditional role, strictly associated with the home.

Traits of the ideal woman are an evident index of both the model of femininity and the nature of the masculinity crisis at stake. Luana Piovani's looks are emphasised throughout the film, both in dialogue and visually, with close-up shots of her face and her scantily-dressed body. Similar to the Hollywood films of the 1980s, in *A Mulher Invisível* the voyeuristic objectifying images of women's bodies reveal much about male empowerment, in a backlash tone. The emphasis on Amanda's lasciviousness suggests another trait of the ideal woman: she is construed as sexually avid, monogamous and always ready to satisfy her man's desires. Amanda indeed reinforces the idea that a good woman is a sex doll (an image that is also mobilised in *The Stepford Wives* (Bryan Forbes, 1975) and taken to the ultimate consequence

34. In Freud's metaphor of the narcissistic wounds upon humanity, the first was inflicted by Copernicus by displacing 'man' from the centre of the universe; the second by Darwin by displacing 'him' from the centre of creation; and the third by Freud himself and the unconscious. Stating that "the ego is not a master in his own house" suggests that men are not fully in control of their own minds and lives (Lawler 2008, pp. 81-82). The use of the masculine to refer to humanity is retained as it is particularly apt to describe the process of individualisation of the male subject, around which both Freud's theory and the film in question revolve.

35. Danahay 1994, p. 41,

in *Lars and the Real Girl*, where the 'real girl' is in fact a sex toy): good-looking, submissive and sexually available.

The fact that Amanda only exists in Pedro's mind makes her hesitant to leave the house at first. Her reluctance to go out in public (narratively justified by the risk of Pedro discovering that she is imaginary) restricts her to the private sphere, therefore reestablishing the public/private dichotomy. In combination with the frequency and enjoyment she displays in cleaning the house (at a certain point she is seen in sexy lingerie on all fours cleaning the floor), Amanda is painted as a resigned housewife, a common figure in the Brazilian imaginary since at least 1942 with the song *Ai, Que Saudades da Amélia* (by Ataulfo Alves e Mário Lago) and its still largely popular chorus: "Amélia não tinha a menor vaidade / Amélia é que era mulher de verdade." Amanda, as her name suggests, effectively functions as a rekindled Amélia, the 'real' woman, now *com vaidade* (a stunning figure), a big sexual appetite (her name also echoes the gerund of the verb to love — *amando*) and a convenient keenness on football, which is supposedly every Brazilian man's passion.

In addition to the private/public binary, the film also mobilises the virgin/whore dichotomy. Although on the surface it may seem to complicate the virgin/whore paradigm due to Amanda's sexual activeness, the femininity mobilised by the film is still largely reliant on it. Amanda is initially seen as sexually submissive and pliable until Pedro wants to leave her and she falls squarely on the less benevolent side of the dichotomy. Vitória is portrayed as virgin-like throughout the film, but her body is also sexualised through her costume (short dresses, vest tops and miniskirts) and camera movement, e.g. a vertical pan when she rings Pedro's

bell to ask for sugar and the scenes where she is seen on her back in a coveting point of view shot of Pedro's best friend, Carlos. The scene that most distances Vitória from the virgin ideal of the *mulher séria* is the sex scene at the hospital. Convinced by her sister and assisted by a bottle of vodka, Vitória breaks into Pedro's hospital room wearing sexy lingerie, suddenly revealing an aggressive sexuality. This scene would be the most disruptive in the film, were it not followed by a misunderstanding that leads to Vitória's punishment. Believing that Vitória, like Amanda, is not real, Pedro brusquely rebuffs her on their following encounter. This reinforces the moralistic lesson that the price to pay for a woman's sexual agency is rejection, in the platitude that divides women between *mulher séria/para casar* and *mulher para comer*. This dichotomy is, in itself, an updated version the virgin/whore binary. Vitória's sister, Lúcia (played by Fernanda Torres), is the third and last female character in the film, and the most outspoken about sex (in a non-submissive way, unlike Amanda, whose sexuality is completely subordinate to Pedro) and clearly not a virgin as she is heavily pregnant. However, Lúcia's comments are advice to her sister and are always in relation to men, therefore bypassing the potential discomfort generated by women taking control of their own sexuality for their own sake and pleasure. More importantly, it is also not by chance that the only female character who shows any degree of agency in relation to sex is portrayed as married and pregnant. By associating Lúcia with motherhood, the Madonna feature *par excellence*, any possibility of subversion is neutralised.

Other examples of leading female characters in contemporary Brazilian cinema can hardly be considered transformational either. *A Falsa Loura* (Carlos Reichenbach, 2007) offers an interesting version of the type of social and personal transformation seen in *Pretty Woman*

and *My Fair Lady*. However, the Pygmalionesque transformation of Simara, a factory worker, is initiated by her female co-workers and taken over by Simara herself. Although Simara is portrayed as determined and independent (as the sole breadwinner in the household she supports her father), any agency she might have is ultimately invalidated, as instead of upward social mobility the only possible outcome the film proposes for a working class female beauty is interclass prostitution.³⁶ From a hardworking, selfless, desexualised ugly duckling to a sexy high-class prostitute, even examples outside popular cinema sustain the virgin/whore dichotomy and portray women seemingly only able to occupy one of the two positions.

4.1.3 Masculinity: From Crisis to Resolution

Despite the fact that a woman is normally at the centre of the plot and advances the narrative, there should be no doubt that these are narratives about men and masculinity. The ideal woman is conjured up, literally or metaphorically, due to the male protagonist's failure to fulfil the social expectations of 'being a man,' which in the original context means having a

36. *A Falsa Loura*, however, is not as misogynistic as *Cilada.com* (José Alvarenga Jr, 2012), in which the male protagonist spends the entirety of the film trying to win back the girlfriend on whom he cheated publicly at the beginning of the film, and succeeds in doing so by means of one grand romantic gesture. One of the most misogynistic films in contemporary Brazilian film production is *E Ai, Comeu* (Felipe Joffily, 2012), the story of three male characters who spend the movie discussing women in overtly dismissive ways, including dehumanising remarks such as "mulher que já vem adestrada" and "mulher quando mexe no cabelo quer dar, é a maneira delas abanar o rabo." A crude tone of misogyny and racism is observed in the association with animals, bitches in particular; the numerous racist remarks ("pica da crioula," "comer japa"); and the sexualisation of a minor. Violence against women is shown as joke material, as when the protagonist of *Cilada.com* is shown slapping his girlfriend to kill a mosquito.

conjugal partner. These are men who are often socially inept, eccentric, and isolated, in the tradition of Pygmalion himself:

Pygmalion loathing their lascivious life,
Abhorr'd all womankind, but most a wife:
So single chose to live, and shunn'd to wed,
Well pleas'd to want a consort of his bed.³⁷

In more recent retellings of the tale, the overtly misogynist element ("abhor'd all womankind") is erased, but the Hollywood films on the theme produced in the 1970s and 1980s still reveal a strong sexist impetus. In the middle of the second wave of feminism, *Stepford Wives* is released with a telling premise: a fantasy world in which real women with real demands are transformed into robotic, submissive housewives. *Mannequin* introduces some feminist demands in its introductory scene, set in 2,500 BC Egypt, using time and spatial displacement to enable the discussion of potentially unsettling topics in the current cultural time frame. The female protagonist's mother tries to convince her to marry a suitor: "If I thought we women could in any way change anything, don't you think I would encourage you? No. Don't. These are the times we live in." The protagonist Emmy (played by Kim Cattrall) refuses to give in, but more than 4,500 years seem to make her ready and eager to settle down with a not-so-well-to-do (white) man. The problems of Jonathan Switcher (Andrew McCarthy) seem to amount to a lack of support from his "cold" and "unfeeling" girlfriend Roxie³⁸ (Carole Davies). Once Jonathan brings Emmy back to life, his career takes off — due to her actual input, although she is never acknowledged — and he marries Emmy, in an unusually similar reenactment of the Ovidian ending. In *Weird Science*, the two teenage

37. Johnson 1800, p. 247.

38. These are the actual words used by a lover when trying to explain why he failed to perform in bed with her.

protagonists create an exotic, sexy woman who, in her own words, "belongs" to them. In these two examples — a woman from centuries past and one that is little more than a tailored commodity (a 'real' sex toy) — there lies the desire to return to a time when women were less questioning and more submissive.



Mise-en-scène and femininity: Emmy (left) seems to have emerged from the 1950s whereas Roxie's (Carole Davis) masculine clothes and attitudes (right) contrast with the pink clothes on the opposite side of the screen

In the protagonists' journey towards manhood, these films seem to discard certain models of masculinity. Rambo and Terminator are referenced in the names of hopeless dogs in *Mannequin*, and, when asked what John Wayne would say about his cowardice, Gary's (Anthony Michael Hall) response in *Weird Science* is adamant: "John Wayne is dead," implying that the masculinity of testosterone-fuelled action heroes and of cold, brutish cowboys are inadequate and old-fashioned. The model promoted is indeed less virile and more sensitive, a model that continues to be promoted in further elaborated form in Hollywood up to the present, as seen in *Ruby Sparks*. However, in the examples from the 1980s, male empowerment is still outlined as phallic, as in the climax to both movies the protagonists assert power over a woman (humiliating Roxie in *Mannequin* and calling a woman a 'bitch' in *Weird Science*) and handling a phallic object (Gary handles a gun in *Weird*

Science and, in more parodic tone, Hollywood Montrose [Meshach Taylor], the gay side-kick of *Mannequin*, hoses the villains while yelling, "mine is bigger than yours"). While there is a promotion of a vulnerable, sensitive model of masculinity, the plot of the 1980s films seem to revolve around men finding empowerment in rather traditional terms. Women are clearly sexually objectified and treated as commodities that can be owned, loaned (in *Weird Science* Max [Robert Rusler] and Ian [Robert Downey, Jr.] ask if they can borrow Lisa [Kelly LeBrock]) and exchanged (Max and Ian propose trading their girlfriends for Lisa). Ultimately, Lisa, like Emmy, is little more than a catalyst for the protagonists's reform — a commodity that empowers them. From the 2000s onwards, Hollywood films on the same theme portray men being more accommodating to real women. Recent films like *Ruby Sparks* and *Lars and the Real Girl* portray a journey that leads to renouncing male narcissism as the key to achieving social and romantic acceptance. The redemptive journey of *Ruby Sparks*'s Paul, for example, is to overcome his own neediness, isolation and control issues. Ruby is unaware of her non-existence and, when given free will, decides to leave him. This is a major shift compared to *Weird Science* and *Mannequin*, where the female protagonists' subordination is not at all problematised.

The Brazilian film, however, still seems to be attached to the ideals presented in the Hollywood films of the 1980s, as Pedro's journey is not redemptive but rather conforms to the model of masculinity which he questions at the beginning of the film. Pedro's nonconformist behaviour is strongly coded as feminine, as the musical score emphasises — the song that constantly plays in the background of Pedro's journey is 'A Woman Left Lonely'

by Janis Joplin. The overpowering lyrics³⁹ repeat that "a woman left lonely [...] will do crazy things on lonely occasions." Pedro's sickness is therefore not only associated with the solitary vice (crazy things done on lonely occasions) but also with femininity. The trope of masculinity in crisis therefore moves from infantilisation to hysteria to feminisation and illness. The fact that Pedro starts the film as a naïve romantic, which is portrayed negatively as the attitude of an *otário*,⁴⁰ is a further index of the feminisation of his character. The prologue of the film, originally devised as a dialogue between Pedro and his best friend Carlos, shows Pedro explaining his feelings: "talvez seja meio absurdo para você, mas eu amo a minha mulher. Eu sou fiel a ela, eu quero ter filhos com ela, eu quero ficar velhinho do lado dela. Entendeu?" As the introductory clause discloses, male faithfulness and wholesome love are so foreign to this model of masculinity that they are referred to as 'absurd.'



The original reverse shot of Carlos (Vladimir Brichta) in dialogue with Pedro

39. The use of theme songs assigned to characters is a common technique used in the telenovelas, therefore exposing the transfer of production techniques from one Globo product to another.

40. As *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles, 2002) clearly illustrates, the *otário* is an honest man who is perceived as a 'sucker.' As in *City of God*, this figure is usually seen as the opposite counterpart of the *malandro*. For more on the *malandro*, see Chapter 4.1.4.

Originally a composition of shot/reverse shot, the scene was later edited and Carlos was excluded from the scene,⁴¹ which then became a monologue — or rather, a dialogue between Pedro and the spectators as the original set-up implied the disruption of the fourth wall and the "você" uttered by Pedro became an interpellation to spectators.



Pedro (Selton Mello) breaking the fourth wall

This set-up generates a feeling of intimacy between protagonist and spectators, implying a shared set of values, i.e. that it is absurd and even impossible for men to be faithful to women. In the original excluded material,⁴² Pedro's line was introduced by Carlos's explanation on the nature of men:

Desde que o mundo é mundo, existem dois tipos de homem: os agricultores e os caçadores. Os agricultores são seres pacíficos e comem todo o dia a mesma coisa. Com o caçador, a coisa é diferente. Ele escolhe o que vai comer, está sempre alerta a comer algo melhor. A natureza não fez o homem infiel à toa, é genético.

41. *UOL Entretenimento Cinema* 2009, n.p.

42. Available in *UOL Entretenimento Cinema* 2009, n.p.

The association between women and things ("coisa," "algo") to be eaten reverberates the association between sex and food as well as the stance of the *pornochanchadas*, with *A Banana Mecânica* as a clear example of women equated to food to illustrate graphically the common double use of the verb 'comer' (see Chapter 3.2.2). Although Carlos's explanation is excluded from the final version, this is nonetheless the framework for the model of masculinity promoted in the film. The paradigm of the 'hunter' described by Carlos is little more than an updated version of a traditional view according to which men are seen as naturally polygamous, genetically programmed to 'spread their seed' as wide and far as possible. The 'seed spreading' model is in fact widely promoted in contemporary Brazilian cinema, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.2. After Pedro's initial defence of a romantic, caring stance, the rest of the narrative develops as a journey that leads to his reformation in order to conform to the kind of masculinity described by Carlos. The last shot of the film is revealing of the ideal promoted, as by the end of the film Pedro has effectively morphed into a bigamous womanising *malandro*.⁴³

43. This ending stands in stark opposition to the subversive ending of *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (Bruno Barreto, 1976), in which Sônia Braga's character is seen holding hands with two men. This is a clear indication of the conservative position of the *Globochanchada*, as *A Mulher Invisível* promotes a much more retrograde view over 30 years after *Dona Flor*.



From *otário* to *malandro* in 105 minutes

While the persistence of Amanda's presence is only suggested in the final scene of the film, in the Emmy-winning spin-off TV series aired in 2011 Amanda is part of the permanent cast. The transgressive elements of the film such as Pedro's feminised romanticism disappear as he becomes a fully-fledged *malandro*, who effectively lives a bigamous relationship with his wife and his imaginary girlfriend. If in the film he trades the occupation of traffic controller to that of writer, which is best fitting with his sensitivity, in the series he becomes a marketing executive, a more profit-oriented and practical, hence more masculine, occupation. From writer to publicist, the sensitive literary author is transformed into a money-oriented yuppie. The practical nature of his new job also further underscores the utilitarian approach of the *malandro* in relation to women.

The hegemonic model of masculinity put forward in contemporary Hollywood films is rather different from that celebrated in *A Mulher Invisível*. While the transformation of the protagonist of *Ruby Spark* involves giving up narcissism and learning how to accept an independent real woman with real demands and needs, Pedro's journey entails his

transformation into a *malandro* type. Like the male characters of the 1980s Hollywood films, Pedro is a sensitive loser who finds empowerment from a revamped version of Amélia — a supportive, caring, submissive woman from another century.

In the tradition of Brazilian cinema, *A Mulher Invisível* is strictly associated with *A Super Fêmea* due to the centrality of male narcissism (see Chapter 3.3). However, a noteworthy transition in the protagonist takes place in relation to *A Super Fêmea*. The male narcissist, who ends the film literally destroyed in the 1973 film, is now empowered in *A Mulher Invisível*. In fact, Pedro's transformation differs from the contemporary Hollywood films in the sense that caring, 'feminised' men must become *malandros* in order to fulfil the expected ideal of masculinity. Furthermore, the revised version of the conservative modes of femininity entail that women are continuously confined to the Amélia model, to the virgin/whore and the public/private dichotomies. The relocation of the binaries of femininity are also observed in other *Globochanchada* and *De Pernas pro Ar* is a particularly illustrative case study of the seductive updating of old-fashioned gender models.

4.2 *De Pernas pro Ar*: A Revolution Confined to the Bedroom

De Pernas pro Ar (Roberto Santucci) was Brazil's top grossing film in 2011 with more than 3.5 million spectators, and is currently ranked the 38th most popular Brazilian film in the country's recorded history, and 7th since 2000. The success resulted in a sequel, *De Pernas pro Ar 2*, which repeated the formula and took over 6 million spectators to the cinemas in 2012, becoming the 2nd most watched film since the year 2000.⁴⁴ Both films star Ingrid Guimarães and both revolve around her character's quest to achieve a good work-life balance.

In *De Pernas pro Ar*, Ingrid Guimarães's character, Alice, is a successful advertising executive whose obsessive commitment to her work has led to a crisis in her marriage. As her husband João (Bruno Garcia) repeats throughout the movie, her perceived selfishness has resulted in a estrangement from him and their son. Comedy's commonplace of mistaken identities is used to generate comic confusion as she picks up a package intended for her neighbour Marcela (Maria Paula), a situation which ends with Alice delivering a box of vibrators to an important client, who was expecting a different kind of toy.⁴⁵ Due to this incident, Alice is dismissed from her job and her career, like her personal life, hits a hurdle. Alice and Marcela's friendship develops and Alice becomes a partner in Marcela's sex shop business, launching a marketing campaign that helps the company take off. Fearing João's reaction, Alice keeps her new business venture a secret until he accidentally discovers it,

44. Filme B n.d., n.p.

45. The fact that the toy Alice is selling is called *minhoquinha* adds to the comicality of the scene.

resulting in a new crisis in their marriage. A time ellipsis takes the spectator six months forward, when Alice and João are separated and Alice is a high-profile businesswoman. The climax of the film consists of Alice running out of a distinguished business ceremony, at which she has been awarded the most important prize, to be reunited with her family, thus normatively reasserting monogamous heterosexual marriage as the preferred lifestyle. The final scene of the film shows Alice hiding from her family to answer Marcela's business call, signalling that Alice has not given up on her ambitions.

Popular cinema in Brazil has always been willing to capitalise on female sexuality, but whereas "[t]he representation of working women almost inevitably involves an invocation of sexuality/sexual performance,"⁴⁶ by incorporating the sex shop business *De Pernas pro Ar* presents an unusual configuration of "the conflation of women's bodies, sexuality and work."⁴⁷ The film also takes elements from the buddy movie in a recent development of the genre that features the still rare female-female duo.⁴⁸ Ingrid Guimarães is famously known for her television comic pairing with Heloísa Perissé in the TV Globo series *Sob Nova Direção*, which lasted four years, and featured the two as best friends running a bar together. As in North-American television,⁴⁹ it is rare to see representations of female solidarity and female community in Brazilian cinema and on television. *De Pernas pro Ar* is therefore a notable example, together with other recent films such as *Divã* (José Alvarenga Júnior, 2009), *Muita Calma Nessa Hora* (Felipe Joffily, 2010) and *Avassaladoras* (Mara Mourão, 2002).

46. Tasker 1998, p. 6

47. Tasker 1998, p. 5

48. Buchanan 2013, n.p.

49. Henry 2004, p. 67

Like most popular films, *De Pernas pro Ar* is reactive, profit-oriented and pragmatic, and it exemplifies well popular cinema's dual facet: its swift reaction to contemporary issues and its power in effectively shaping reality. According to research by ABEME (Associação Brasileira das Empresas do Mercado Erótico e Sensual), in the year the film was released there was a 42% increase in the number of sex shop sales representatives.⁵⁰ This is not to say that the film has created this specific economic and cultural phenomenon, but rather that it has savvily channeled an already-existing tendency — it is loosely based on the real story of businesswoman Érica Rambalde⁵¹ — and escalated it through its naturalisation and popularisation. Similar to the mechanisms of advertising depicted in the movie, the film capitalised on a trend and legitimised it by making it accessible — and sexy — to millions of spectators.

It is not only on the surface — the plotline revolving around the sex shop business — that *De Pernas pro Ar* captures the *zeitgeist* of gender changes in contemporary Brazil. The film elaborates on the sexual division of labour, which is a prominent agenda item⁵² of SPM (*Secretaria de Políticas para as Mulheres*), a governmental organ specifically created in 2003 to advise the Presidency on women-related policies. Women as entrepreneurs is also a topic of weight in contemporary Brazil, considering it is one of the few — if not the only — fields in which real gender parity has been achieved.⁵³ In 2004, Sebrae (*Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio*

50. Coldibeli 2013, n.p.

51. Olivette 2012, n.p.

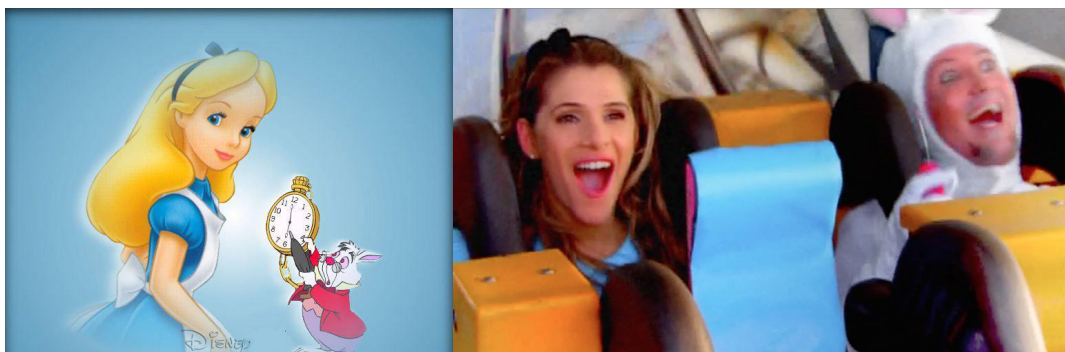
52. Secretaria de Políticas Para as Mulheres (SPM) 2008, n.p.

53. According to a 2010 report by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, women amount to more than 49% of Brazilian entrepreneurs (*Portal Brasil: Mulheres do Brasil* n.d., n.p.).

às *Micro e Pequenas Empresas*) launched the *Prêmio Mulher de Negócios*, of which the award ceremony in *De Pernas pro Ar* and the woman on the cover of a business magazine that Alice reads could be seen as echoes.⁵⁴ By focusing on a woman's search for professional success, *De Pernas pro Ar* is an illustrative case study to investigate how ideas around feminism and women's emancipation are articulated in popular film in contemporary Brazil.

4.2.1 The Female Body and the Grotesque

The name of *De Pernas pro Ar*'s protagonist, Alice, could be unrelated to Lewis Carroll's eminent character, were it not for the clocks ticking in the opening sequence and her relationship with a rabbit — taken to a much more intimate level than in Carroll's book. The parallel is not overtly developed in the movie, but the association is relevant to the extent that it sets the plot in the domain of fantasy.



As in Carroll's story, after taking a magic pill Alice finds her (orgasmic) wonderland

54. The woman on the cover is Mariza Leão, producer of the film.

Unlike Carroll's classic, the fantasy world presented in *De Pernas Pro Ar* is not nonsensical but carnivalesque. The film's carnivalesque stance is announced from its title; in Bakhtinian fashion, spectators are promised a world upside-down and are led to believe, due to the romantic comedies' focus on gender roles, that the promised subversion is of that nature. However, instead of subversion, the carnivalesque in this case seems to reveal an incredulity at the idea of a world where women are workaholics *and* have orgasms. Placing it in the realm of fantasy offsets the potential subversiveness of a mainly female cast and of addressing the topics of working women and women's sexual pleasure.



The upside-down world where scantily-dressed men are chased by women



The combination of various cinematic techniques (handheld camera and mismatched angles in the shot-reverse shot sequence) in a relatively short sequence creates a hallucinatory wonderland of colourful sex toys⁵⁵

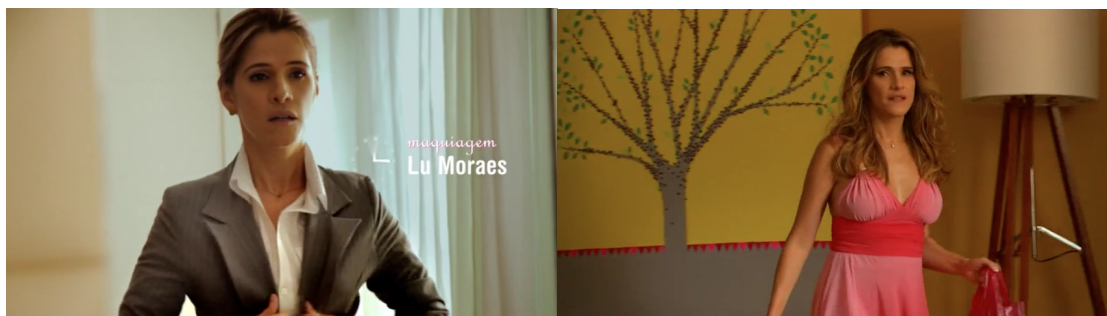
55. This scene is strangely reminiscent of *A Super Fêmea* (Aníbal Massaini Neto, 1973). In addition to the severed male body parts, the *grotto-esque* atmosphere resembles that of the advertising agency in the 1973 film. See Chapter 5.3 for details.

Furthermore, the film is clearly focused on the material body, which is central to the carnivalesque — in the conflict between body and mind, in carnival as well as in comedy the body has the upper hand. In a carnivalesque oxymoron, the otherwise controlling Alice is rendered out of control after taking ecstasy.



The lighting, distorted sound and uneven framing of the character advance Alice's altered mental state and her body out of control

After inadvertently taking the drug, Alice succeeds in giving herself an orgasm for the first time in her life. The film affirms what Matthew Bevis calls a "long-standing comic law: the body will finally come good (or, at least, come through), provided one doesn't overthink things."⁵⁶ Allowing her body to take control marks the turning point in Alice's journey, leading to a personal transformation that is equally marked on her body:



Alice before (left) and after (right): from control freak to body in control

56. Bevis 2013, p. 31.

The drug-induced dance and the masturbation scene (presented metaphorically as a roller-coaster ride) are not the only instances where Alice's body prevails; a relatively long sequence shows her watching her son's football game wearing music-activated vibrating underwear. The comic effect derives from Alice's inability to control the sensation and effectively having an orgasm (conventionally an intimate, private act) in a public space, thus confounding the public/private binary. In the sequences where Alice's body takes control, the film departs from the notion of the individualised ego and is approximated to the aesthetic of the grotesque. In Bakhtin's line of reasoning:

In grotesque realism, therefore, the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all people. As such it is opposed to severance from the material and bodily roots of the world; it makes no pretense to renunciation of the earthy, or independence of the earth and the body. We repeat: the body and bodily life have here a cosmic and at the same time an all-people's character; this is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualized. The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed. This is why all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable.⁵⁷

The scenes where Alice's body becomes "grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable" are not only the funniest of the film but also the most transgressive, as they challenge the social constraints of modesty and reservation imposed on the female body. Considering that "[i]n the context of comic performance, the female body is already at issue, out of place,"⁵⁸ allowing Alice's body to reign freely not only connects it to its earthly qualities (clearly expressed under the sign of the orgasm), but also links the movie to the carnivalesque

57. Bakhtin 1984, p. 19.

58. Tasker 1998, p. 168.

tradition in Brazilian comedies, a form of "the ancestral body of the people."⁵⁹ These passages are the closest to the Bakhtinian mystical carnivalesque utopia, where Alice becomes "a representative of 'the grotesque body of the people' rather than a rounded personage."⁶⁰ In other words, these are the instances where the "cosmic, social, and bodily elements" become an "indivisible whole."⁶¹ The fact that, in all other case studies analysed here, the depiction of the body out of control has been restricted to male characters adds to the transgressiveness of Ingrid Guimarães's performance.

Albeit superficially, the carnivalesque is also presented in the form of syncretic cultural miscegenation. Similar to *Macunaíma*'s mythical saga that takes him to all corners of Brazil, in *De Pernas pro Ar* the home-delivery business model created by Alice reaches the whole of the country in the sequence where sales representatives are shown in Bahia and the Amazon introducing their products to indigenous and black women. Part of the continuous effort to update the nationalistic discourses of the 1950s and 1970s, this sequence also capitalises on the idea of Brazil as a unified cultural melting pot. The pink map on the new office wall presents the idea of a country united through pleasure, which is not far removed from the idea of unity through joy (*alegria*) and carnival.⁶²

While there are no black characters in the movie, at the erotic fair a black woman is quickly seen wearing a crown; as part of a doubly marginalised group, only in the context of the

59. Bakhtin 1984, p. 29.

60. Stam 1989, p. 135.

61. Bakhtin 1984, p. 19.

62. Brazil 'gone pink' also suggests the fear of the so-called female domination, as the film is inserted in the traditional framework of the war between the sexes.

carnavalesque can a black woman be seen as empowered. The figure of the sexy dancer in a crowd also resembles that of the *Globeleza* (as discussed in Chapter 3.2.2), indicating that the representation of black women continue to be restricted to the representation of their sexuality. The only instance where people of colour appear in the film, and still with no dialogue or character development, the sequence is perhaps a superficial attempt to include ethnic minorities, presumably with the intention of expanding the pool of identifiable viewers. The virtual lack of characters of colour forwards a view that "'femininity is a raced and classed concept'"⁶³ and, like in North American television, "representations of feminism are almost exclusively filtered through white, middle-class, heterosexual, female characters."⁶⁴ Such a filter not only creates a "racially, sexually, and economically privileged version of feminism, that, for the [...] public, has come to represent feminism in toto,"⁶⁵ but also supports the fallacy that women's oppression at its most primary levels (domestic and sexual violence, rape culture, etc, that is, at the level of basic human rights) are no longer issues in contemporary society.⁶⁶

63. Tasker 1998, p. 5.

64. Bonnie Dow cited in Henry 2004, p. 69.

65. Bonnie Dow cited in Henry 2004, pp. 69-70.

66. Issues of race, class and the idea of 'post-feminism' are further developed in the next section (6.2.2).



The carnivalesque crowning of an otherwise disenfranchised minority

The film presents constant allusions to yet another carnivalesque motif, the senile pregnant hag. The continuous cycle of life and death is symbolised by the (indirectly) sexualised old body:



An old lady slowly makes her way to the erotic fair

Unlike the "completed, self-sufficient individuality"⁶⁷ of the Renaissance body, whose age was represented "as far removed from the mother's womb as from the grave, the age most distant from either threshold of individual life,"⁶⁸ the association between sexuality and old age connects womb and grave.⁶⁹ As Bakhtin argues, the figure of the laughing old hag is

a typical and very strongly expressed grotesque. It is ambivalent. It is pregnant death, a death that gives birth. There is nothing completed, nothing calm and stable in the bodies of these old hags. They combined a senile, decaying and deformed flesh with the flesh of new life, conceived but yet unformed. Life is shown in its two-fold contradictory process; it is the epitome of incompleteness. And such is precisely the grotesque concept of the body.⁷⁰

Perhaps the most carnivalesque of all characters in this film, Alice's mother Marion (Denise Weinberg) is also a sexualised older woman,⁷¹ whose body encapsulates the cosmic nature of the carnivalesque:

The unfinished and open body (dying, bringing forth and being born) is not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries; it is blended with the world, with animals, with objects. It is cosmic, it represents the entire material bodily world in all its elements. It is an incarnation of this world at the absolute lower stratum, as the swallowing up and generating principle, as the bodily grave and bosom, as a field which has been sown and in which new shoots are preparing to sprout.⁷²

67. Bakhtin 1984, p. 29.

68. Bakhtin 1984, p. 29.

69. *Divã* (José Alvarenga Jr, 2009) is another good example of the carnivalesque in the figure of the pregnant hag in contemporary Brazilian cinema. Fertility is symbolised by Cabral's character's active sexuality and her laughter as the enjoyment of her own body and sex.

70. Bakhtin 1984, pp. 25-26.

71. In *De Pernas pro Ar 2*, the subversiveness of Marion's sexuality disappears completely. The move towards a more conservative stance is a trend observed in all *Globochanchadas*, as will be discussed in 6.2.5.

72. Bakhtin 1984, pp. 26-27.



The framing emphasises the sexual innuendo between Marion (Denise Weinberg) and her much younger personal trainer

Marcela is yet another carnivalesque character. A direct descendant of Renata Fronzi's Naná in *Garota e Samba* (see Chapter 2.2), Marcela is tall, curvaceous and sexually assertive. Like Naná, she wears femininity as a masquerade, as "a parodic performance of the feminine that 'makes visible' what is supposed to remain concealed: the artifice of femininity, the gap between an impossible role and the woman playing it."⁷³



Marcela (Maria Paula), a female drag queen

73. Rowe 1995, p. 6

In addition to these elements that are restricted to characters and images, in broader narrative terms the carnivalesque emphasis on the collective is sustained by intermittent communal celebrations (e.g. women-only parties, disco parties and an erotic fair). These, however, are transitory and contained in comparison to the historical focus on the community that has been observed in the previous decades (see Chapters 2.1 and 3.2), and contemporary Brazilian popular cinema indeed seems to move towards a more Hollywood-influenced focus on the individual.



The erotic fair in *De Pernas pro Ar*

4.2.2 Feminism: Individualism and Choices

Brazilian comedies have always featured remarkable — if relatively few — female comedians. Movies centered on female protagonists have been popular, as was discussed previously regarding *Garotas e Samba* and films starring Dercy Gonçalves. If the *chanchadas* tended to centre on stock characters (such as the maid, the spinster, the gold-digger and the shrew),⁷⁴ contemporary Brazilian comedies move to more individualised

74. See Chapter 4.2.2 for an analysis of these stock characters.

characters, following the tradition of the Hollywood romantic comedies strictly. In stark contrast with the previous cycles of Brazilian cinema that champion the community over the individual, this is a significant shift promoted by the *Globochanchadas*.⁷⁵

On the surface, *De Pernas pro Ar* appears to promote an inversion of gender roles. Alice's womanhood is questioned as she lacks maternal instinct, employs a maid to do the housework and, when a male character sighs "eu não entendo as mulheres," her retort is "eu também não." This distancing from a collective gender identity is telling as it emphasises Alice as an individual, not aligned to any feminist discourse despite the fact that her quest for financial success and sexual liberation are closely related to feminism. João, in his turn, is feminised, as he constantly complains that he is not heard, that Alice can only think of work and sex and demands her to spend more time with him and their son. This apparent inversion, however, is not as profound as the carnivalesque inversions seen in films from previous decades.⁷⁶ In line with the carnivalesque tradition, traits of stock characters are still present, but this phase notably constitutes a shift in relation to previous decades as spectators are now provided with more psychological development and films tend to focus on one or two protagonists as opposed to multiple couples (the sextet of *Garotas e Samba*, the quartet in *Matar ou Correr*, the orgy including various couples in *A Banana Mecânica* and *A Viúva Virgem*, etc). By

75. The focus on the community has been ascertained in Chapters 4.1.5 in relation to the *chanchadas* and Chapter 5.2.1 in relation to the *pornochanchadas*. Furthermore, the scatology which is widespread in the *pornochanchada* underscores "[c]omedy's tendency toward the scatological [...] as a search for a universal humanity that transcends traditional boundaries of class, race and nationality. Comedy pulls everything down to its most basic level, and as such it transcends petty concerns of the moment [...]" (Karnick and Jenkins 1995, p. 265).

76. See Chapter 4.1.2 on the debasement of masculinity in the *chanchadas*, for example.

focusing on one female protagonist⁷⁷ and her trajectory to find a work-life balance, *De Pernas pro Ar*, in line with similar narratives produced in the US such as *Sex and the City*, "lacks a larger political agenda but rather is focused on the effects of individual choices on individual lives."⁷⁸

Although feminism is never mentioned in the film, it is implied that it positions itself in the so-called post-feminist framework.⁷⁹ Even among those who reject the term 'post-feminism' and consider themselves third-wave feminists, there is an observable focus on individualism in this new phase of the movement.⁸⁰ Feminism, or rather women's emancipation, therefore "becomes reduced to one issue: choice."⁸¹ Along these lines, *De Pernas pro Ar* does not present any concrete instance of gender discrimination as the female protagonist gets a promotion and succeeds in her own business, proving that she is as capable and talented as

77. Paradoxically, although the film focuses on Alice's trajectory, spectators are never provided with any in-depth version of Alice's motivations and desires, partly because she does not seem to know them herself. In *De Pernas pro Ar 2* (Roberto Santucci, 2012), spectators are provided with background information on her motivations, as Marion shows João a video of Alice as a child already planning to be a successful businesswoman. This information is not given by Alice and once again she seems to need others to define her and justify her actions. Alice's complete lack of self-awareness reinforces her association with masculinity — as being in touch with one's feelings is perceived as a feminine characteristic — and ultimately serves to position women as lacking and inept.

78. Henry 2004, p. 72.

79. The term 'post-feminism,' however inconsistently and ill-defined, generally implicates that feminism has been superseded and "tacitly assume[s] and promote[s] a liberal notion of the formal equality of men and women, whose viewpoints are structurally accorded equal weight." (Modleski 1991, p. 6). Brooks 2002 argues that postfeminism "does not assume that either patriarchal or modernist discourses have been replaced or superseded" and equates it with postcolonialism in its "continuous engagement with the effects of colonial occupation" (pp. 1-2). The problem with this comparison is that there is a fundamental difference between colonialism, a practice of power that no longer exists in the same terms as it once did. As Faludi argues, citing Brenda Polan, "Post-feminism is the backlash. Any movement or philosophy which defines itself as post whatever came before is bound to be reactive. In most cases it is also reactionary" (Faludi 1993, p. 15).

80. Astrid Henry's explains that "third wavers have steered clear of prescribing a particular feminist agenda and instead have chosen to stress individuality and individual definitions of feminism. This is paralleled in the preferred writing genre of third wavers — the autobiographical essay, a form which shares little with the group manifestos of a previous generation" (Henry 2004, p. 71).

81. Henry 2004, p. 71.

her male counterparts (if not more), and consequently implies that the outcome of the film is dependent on her choices alone.⁸²

Furthermore, in displacing oppression from outside (society) to within (the self), the film promotes the self-regulation of female sexuality while subtly co-opting women into the denial of gender inequality: anything can go under the mantra of 'a woman's choice.' A stretch in this line of reasoning is observed in *Bruna Surfistinha* (Marcus Baldini, 2011), where prostitution is glamourised as a personal choice and means of empowerment.⁸³ As Tania Modleski argues, while these films may contain transgressive elements relative to women's sexuality, they nevertheless rely on the same oppressive practices to which feminism has historically been opposed, such as the objectification of women's bodies:

Where commercial movies seek to package and commodify marginalised groups and experiences it is [...] both a territorial claim and a recognition of sorts. The contemporary articulation of 'strong women' in terms of an aggressive sexuality involves a particular kind of objectification and display, one that also picks up on mainstream 'post-feminist' discourses.⁸⁴

On the surface, it is Alice's initiative to behave more maternally and to reunite with her husband, but the narrative as a whole operates as a moral tale favouring traditional gender

82. A 2013 virtual debate promoted by *The Economist* discussed the motion 'This house believes a woman's place is at work.' The debate was followed by a poll in which the majority of users (53%) voted against the motion; a woman's place is wherever she wants, those who opposed the motion argued. What was not taken into account is that the liberal argument of freedom of choice ignores asymmetrical power relations, unequal opportunities and soft forms of domination, such as tradition, social pressure and the inculcation of a deep-seated sexist culture. In both *De Pernas pro Ar* and *De Pernas pro Ar 2* (Roberto Santucci, 2012), Alice is apparently free to choose as she wishes, but the narrative of the film functions to pose only one choice as the correct one, which, of course, defeats the very concept of 'choice.'

83. Other real-life cases of this so-called empowerment through sexuality include that of middle/upper-class women who claim to have chosen prostitution as a career (see Turioni 2013, n.p.), and 'pussy power,' which is based on the liberal ideal of free choice (for a critique of the concept of pussy power, see Maria Júlia 2013, n.p.).

84. Tasker 1998, p. 12.

roles, promoting the fundamental value of the family in a clear display of the cultural ambivalence regarding female sexual agency.⁸⁵ Following Hollywood's model of initial scenario-crisis-reestablishment of the status quo, the protagonist's story is a transformational journey that aims at correcting the anomaly that is an ambitious woman. In order to achieve that, the film mobilises subtle mechanisms of control that, combined, offer a clear depiction of the glass ceiling in operation — invisible and incommensurable elements such as work-life balance and social pressure in the form of guilt, public shaming and ostracism — that prevent women from reaching the top of the professional ladder. The ending is ambivalent in relation to Alice; whereas it could be argued that she escapes punishment (as she ends the film in a position of professional success *and* familial happiness), there is great emphasis on the idea that a successful career comes to women at great personal cost.

Whereas sitcoms can sometimes offer a redefinition of the family (e.g. *Sex and the City* and *Friends*),⁸⁶ *De Pernas pro Ar* restates the traditional family unit. Unlike *Sex and the City*, *De Pernas pro Ar* is only partly based on female friendship and solidarity. Although most of the film focuses on the relationship between Alice and Marcela and, to a lesser extent, Alice and her mother, the ending foregrounds the nuclear family as the preferred arrangement with no matching alternative. The shift is evident in *De Pernas pro Ar 2*, where Alice and Marcela's friendship is transformed into competition for the attention of Ricardo (played by Eriberto Leão). Already in *De Pernas pro Ar*, we see Marcela, who at first appears to be single and

85. In relation to *Sex and the City*, Astrid Henry explains that "[t]o dismiss, as many have done, *Sex and the City*'s main characters as gay men in drag is to miss the larger — and potentially more threatening — point [...]. Such, often hostile, reactions all reveal the continuing cultural ambivalence about female sexual agency. If such agency can be written off as 'gay' — or even as 'male' — there is little need to face the larger social changes represented by women's growing sexual assertiveness" (Henry 2004, p. 80).

86. Henry 2004, p. 67.

satisfied, later embrace the idea that success equates to children and husband, and the role of a housewife. Finally, the climactic ending scene consists of Alice's realisation that even the highest professional achievement — a largely successful and profitable business and the prize of entrepreneur of the year — pales in comparison to familial harmony. The actions that follow her epiphany are revealing, as she denies herself the recognition of her success by sending her mother as a proxy to receive the prize. The cross cutting between Marion and Alice gradually gives way to the sequence of Alice's journey to reunite with her husband and son, with her mother's voice-over spelling out the importance of family. Alice's literal travelling symbolises the end of her metaphorical journey of self-realisation as mother and wife. Most dramatically, at the end Alice puts her own life at risk by jumping in the water to reach her husband's sail boat, despite not being able to swim. The driven, powerful, ambitious woman is taken back to the traditional role of the damsel in distress as she needs her husband to rescue her and save her life, as she yields, "não vivo sem você."

A business phone call disturbs the family harmony presented in the last scene and, although her family voice their support, the tone is not of encouragement but rather resentful resignation, reinforcing the double standard according to which ambition is seen as positive in men and negative in women. The film's epilogue shows Alice contacting Marcela to help her close a new business deal. Not as much a subversion as the announcement of a sequel, the ending nonetheless signals the Protean nature of the carnivalesque and the relative permissiveness necessary to maintain the status quo. Alice has not given up, but she is not emancipated nor entirely free, torn between the demands of career and family and constantly blamed for her falling short of perfection.

4.2.3 The Binaries of Femininity Relocated

While the carnivalesque scenes depicting Alice's body out of control may confound the divide between public and private spaces (see Chapter 4.2.1), the binaries of femininity are still presented, albeit in new, revamped form. A revolution confined to the bedroom is not, after all, a revolution.

The pillar on which both *De Pernas pro Ar* and *De Pernas pro Ar 2* comfortably rest is one of the most fundamental of patriarchy: the sexual division of labour. As part of a conscious effort to make *De Pernas pro Ar 2* available to a wider audience, the sexual content of the film was toned down, resulting in the new rating being lowered to 12 years old (from 16 for the original film).⁸⁷ Significantly, this change makes *De Pernas pro Ar 2* lose its most transgressive carnivalesque elements in relation to the first film. The sequel is considerably more conservative in terms of female sexuality while maintaining the overall traditional framework regarding the domestic division of labour. *De Pernas pro Ar 2* furthers the premise of the original movie that if a woman fails to achieve the unattainable ideal of mastering the triple burden of caring for her home, children and career perfectly and effortlessly — all while maintaining her health and beauty (an ideal that the film construes as possible and personified by a character aptly named Vitória) —, the problem lies in her

87. Still employing the strategy of the *chanchadas* to make 'family' comedies also attractive to men, female characters display a considerable amount of bare skin and tight clothes.

ambition to foster a career, not in juggling the three with no support from a partner. The film indeed seems to make a conscious effort to reinforce the perception that home and children are the domain of women, e.g. when Alice falls sick, it is her (female) friend who picks up her son at school, as if little did it matter which woman did the job, as long as it was a woman, while the husband innocently echoes Alice's shaming.

The critique of *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001) regarding the restrictive ways in which female liberation is shown also applies to *De Pernas pro Ar*:

while the success of professional women is trumpeted and while women's social independence is celebrated in a blaze of consumerism, intimate heterosexual relationships remain unconstructed, and people have no means of transforming their personal life to match their professional life.⁸⁸

Like Bridget, although Alice's professional success is celebrated with shopping sprees (particularly salient in *De Pernas pro Ar 2*, with a long shopping sequence in Times Square), her personal life does not match her professional accomplishment, as the latter constitutes the main site of conflict throughout the film.

Furthermore, the same pattern of association of women with consumerism already observed in the *chanchadas* (see Chapter 2.2.3) continues in the *Globochanchada* and indeed much emphasis is given to consumerism in *De Pernas pro Ar 2*. In a relatively lengthy sequence, the main characters are shown shopping in designer boutiques in New York City.⁸⁹

88. Whelehan 2002, pp. 42-43

89. This is related not only to femininity, but also to the lifestyle promoted by the Globo conglomerate, as widely observed in the soap operas.

In addition to the equation between social independence and consumerism, the liberating aspect of the female empowerment shown in the film can also be questioned. Despite the fact that the three main female characters in *De Pernas pro Ar* (Alice, Marion and Marcela) are sexually liberated women — and the film is, in many ways, about Alice's path to sexual satisfaction —, there is no profound subversion in relation to female sexuality. There is nothing new about showing liberating images of women, as long as they are restricting women's sexuality to the bedroom while men are allowed to talk openly about sex and womanising; what is notable is that the message is still widely distilled in contemporary popular film. Even if one accepts the reduction of liberation to sexual liberation, which is only one of the demands of feminism, sexual freedom in the film is portrayed fundamentally in relation to men.

The dichotomy public/private is sustained under other guises as well. Alice's marketing strategy is a good metaphor for the film as a whole: home delivery ensures that women's desire continues to be private, as female sexual activity is seen as positive insofar as it does not disturb societal norms of decorum. As a male character in the film explains, "mulher que se mete nisso aqui [the very public erotic fair] é tudo vagabunda." Following the rationale according to which a 'good' woman is a "dama na rua e vagabunda na cama," the film does not deconstruct the oppositions public/private and virgin/whore but merely relocates them. The strategy of assigning different spheres where each code of conduct is permissible — generally to the benefit of men — does not differ from women's magazines' articles on 'how to please your man.' As feminist activist Maria Júlia, writing for the *Marcha Mundial das*

Mulheres,⁹⁰ puts it, the relocation of the binaries of femininity is not a new idea, but one which is

trazida de tempos em tempos com mais força pela mídia — um dos principais meios através do qual se realiza o backlash contra as feministas. Para barrar conquistas e neutralizar nosso discurso, propaganda-se um outro, com apelo na sociedade e de fácil degustação: para libertar-se basta afirmar-se enquanto livre. Não é preciso romper com nenhum padrão, pois atendendo ao que já está aí é o bastante. E para isso, basta procurar ter a maior quantidade de prazer sexual possível.

In *De Pernas pro Ar*, and particularly in *De Pernas pro Ar 2*, modes of conduct that are disturbing to the divide between private kinkiness vs. public demureness are neutralised to conform to the traditional framework.⁹¹ A consequence of the reinstatement of this new divide — essentially a sugarcoated version of the old binaries of private/public and virgin/whore — is the naturalisation of misogynistic practices such as slut shaming.⁹² Indeed, Alice faces punishment every time she takes sex outside the private sphere: she is fired for the vibrator incident and humiliated when her husband finds her presenting a number at the erotic fair. In a symptomatic sequence, Alice, accidentally trapped in a strap-on dildo, makes her way from a customer's house to her own home, embarrassed and highly apologetic. The scene is followed by a row with her husband, to whom the sight of her with a plastic penis is unbearable. The potential subversion contained in the image of a phallic woman is neutralised

90. One of the biggest feminist organisations in the world.

91. For example, Marcela's various male visitors, initially taken to be boyfriends, are revealed to be gay friends, and she ends the film pregnant and settling for a life as a housewife.

92. Slut shaming is "the act of criticising a woman for her real or presumed sexual activity, or for behaving in ways that someone thinks are associated with her real or presumed sexual activity" (*Wikia: Geek Feminism* Wiki n.d., n.p.).

by Alice's passive attitude in the face of João's aggressive reaction.⁹³ The scene is a clear illustration that still, "[t]he world polices women — even now in this so-called post-feminist era — into silence about sex, socially constructed modesty, and self-regulating repression of behavior and fantasy."⁹⁴



A much more graphic illustration of the phallic woman than Naná's cigarette holder in 1957 *Garotas e Samba*

Not only in relation to sexuality are women confined to the private domain in *De Pernas pro Ar* as all professional settings appear adverse to female professionals. Alice is literally the only woman in the room when training her team, when presenting a new product to the client and among the award winners, who are all white middle-aged men. It is likely that the mise-en-scène is staged to make the protagonist stand out, but it nonetheless sets up Alice as the exception, reaffirming and naturalising the corporate world as a male-dominated sphere.

93. João's reaction to the penis attached to Alice's body reverberates a range of anxieties, from the hint of homophobia ("Não vem por trás!") to the fear that women might not need men. The contrast with the *Sex and the City* episode (Season 1, Episode 9: 'The Turtle and the Hare' aired on 2 August 1998), where Charlotte also discovers a rabbit vibrator is telling: in the North American sitcom, the possibility of making men redundant is clearly posed whereas Alice's sexual satisfaction is always strongly related to (private) marital life, from her motivation to pursue it to the end to which it serves.

94. Linda Johnson cited in Henry 2004 (p. 82).

Although on the surface supportive of female emancipation, the scenario establishes the public sphere as a man's business, where the exceptional woman who infiltrates it suffers considerable personal loss. The fact that Alice's former (male) boss receives an award surrounded by his family suggests that, whether or not it might be true that it is lonely at the top, just how lonely seems to depend on one's gender.

The solipsistic shift presented in both *De Pernas pro Ar* and *De Pernas pro Ar 2* indirectly cements the idea that gender difference — and consequently gender inequality — is the result of individual choices, not systemic and structural discrimination. The emphasis on individual freedom therefore demobilises collective organisation and action. *De Pernas pro Ar* is in many ways the (re)construction of an oppressive and unattainable ideal of 'having it all.' As it so well illustrates, 'having it all' becomes a new form of entrapment and a means of domesticating women and taking them back to their 'proper' place, which is still strongly linked to the private sphere. *De Pernas pro Ar 2* advances this statement by showing the mechanism through which women's freedom is shaped and limited by a lifestyle culture based on consumable signs of happiness and accomplishment.

4.2.4 Male and Female Sexuality: *Dois Pesos, Duas Medidas*

The film is strongly anchored to the double standards — commonly referred to in Portuguese as *dois pesos, duas medidas* — in relation to sexuality as it promotes a model of masculinity that frames men as irrational sex-driven animals and ambitious women as frigid shrews. The marriage crisis used as a plot trigger is a warning against the dangers of taking one's man for granted, based on the untroubled premise that, in the words of Marion, "um homem procura fora o que não tem em casa." While some degree of sexual emancipation has been observed since the *chanchadas*, in the *porno-chanchadas* fear of female adultery becomes a recurrent source of humour, particularly exploiting the pathetic comicality of the cuckold (*corneo*). In *De Pernas pro Ar*, there seems to be a return to the model of the *chanchadas* as it is male adultery that takes centre stage, but now humour does not originate from the husband's tricks to cheat on his wife, but from the misunderstanding (in Alice's assumption that her husband is cheating on her) leading to her humiliation. Several scenes in the movie reinforce men's uncontrollable sexual urge, including the TV programme that claims that male macaws are unable to be faithful and the opening scene consisting of a montage of quick shots showing João's hands trying to grab Alice's body in bed while she repeatedly evades his attempts. The notion of men as naturally polygamous, more promiscuous and having more sexual desire than women is a relatively recent development in the history of sexuality, as women were

once considered purely driven by urges, "even greater 'slaves to lust... worse than beasts.'"⁹⁵

The fact that João remains faithful although the threat of unfaithfulness is sustained throughout the film (via secondary characters and Alice) conveniently prevents João from being blamed while the idea of men as sexual predators is unquestioned and repeatedly used as a narrative driving device. The counterposition of João's 'feminine' demands in parallel to the other (female) characters' obsession that he is cheating on Alice perpetuates the 'seed-spreading' model of masculinity at the same time that it redeems men in the figure of João.

Despite the fact that men as 'seed spreaders' is historically and socially situated, contemporary Brazilian comedies seem to make a rather conscious effort to promote it as a universal given. For example, another *Globochanchada*, the also very successful *Qualquer Gato Vira-Lata* (Tomas Portella, 2010), spells out what *De Pernas Pro Ar* suggests. The edifying tone of the message is emphasised by the setting, a university lecture:

Female student (extra): Então o senhor afirma que a grande responsável pelo desastre das relações amorosas é a mulher, é isso?

Male professor (Malvino Salvador): Isso, a mulher podia salvar a relação com o homem se ela voltasse a obedecer as leis da natureza.

Student: O senhor é muito machista, professor, isso sim.

Professor: O biólogo não tem direito a opinião pessoal. Darwin nunca foi revogado. A exemplo de seus ancestrais selvagens, enquanto o macho pode fazer centenas de filhos por ano, a fêmea só pode fazer um. Um. [...] O homem precisa perpetuar o seu código genético pelo mais vasto território que encontrar, se possível, por toda a superfície do planeta.

Student: Então na sua opinião, professor, a gente tem que ficar aqui chupando o dedo enquanto vocês saem por aí, comendo deus e todo o mundo?

Professor: Os homens foram programados para isso. Mocinha, há hoje em dia milhões de homens inseguros, desamparados, as mulheres atacam, elas marcam pesado, elas telefonam demais. Elas não são românticas. [...] Briguem com a natureza, não comigo. É a biologia evolucionista quem diz.

95. Mottier 2008, p. 19.

The last words of the male professor, whose authority is underscored by visual and linguistic elements,⁹⁶ dismiss the female students' contestation by appropriating the scientific discourse ("é a biologia evolucionista que diz"). The appropriation of the scientific discourse to legitimise male philandering is revelatory of a rather self-conscious effort to normalise man's 'natural right to polygamy'⁹⁷ as some feminist activists have put it, a pattern which is observed overtly since the *chanchadas*.

A rather different picture is painted in relation to the female character and sexuality. Although the film plot revolves around Alice's discovery of her sexuality, it is still inserted within a heteronormative framework and it is the break-up with João that precipitates her quest for sexual self-fulfilment.⁹⁸ In both *De Pernas pro Ar* and *De Pernas pro Ar 2*, the transgression of approaching the topic of female orgasm is a superficial varnish, serving to satisfy the modern-spirited while continuing to promote — now with a shinier varnish — the pillars of gender inequality. Female sexuality in these films also functions as a policing force contributing to the medicalisation of women's bodies and minds and it is telling that having an orgasm was precisely one of the treatments given to the hysterics.⁹⁹ Alice, who is depicted

96. The mise-en-scène places him on a higher level in the lecture theatre while the female students are on the same level as the rest of the class; the students use linguistic markers of reverence, such as 'professor' and 'senhor,' while he uses the condescending diminutive 'mocinha,' adding to the infantilisation of the female students against his untroubled authority.

97. Maria Júlia 2013, n.p.

98. Along similar lines, *Divã* is particularly daring as it approaches a topic which is doubly transgressive — a middle-aged woman's sexuality. The fact that the protagonist is played by charismatic Lília Cabral seems essential to foster the audience's empathy and generate the film's success. Cabral is not the only actor on whose extra-filmic star persona the film capitalises, as supporting actor Reynaldo Gianecchini's real-life relationship with middle-aged TV presenter Marília Gabriela gave him more visibility than his actual artistic talent.

99. Another eminent chapter in the history of women's pathologisation is Freud's diagnosis of hysteria, whose first treatments involvement genital massages until the achievement of 'hysterical paroxysm,' a technical term for what would today be known as orgasm (Mottier 2008, p. 35).

as a self-centered irascible workaholic lacking self-awareness, allows others to define her as Marcela and Marion consistently point out what her problem is. In addition to depriving the protagonist from agency, the overemphasis on what is perceived as her problem places the film in the long-standing tradition of medicalisation of women. Equating a woman's mental well-being to sexual satisfaction — an idea that dates back as far as Ancient Greece¹⁰⁰ — and the medicalisation of women's sexual desire, or lack of it, is still widely present in popular culture, in, for example, the association between bad temper and frigidity or pre-menstrual syndrome. The pathologisation of Alice's desire (signified by her ambition) is further underscored in *De Pernas pro Ar 2*, where she is sent to a clinic against her will after an exhaustion-related breakdown.¹⁰¹ Alice's hospitalisation is also a symbolic punishment for transgressing the male-dominated public sphere as well as a suggestion that women might not be as equipped as men to handle the stress inherent to a successful career. Sex is therefore used as a means of regulating gender anomalies, as gender experimentation is generally seen as more taboo than sexual experimentation.¹⁰²

100. The Ancient Greek attributed female humour fluctuations to a displacement of their uterus — a condition artfully named 'the wandering womb' (Mottier 2008, p. 35).

101. Outside of comedy, in the Brazilian cinema of the 1970s films of this tradition include *A Dama do Lotação* (Neville de Almeida, 1978), *Bonitinha mas Ordinária* (Braz Chediak, 1981) and *Mulher Objeto* (Silvio de Abreu, 1981), all of which present psychologically unstable, sexually voracious women.

102. Henry 2004, p. 82.

4.2.5 Reactionary Pleasure

The analysis of *De Pernas pro Ar* demonstrates that the carnivalesque tradition continues in Brazilian popular cinema, but now restricted to contained scenes of organised chaos, as it were, therefore marking a crucial shift in the promotion of the individual to the detriment of the collective. A clear transition is also observed from the first *De Pernas pro Ar* to *De Pernas pro Ar 2*, as the few embedded carnivalesque motifs, such as the pregnant hag and Marcela's public orgasms, disappear. The female body out of control is the only element that is maintained in the two films, which constitutes the most transgressive scenes in *De Pernas pro Ar 2*.

By revolving around a woman's path to sexual and professional fulfilment *De Pernas pro Ar* not only captures current debates in Brazil but, most importantly, promotes the dislocation of systemic asymmetries to the level of the individual. A product of its time, the centrality of sexuality in *De Pernas pro Ar* is conspicuous of the privilege — a privilege which is strongly classed and raced¹⁰³ — of defining liberation exclusively in terms of sexual freedom.¹⁰⁴ It is not by chance that the movie has been compared to *Sex and the City*; while to both have the positive or progressive effect of broadening cultural representations of female sexuality,¹⁰⁵

103. Focusing on sexual liberation also elides primary oppressive practices such as domestic violence, sexual violence and rape culture.

104. Henry 2004, p. 70.

105. Henry 2004, p. 79.

equating female emancipation to sexual liberation is a violent reductionism of the struggle for gender equity. As in previous decades, the film portrays "the traces of feminist struggle elsewhere, even if it is only in the attempt to capitalise on a discernible new audience: the modern women."¹⁰⁶

The old-fashioned double standard in relation to male and female sexuality is promoted in a modern setting and men continue to be seen as natural womanisers, now with the support of the legitimising discourse of science in the perversely distorted use of biology and genetics. In line with the trend observed in previous decades as well as in *A Mulher Invisível* (see Chapter 4.1), masculinity continues to be portrayed as under threat with the feminisation of its male protagonist. Exceptional in *De Pernas pro Ar* is that such a threat is introduced rather bluntly by the character of Alice and her desire to occupy the public sphere. In addition to the menace this poses to patriarchy, *De Pernas pro Ar* is also exceptional in the sense that it offers a depiction of the destabilisation, however ephemeral, of the institution of the family provoked by women's emancipation.

The application of a traditionally Brazilian formula of humour to a modern topic such as female sexuality results in a profitable package that is alluring to viewers, a fact which is confirmed by the box-office success of the film and its sequel. By providing spectators with a superficially transgressive topic focused on an individual's journey that leads to Alice's 'choice' to conform to the traditional role of wife and mother, the film promotes the internalisation of traditional social gender ascriptions. Elaine Moraes, expert in erotic

106. Tasker 1998, p. 12.

literature, puts forward a similar argument in regard to *Fifty Shades of Grey*,¹⁰⁷ "[a]o colocar a simbólica repressão feminina a serviço do desejo, a trilogia transfere as tradicionais imagens da submissão para o obscuro plano da fantasia, no qual se revela o tempo forte da personagem e de suas leitoras."¹⁰⁸ *De Pernas pro Ar* then functions to promote one view — a rather traditional one — not only as preferable but also as sexy and modern.

When Tania Modleski asks herself, "[i]t is not altogether clear to me why women, much more so than any other oppressed groups of people, have been so willing to yield the ground on which to make a stand against their oppression,"¹⁰⁹ her astonishment is valid. However, women's readiness to introject and incorporate sexism and inequality becomes more understandable given the seductive cultural production behind it, which the *Globochanchadas*, and *De Pernas pro Ar* in particular, well illustrate. With an entire industry promoting traditional roles in subtle yet powerful ways, it is hardly surprising that women tend to yield the ground on their own liberation. Similar mechanisms are observed in *Se Eu Fosse Você*, the most successful *Globochanchada* to date and in fact one of the most popular films in Brazilian cinema's recorded history.

107. James 2011.

108. Moraes 2013, n.p.

109. Modleski 1991, p. 15. I would argue that, due to the different paths of the civil rights movements in Brazil and the US, in the Brazilian context racial minorities have been equally yielding.

4.3 *Se Eu Fosse Você*: Liminal Spaces

The 2006 film *Se Eu Fosse Você* is the epitome of the *Globochanchada*. Directed by Daniel Filho, who has stated that "[m]y project is Globo Filmes. I am Globo Filmes,"¹¹⁰ *Se Eu Fosse Você* brought 3.6 million spectators to the cinema and its sequel, *Se Eu Fosse Você 2* (2009), was the second most watched film since the Revival attracting over 5 million spectators.¹¹¹ The two use a storyline appropriated from a popular Hollywood genre of comedy, the body swap movie, and inaugurate the formula in Brazilian cinema. The plot revolves around a wealthy married couple, Helena (Glória Pires) and Cláudio (Tony Ramos) and their dissatisfaction with their individual lives: Helena finds her life as a stay-at-home mother unfulfilling — in her words, "vida vazia de shopping e academia" — and Cláudio is on the verge of losing his advertising firm in a takeover. During a fight, they each accuse the other of having an easy ride and in unison say the sentence that, as suggested by the title, triggers their transformation. The film is clearly positioned within the 'battle of the sexes' framework, as an introductory sequence in outer space, with the voice-over announcement of the alignment of Mars and Venus, hints at the fundamental and abysmal differences between men and women. The perception of men and women as diametrically opposed and in competition is widely verified in popular culture.¹¹² This framework is problematic to the extent that it effaces differences within the sexes, which some feminists claim to be greater than between

110. Daniel Filho cited in Donoghue 2011 (p. 59).

111. *Ancine-Agência Nacional de Cinema* 2013, n.p. According to producer Walkiria Barbosa from Total Entertainment, the number of spectators would be even higher, had Brazil a greater number of theatres, see Arantes 2009, n.p..

112. For example, the self-help book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Even in science, Richard Dawkins influential *The Selfish Gene*, considered a watershed in evolutionary biology theory, has a chapter entitled 'Battle of the Sexes' (Dawkins 1989, pp. 140-165).

men and women. It also distorts feminism as a competitive battle for superiority, not a struggle for equality. Furthermore, *Se Eu Fosse Você* relies largely on gender stereotypes: Helena, her mother (Glória Menezes) and female colleagues do not have jobs; among the few women who are seen working, one is a secretary (Cibele, played by Danielle Winits) who openly uses her sexuality to further the firm's business (and more seriously, the film naturalises sexual harassment in the workplace); women are constantly seen shopping, having beauty treatments or talking about shopping while men are always talking about women and football.

Despite the obvious conservative stance of the two films, the body swap genre is a privileged site for analysing the articulation of the perceived nature of sex and gender in popular culture. In contrast to Hollywood films of the same kind, the Brazilian movie is rather innovative. In fact, in a genre that already privileges the body, the carnivalesque celebration of the flesh makes it more lenient in relation to sexuality, and enables it to fully explore the homosexual subtext contained in the genre's premise. Even when reproducing the generic formula, as in the case of the idea of a metaphysical gender essence that resists its material relocation, the fact that they dedicate equal time to the portrayal of both sexes is also original. Finally, as will be discussed, the separation of body and soul in this film has concrete consequences derived from the relation between class and capitalism, manifested in *Se Eu Fosse Você* as light-hearted class tensions.

4.3.1 The Body Swap Genre

The body swap, also known as body switch, is a cinematic sub-genre of comedy that originates from literature with the novel *Freaky Friday*, which inspired a homonymous Disney picture directed by Gary Nelson in 1976. Other examples in Anglophone literature include the 1882 novel *Vice Versa: A Lesson to Fathers* by F. Anstey, a body swap between son and father, and Thomas Mann's 1940 novella *The Transposed Heads*, a swap between two brothers. Although the formula does not seem as prolific as the Pygmalion myth in Western literature, its premise has provided fertile material for Hollywood as dozens of movies of the kind have been produced since the inaugural *Freaky Friday*.¹¹³

The body swap formula encompasses a range of creative possibilities in comedy:¹¹⁴ the body switching can be 'intra-gender',¹¹⁵ interclass and/or interracial,¹¹⁶ and the 'single swap' or 'age swap' films,¹¹⁷ premised on the idea of the same person inhabiting the body of a younger or

113. *Freaky Friday* alone has had two remakes, one in 1995 directed by Melanie Mayrons and one in 2003 directed by Mark Waters.

114. Due to the genre's obvious inclination toward the metaphysical, it has been largely used in sci-fi movies such as *Looper* (Rian Johnson, 2012) and episodes of the *Star Trek* series ("Turnabout intruder" and "Vis à vis"). As the list of body swap appearances in the media is too extensive, examples used here will be drawn from comedies only, as it is the focus of this study.

115. Usually intergenerational, e.g. *Dream a Little Dream* (Marc Rocco, 1989), and most often in the same family (mother and daughter, sisters, father and son, grandfather and grandson), e.g. *Like Father Like Son* (Rod Daniel, 1987), *Vice Versa* (Brian Gilbert, 1988), *18 Again!* (Paul Flaherty, 1988), *Wish Upon a Star* (Blair Treu, 1996), *Sister Switch* (Torrance Colvin, 2009).

116. *All of Me* (Carl Reiner, 1984), where a female millionaire inhabits the body of a male middle-class lawyer, and the famous *Trading Places* (John Landis, 1984), where a black con artist played by Eddie Murphy trades places (but significantly not bodies, hinting at potential racial anxieties) with white millionaire Dan Ackroyd. Their release coincides with the first years of the Reagan administration, and they indeed reflect the value of the individual over class allegiances, a rhetoric used in the Reagan era to justify, among other things, the dismantling of the welfare system.

117. A precursor of this variety is *Monkey Business* (Howard Hawks, 1952), where a scientist played by Cary Grant creates a youth formula that makes him act like a 20-year-old.

older version of her/himself.¹¹⁸ Far less common in Hollywood is the body swap across genders, a topic which will be discussed below. The plot usually features characters whose dissatisfaction with their own lives leads them to idealise the life of another, or their own at a different age. The narratives develop until mutual understanding is reached, be it intergenerational, interclass or intergender, when, crucially, characters revert to their original bodies and the status quo is reattained. The body switch formula is therefore essentially about social regulation and personal conformity; it presumes and establishes a norm to which individuals should conform as well as appreciate. It is thus not surprising that the film considered to have inaugurated the genre in Hollywood was created by Disney, a well-known manufacturer of traditional gender role models. The climax of these movies usually consists of a chaotic sequence as a consequence of some event that requires a physical ability specific to the person who is in the wrong body. Such privilege of body over mind makes it a particularly carnivalesque genre, and it is arguably one of the few Hollywood genres of comedy that still relies heavily on slapstick.

Intergender body swaps are a relative recent development of this sub-genre. This category fosters greater potential for gender and sexual subversion, which is perhaps why films of this kind only became more common in Hollywood in the 2000s. An early example of this variety, *All of Me* (Carl Reiner, 1984), shows a female millionaire coexisting¹¹⁹ in the body of a middle-class lawyer played by Steve Martin. *Switch* (Blake Edwards, 1991), by the same

118. Usually a man, as seen in the popular *Big* (Penny Marshall, 1988) and also in *17 Again* (Burr Steers, 2009). More recently, *13 Going on 30* (Gary Winick, 2004) has featured a female protagonist.

119. Significantly, in the only example of intergender swap in the 1980s, the male character does not give up all power over his body.

director as *Victor Victoria* (1982), is the most transgressive of its kind in Hollywood and shows a womaniser turned into a woman.¹²⁰ Examples in the 2000s include *The Hot Chick* (Tom Brady, 2002) and *It's a Boy Girl Thing* (Nick Hurran, 2006). Most of these films focus on only one of the bodies (male in *All of Me* and *The Hot Chick*, and female in *Switch*). *Switch* shows a 'masculine' woman, which is far more subversive than an 'effeminate' man, as suggested by *The Hot Chick*, where spectators practically do not see the male protagonist living in a female body. In the only popular film¹²¹ where equal importance is given to the two bodies — *It's a Boy Girl Thing* —, the fact that the two protagonists are androgynous-looking teenagers offsets the destabilisation of gender norms. The fact that *It's a Boy Girl Thing* was released eleven months after *Se Eu Fosse Você*¹²² underscores the innovative nature — despite its appropriation of a Hollywood formula — of the double-swap portrayed in the Brazilian film.

4.3.2 Body vs. Mind and The Pseudo-Carnavalesque

The body swap formula is founded on the Cartesian divide between interiority and exteriority, which are seen as discrete, separable dimensions of a naturally unified being.

120. Another example in the 1990s is *Prelude to a Kiss* (Norman René, 1992). With art-house pretensions, this drama portrays Meg Ryan trading bodies with a dying elderly man. The film focuses on the generational conflict (leading to the female protagonist's appreciation of life and its finitude) rather than on gender, but spectators nonetheless get to see Alec Baldwin kissing an elderly man on the lips.

121. Less popular films with a double inter-gender body swap include *A Sainly Switch* (Peter Bogdanovich, 1999), a made-for-TV comedy about a black couple who switch bodies, and *All Screwed Up* (Neil Stephens, 2009), about the swap of two high school students, a white male and a black female teenager.

122. *It's a Boy Girl Thing*'s date of release was 26 December 2006 and *Se Eu Fosse Você*'s was 6 January 2006.

Bakhtin too seems to base his theory on this fundamental split,¹²³ notwithstanding the fact that he inverts the hierarchical valuation of the dichotomy body/mind. Nonetheless, Bakhtin's disintegration of bodily boundaries¹²⁴ paves the way for the blurring of the inner/outer divide between the metaphysical and the material. The notion of boundaries is also crucial to Bakhtin's vision of art:

a domain of culture should not be thought of as some kind of spatial whole, possessing not only boundaries but an inner territory. A cultural domain has no inner territory. It is located entirely upon boundaries, boundaries intersect it everywhere, passing through each of its constituent features.¹²⁵

It is remarkable that the Bakhtinian notion of no interiority prefigures Judith Butler's position of gender occurring on the surface of the body,¹²⁶ despite the fact that she does not seem to utilise Bakhtin as a main source of reference. Butler's ground-breaking formulation of gender identity as an illusion of interiority does not find an echo in *Se Eu Fosse Você*. By postulating the split between body and mind/soul,¹²⁷ *Se Eu Fosse Você* furthers the unquestioned premise that these are two separate dimensions of a being, and that the body contains the soul. The

123. "[Bakhtin] takes the human subject for granted as an irreducible unit, as well as capable of free will and characterised by the classical mind/body split. [...]he members of the [Bakhtin] Circle do seem to subscribe to something called 'human nature' — not a fixed or static essence,' but an historically-mutable and socially-embedded complex of qualities, capacities and powers" (Thomson 1993, p. 223).

124. "[T]he grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and complete phenomenon. The grotesque image displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs. The outward and the inward features are also merged into one" (Bakhtin 1984, p. 318).

125. Zbinden 2006, p. 29.

126. Butler argues that "[i]f the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (Butler 1999, p. 186).

127. While there are obvious differences — and consequences — to the use of the concepts of mind and soul, the two are fused in their counterposition to the body in the traditional dichotomies body vs. mind/body vs. soul. The two will be used according to the discourse on which they are inserted (religious or medical, for example).

film also subscribes to the heteronormative view of human beings as naturally cisgender,¹²⁸ and it is precisely because the film is strongly based on this traditional view of gender and sexuality that disruptive moments are noteworthy. Considering Butler and Bakhtin's points, and as *Se Eu Fosse Você* illustrates, gender identity could be seen as produced upon boundaries, in the tenuous frontiers where hegemonic and resistance practices meet and are negotiated.

Despite the fact that the divide between body and mind is maintained in *Se Eu Fosse Você*, since comicity derives from the incongruous corporeal acts resulting from the mind switching, these films conform but also confound the Cartesian split on which they are based. Like drag, these destabilising acts underscore gender as performance by making spectators hyperconscious of gender-specific bodily codes. It is a matter of fact that imputing physical attributes to the mind serves a very concrete purpose in these films; despite the given context of the body swap, what spectators effectively see on the screen is a man running 'like a woman' during a football match and a woman initiating sex 'like a man,' for example. These moments serve a regulatory function by exposing as ridicule that which does not conform squarely to the social expectations of cisgenderism. Nonetheless, the disruption caused by this type of representation could explain why Hollywood has recoiled from portraying intergender body swaps for nearly three decades.

128. The term 'cisgender' refers to a person whose self-perception of gender corresponds to the social expectations related to their anatomical sex, as assigned at birth. The term is usually used in opposition to 'transgender' (Brubaker et al. 2011, p. 50).



With a 'masculine' mind, Helena forcefully initiates sex 'like a man'

The clear dissociation of body and soul promoted by the body swap genre is also relevant as it enables the location of gender identity, of which the sequence where Cláudio (in Helena's body) wears Helena's nightgown is a clear example.



A woman's body is not sexualised when it is inhabited by a man

The scene, in which the camera shows Glória Pires's face in slow motion, is followed by a close-up shot of Cláudio/Helena touching his/her¹²⁹ own breasts with curiosity and appreciation. This image is best understood in the long tradition of transvestism in comedy,

129. The extent to which language is gendered is revealed when describing disruptive bodies. As happens in the case of transsexuals, language becomes insufficient.

which allows men to appropriate the female body.¹³⁰ As the association with transvestism suggests, Cláudio's enjoyment of his female body also indicates that in the film bodies are seen as clothing¹³¹ and the mind is construed as the primary *locus* of gender identity. This is a significant departure from the carnivalesque tradition and its fundamental privilege of the body over the mind. All other bodily acts, from mannerisms to skills such as playing football, fighting and dancing, are seen not only as gendered but also as directed by the mind. As Cláudio (as Helena) explains in a dialogue in *Se Eu Fosse Você*:

Cláudio (Glória Pires): Homem é mais forte, Helena.

Helena (Tony Ramos): Depende do que você chama de força.

Cláudio: Estou falando de músculos.

Helena: Só que você se esqueceu que os seus músculos agora estão comigo?

Cláudio: Na verdade, só músculos não querem dizer nada. O importante é saber usá-los.

[He proceeds to apply a karate move to prove his point]

The privilege of mind over body as well as the trivialisation of the body — ultimately seen as clothing — is not the only element that departs from the carnivalesque tradition. While carnivalesque moments and characters are still present, they function as superficial ancillaries to entertain audiences rather than to promote systematic inversions in a world *à l'envers*. An example of this pseudo-carnavalesque depiction is presented in the figure of the UFO

130. The opposite, however, i.e. Helena appreciating Cláudio's body, is never shown, indicating the disruptive potential contained in the idea of a woman enjoying phallic power.

131. Reflecting a religious view of the soul as perennial substance that travels through bodies, as is the case of religions based on reincarnation (e.g. Buddhism and *Espiritismo*, a vastly popular doctrine among the Brazilian *classe média*), or through time (as evidenced by the idea of the Last Judgment in the Christian tradition), gender identity is given by a supposedly timeless interior. However, the idea that the body rules the mind, or that the mind — not the physical brain but a metaphysical essence of consciousness — is naturally and fundamentally gendered entails a contradiction, having seen that for the same religions the soul is considered gender-neutral. In religions that involve reincarnation, for example, the same soul can incarnate either female or male bodies and the soul as genderless is present in the founding idea of the Holy Trinity in the figure of the Holy Spirit. This contradiction is never fully addressed in the film, or any of the genre, sustaining the idea of gender as naturally imprinted on one's soul. The role of contradictions at moments such as this is significant, as will be discussed in 6.3.5.

specialist, a vestigial Rei Momo (played by flamboyant Dênis Carvalho), to whom the couple turn in order to try to swap the bodies back to normal.¹³² He fails to help, but the sequence functions as a superficial carnivalesque relief with fast cross-cutting and extreme close-ups.



The new Rei Momo, now practically an extra

There are very few examples in *Se Eu Fosse Você* where the body takes precedence over the mind, and significantly these are mostly related to woman-specific corporeal experience, namely when Cláudio (in Helena's body) cannot work due to menstrual cramps in *Se Eu Fosse Você* and when s/he experiences morning sickness in *Se Eu Fosse Você 2*. The only instance where, in a typical carnivalesque way, the body takes precedence over the mind in relation to the male body is associated with the urge to urinate. In both *Se Eu Fosse Você* and *Se Eu Fosse Você 2*, Helena's struggle to urinate with a penis combines elements of transgression — the appropriation of phallic power — and of backlash¹³³ — women's supposed inability to, quite literally, handle it.

132. Turning to the UFO specialist, *Se Eu Fosse Você* indirectly acknowledges the failure of the Church to account for sexual matters, as Helena never seeks advice from the priest (played by Ari Fontoura), with whom she otherwise seems to have a close relationship. The first *Se Eu Fosse Você* therefore suggests Catholicism as cultural and ritualistic rather than a source of actual existential support. This is 'corrected,' as it were, in *Se Eu Fosse Você 2*, where Helena effectively seeks the priest's advice on the difficulties in her marriage. The changes from one film to the other reinforces the thesis that the *Globochanchadas* tend to get more conservative as the franchises develop.

133. The media plays a pivotal role in the backlash against feminism (for the definition of backlash, see Chapter 1.3.5). As Faludi argues, "[t]he backlash is at once sophisticated and banal, deceptively 'progressive' and proudly backward. It deploys both the 'new' findings of 'scientific research' and the sentimental moralizing of yesteryear; it turns into media sound bites both the glib pronouncements of pop-psych trend-watchers and the frenzied rhetoric of New Right preachers" (Faludi 1993, p. 12).

In the confusion between mind and body, however, significant contradictions emerge. Although Helena's doctor friend attests that "tudo normal, a cromatina sexual de vocês está certa: o XX está com ela e o XY está com você," Cláudio is portrayed as more sexually active and the initiator of their sexual activity despite the fact that he is inhabiting her body. This arrangement conforms to the popular notion that men are more sexually driven than women, but opposes some evolutionary biology theories according to which human sexual behaviour can be explained by hormones, chromosomes or a supposedly hardwired ancestral division of labour (see Chapter 4.2.4).¹³⁴ Construing what is popularly perceived as inherently bodily attributes (genetically passed on via natural selection) as transcending the body,¹³⁵ the film creates a contradiction for which it does not account, thus constituting one of the disruptive liminal moments that indirectly open up space to accommodate for change, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.3.5.

134. It is possible to sketch an alternative scenario that would endorse the evolutionary biology arguments put forward in the popular films analysed here, as imputing gender attributes to the body could also be constructed as comic, e.g. showing Helena as Cláudio experiencing more sexual desire than she felt in her female body, to name just one trait considered natural to men.

135. This framework also echoes the traditional view of transexuality as a woman's mind trapped in a man's body or vice-versa. Positing gender identity to the mind allows it to be seen as a medical condition that requires both surgical intervention and psychological treatment. The alignment with this discourse then underscores the medicalisation of bodies and the pathologisation of deviations from the norm.

4.3.3 Consumerism and the Exploitation of Bodies

In addition to the distancing from the carnivalesque tradition, the clear privilege given to the mind as the body becomes a mere receptacle¹³⁶ has yet another consequence, one which enables the exploitation of bodies intrinsic to capitalism. Roberto DaMatta develops a relationship between body and soul and the exploitation of subaltern bodies that is peculiar to Brazilian society:

Parece, pois, difícil viver num mundo de indivíduos no Brasil. A *individualidade* é sempre recusada, seja porque provoca a independência da pessoa, seja porque impede [...] o estabelecimento das famosas curvaturas nos códigos legais e normas impessoais do mundo público. Do mesmo modo, a indivisibilidade impediria que os marginais do mercado de trabalho — nossos biscateiros e empregados domésticos — fossem vistos e tratados com o *respeito* e a *consideração* que merecem. Porque podem ser vistos como *gente* e divididos em pessoas com um corpo e uma alma, podem ser de um lado explorados e, do outro, considerados. E aqui, sem dúvida, tocamos não só no personalismo típico das sociedades latino-americanas e tradicionais, [...] mas também no coração dilema brasileiro, esboçado igualmente nessa divisão dicotômica do mundo, em que o público fica divorciado do privado e a exploração do corpo do empregado nada tem a ver com sua alma que, para os exploradores, tem um lugar garantido no Paraíso. Assim, o corpo é amassado nas lides do trabalho sub-remunerado, mas a alma é cultivada e alimentada de consideração e respeito. Eis aí, numa cápsula, os ingredientes fundamentais do patrimonialismo e da patronagem, na sua sofisticada dialética de explorar e respeitar, desonrar e considerar.¹³⁷

Se Eu Fosse Você offers material for the analysis of the class tensions described by DaMatta; like the Brazilian telenovelas, it portrays a wealthy couple who owns all the traditional

136. Indeed, as receptacle of an essence that is the core of the individual, hence the connection with the individualisation of characters, as discussed in Chapter 6.2.2.

137. DaMatta 1997, pp. 175-176 (emphasis in the original).

material symbols of status: a mansion with a swimming pool, two brand new cars, and with an air of triviality, are able to discuss whether or not they should send their daughter to study in Europe. In this context, the maid is part of the package of status-laden commodities of a desirable lifestyle.



Abiding by the telenovela standard of the superrich, the image of idyllic familial harmony involves an ever-present servant

The maid Cida (played by Maria Gladys) is exemplary of the mechanism described by DaMatta, whereby the family's close and informal relationship with her does not preclude the exploitation of her work — on the contrary, it is precisely one of the ingredients that enables it. Hence, instead of the celebration of the body promoted by the carnivalesque, the separation between body and soul implied in the film's premise allows for the dialectics of exploitation to take place. *Se Eu Fosse Você* goes as far as enacting subtle class tensions, as Cida defies Helena, who orders her to wear a uniform for a social function.



Cida rebels when ordered to wear a uniform against her will

Cida resists the depersonalisation imposed by Helena through the use of a uniform — a depersonalisation which is also structurally replicated in the film as Cida is often shown in long shots, literally mingling with the scenario as her body is portrayed as yet another commodity in the background. The unequal treatment reserved to domestic workers was in fact sanctioned by law until 2013, up until when the Brazilian Constitution ensured reasonable working conditions to all workers but explicitly exempted domestic workers, thus legitimising exploitation. Cida's insistence on her individuality and her refusal to be commodified, at first endearingly harmless is perceived as more serious by 2009, the year of release of *Se Eu Fosse Você 2*. In 2010, the formulation of a constitutional amendment aiming at guaranteeing equal rights to domestic workers culminated with the approval of the *Projeto de Emenda Constitucional* (PEC) 66/2012 by the Senate in 2013. The amendment, entitled *PEC das Domésticas*, is index of the real changes taking place for the empowerment of this category of workers. Precisely at the point when domestic workers are finally regarded as *sujeitos de direito* in the Brazilian constitution, in *Se Eu Fosse Você 2* the character of Cida loses her relative importance as a secondary plotline as she is symptomatically and definitely

sent off to the background. The evolution of the topic in the two films shows that, in reactionary humour, when class tensions become real they are no longer joke material.

The exploitation of bodies is irrevocably linked with capitalism, and indeed consumerism is unashamedly promoted by the two *Se Eu Fosse Você* films (as well as *De Pernas pro Ar*, as discussed in Chapter 4.2.3). In the beginning of the first *Se Eu Fosse Você*, Helena's existential crisis (in her words, "vida vazia de salão, de academia, de shopping") hints at the emptiness of a culture that is geared by the search to satisfy the unlimited needs and desires it creates. The connection between capitalism and patriarchy is widely acknowledged,¹³⁸ as the film itself suggests in a dialogue between Helena and her mother:

Vivian: Mulher foi feita para fazer compras, não para fazer terapia. A não ser que seja casada com o Cláudio, aí quem ia ficar maluca era eu.

Helena: Ai, mamãe. Você acabou de dizer uma pérola do pensamento machista.

Vivian: Não, eu estou defendendo o direito das mulheres de fazer compras.

As the dialogue continues, Helena shows hesitation in buying an expensive dress, to which her mother retorts that she should not feel pity for taking advantage of the only thing her husband can offer: money. Throughout the film, spectators are reminded that Cláudio is the provider of the household, squarely reproducing traditional gender roles within the family. As Maggie Günsberg explains in relation to Italian cinema, "[w]ith bourgeois ownership of capital and a readily available servant class came the status symbol of the leisured, non-working wife, soon to become stereotypically associated with a form of parasitic

138. In Maggie Günsberg's words: "One basic locus for the production of gender relations is that of relations of production and consumption. A decisive shift took place during early capitalism's move away from cottage industry, when masculinity became associated with production outside the home, and femininity with (re)production and consumption inside the home" (Günsberg 2005, p. 68).

consumption which drained her productive husband's assets."¹³⁹ The dialogue also reveals the same pattern of discursive manipulation observed in *De Pernas pro Ar* (see Chapter 4.2.2), where housework is construed as choice and where women's liberation is reduced to sexual liberation within a strictly heteronormative framework. The same classist neoliberal model is used to reduce 'rights' to the superficial act of purchasing high-status commodities. As fundamental as it is for any struggle for equality, the concept of 'right' is co-opted by an empty, yet alluring, rhetoric of consumerism as equating empowerment.

4.3.4 Masculinity in Crisis: Feminisation

Whereas conspicuous consumption has been largely associated with women since the *chanchadas* (see Chapter 2.2), the body swap in *Se Eu Fosse Você 2* promotes a temporary inversion as much emphasis is given to the shopping spree of the male protagonist (Helena in Cláudio's body). As these films operate in a strictly cisgendered framework, the only alternative for gender disruption is to link it with homosexuality. In other words, feminine-coded behaviour is immediately associated with homosexuality, and indeed an acquaintance of Cláudio's has no doubt he is gay apparently due to his mannerisms and his keenness on shopping.

139. Günsberg 2005, p. 68. The non-working wife, as Günsberg explains, is parasitic not only of her husband, but also on the working class woman who frees her from housework. This relationship is also presented in *Se Eu Fosse Você*, as Helena's existential crisis is vastly enabled by Cida's labour, as discussed in the previous section.



Feminine-coded behaviour equals homosexuality in *Se Eu Fosse Você 2*

Despite the overlap between gender and sexual orientation, the body swap in *Se Eu Fosse Você* and *Se Eu Fosse Você 2* is extraordinary as it enables a degree of gender experimentation that is rarely seen in Brazilian popular cinema. Indeed, it promotes one of the most radical depictions of masculinity in crisis. As discussed in Chapter 4.1 and 4.2, the new face of the trope of masculinity in crisis in the *Globochanchada* is illness (Pedro in *A Mulher Invisível*) and feminisation (Pedro in *A Mulher Invisível* and João in *De Pernas pro Ar*).



Cláudio (Tony Ramos): a radical depiction of the vulnerable, feminised men of the *Globochanchadas*

The double standards associated with excessiveness is an additional index that the hysterical men of the *pornochanchadas* (see Chapter 3.2) still inhabit Brazilian cinema.¹⁴⁰ Although Cláudio's comic performance is loud and grandiloquent in general, it is only when he inhabits Helena's body that he is called 'out of control.' The use of the adjective in the feminine form (*descontrolada*) is revealing of a double standard according to which histrionic outbursts are sanctioned in men, i.e. while hysterical men are embraced and accepted as funny, histrionic behaviour is not tolerated in women, as it requires regulation ('more control').¹⁴¹ The abundance of examples of men portrayed as out of control in Brazilian cinema (lacking control of their bodily functions and also infantilised, hysterical and feminised, as discussed in previous chapters) underscores the fact that this is recurrent trope used to deal with the perception that masculinity is in crisis.

4.3.5 Liminality and the Horizon of Expectations

By separating body and mind, not only does *Se Eu Fosse Você* promote a separation between gender and sex, it also gives way to transgressive sexual practices. The subtext of homosexuality is disruptive as it threatens to expose heteronormativity as a fictional norm, as argued by Butler:

140. This is also observed in other media as well. Comedian Fábio Porchat is a good contemporary example of this kind of histrionic comic persona (see *Porta dos Fundos* 2012a, n.p. [video] and *Porta dos Fundos* 2012b, n.p. [video]).

141. Furthermore, Helena is generally portrayed as demure and part of the spectatorial pleasure is supposedly derived from seeing Cláudio's usual corporeal expansiveness contained by Helena's mind.

When the disorganization and the disaggregation of the field of bodies disrupt the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence, it seems that the expressive model loses its descriptive force. That regulatory ideal is then exposed as a norm and a fiction that disguises itself as a developmental law regulating the sexual field that it purports to describe.¹⁴²

Although the film does not go as far as to challenge the heteronormative framework, the homosexual subtext is constantly suggested, as the dialogue below from *Se Eu Fosse Você* illustrates:

Cláudio (in Helena's body): Pelo menos tem uma coisa boa nessa história toda. Eu nunca fui tão seguro da minha sexualidade.

Helena (in Cláudio's body): Mas é engraçado, né? Se a gente ama uma pessoa, a gente ama essa pessoa por dentro e por fora. Mais doido ainda é que, portanto, eu amo outra mulher. E tô amando, então, meu próprio corpo como se fosse outro.

Cláudio: Ih, não vem com essa história para cima de mim, não. Eu nunca gostei de corpo de macho.

Helena: Cláudio, aproveita que você está com o meu corpo e vê como ele funciona.

Earlier in the movie, Helena's friend¹⁴³ asks whether she had ever been curious to have sex with a woman, and suggests that she takes advantage of the situation to experiment. Female homosexuality is clearly posed while male homosexuality is readily dismissed, as seen in the dialogue above. Helena and Cláudio eventually do have sex, and although effectively enacted, male homosexuality remains unspoken, suggesting that it is more taboo than lesbianism. The fact that sexual intercourse is presented at all in *Se Eu Fosse Você* is exceptional in relation to the Hollywood films of the same kind as it is the only film where

142. Butler 1999, p. 185.

143. Helena's doctor friend, whom we see briefly in the first *Se Eu Fosse Você* disappears in the sequel while Cláudio lives a 'bromance.' As in *De Pernas pro Ar* and as already suggested in the first *Se Eu Fosse Você*, the sequel leaves no room for doubt that a woman's only true friends are within her nuclear family — her mother and daughter.

consensual sex between the couple takes place.¹⁴⁴ The sex scene is in fact key to the development of the narrative, as it is the turning point that marks the body reversal back to the status quo. By approaching the sex act between the swapped bodies in a relatively untroubled way, the Brazilian film exposes Brazilian cinema's traditional leniency in relation to sexual experimentation, as discussed in Chapter 4.2.3.

Furthermore, the scene indirectly exposes heterosexuality as a norm and a fiction¹⁴⁵ — indirectly because male homosexuality remains unarticulated, which is not unfamiliar to Brazilian audiences more broadly as there lingers an understanding that males who penetrate males are not considered homosexual.¹⁴⁶ Although "[b]ehaviour and identity are more complex in messy reality"¹⁴⁷ than the unproblematic division between male-active and female/effeminate-passive, such complexity only emerges as the concept of 'gay' *as an identity* becomes consolidated, and despite the fact that this is increasingly the case in Brazil, spectators surely hear the echo of the cliché of the *homem que é homem* (given by his ability to penetrate and never be penetrated) when Cláudio says "eu nunca gostei de corpo de macho." The irony, of course, is that moments later he does have sex with one — with Helena in his body. In fact, not only does he have sex with a man, he is also penetrated, which further

144. Unconsensual sex takes place in *Switch*, with Steve Brooks (as Amanda) having sex with his best friend Walter, after a drunk night out. The sexual act is never shown and is followed by a long argument where Amanda calls Walter a rapist.

145. The risk of subversion, however, is offset by the fact that Helena and Cláudio are married. In *Se Eu Fosse Você 2*, when they decide to have sex as an attempt to swap their bodies back to normal, as in the previous film, spectators are reminded that this takes place between a heterosexual, married couple:

Helena (Tony Ramos): Tô me sentindo uma vadia.

Cláudio (Glória Pires): O que é isso, Helena, não exagera. Também não é com qualquer um. Sou eu, Cláudio, seu marido, lembra?

146. Murray 1995, pp. 49-50.

147. Murray 1995, p. 51.

transgresses traditional views on manhood. This is never explicitly stated, which helps deflect anxieties around male homosexuality, together with the fact that Tony Ramos is a famous star known to be a heterosexual *galã* who famously possesses copious amounts of body hair, apparently a sign of manhood.¹⁴⁸

At the core of the body swap genre is social transgression as the body switching takes place precisely due to the dissatisfaction experienced by the characters. A highly regulatory genre, it reveals the normative mechanisms of social conformity. As the analysis of *Se Eu Fosse Você* demonstrated, various legitimising discourses — medical, religious, scientific — can be mobilised to reinforce social norms, often contradicting and disavowing each other. Just as revealing as what these films regulate is what they expose: double standards, failures in the heteronormative matrix and disruptive sex acts and gendered behaviour. These liminal transgressive acts constitute boundaries where the horizon of representation might be expanded and eventually lead to change. In these borderline, marginal spaces, new possibilities of representation emerge, despite the films' overall conservative framework.

148. In the case of Brazil, one that deserves regulation, as seen in the recent case of the Gillette TV advertisement that promoted male depilation. After dozens of complaints, the CONAR (*Conselho Nacional de Autorregulamentação Publicitária*) had to be mobilised and finally ruled in favour of the ad (*Globo G1 Notícias* 2013, n.p.).

4.4 The *Globochanchada*: Conclusion

The *Globochanchada* continues the previous cinematic cycles' fondness for reworking — and debasing — classical themes, as observed in the small sample of films contained in this chapter: the body exchange *topos* (Chapter 4.3), the Pygmalion myth (Chapter 4.2) and the story of Alice in the Wonderland (Chapter 4.1). As the analysis of the corpus suggests, these topoi do not derive from the original classical texts to which they refer,¹⁴⁹ but from US cinema. Particularly in the most recent phase of the *Globochanchadas*, there seems to be a shift in Brazilian cinema's relationship with Hollywood. If Manga's *chanchadas* addressed Hollywood in the form of parody and critique, the latest *Globochanchadas* appropriate traditional Hollywood formulae and motifs without a critical edge.¹⁵⁰ This is not to say that the traditional dynamics of hegemony and periphery are still in place, but rather that Globo Filmes adopts a utilitarian approach which is only enabled by a position of cultural and economic self-confidence. The relationship with hegemonic cinema is still posed (as seen in the oft-cited phrase *cinema nacional de qualidade*), but anxieties around mimicry and inferiority are no longer present, particularly because the North-American conglomerates are themselves involved in the production process. In an affluent environment of increased economic power, international cooperation is welcomed in a scenario of, literally, mutual profit: the American companies offer the means of production and distribution while the Brazilian producers deliver a product that speaks to the national audience. In a relationship of

149. As seen in the image on Chapter 3.2, Alice's costume in *De Pernas pro Ar* is clearly based on Disney's depiction of Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson and Hamilton Luske, 1951).

150. This is observed in the clichés of American culture: the son's football match and the clichéd images of NYC in *De Pernas pro Ar*, the Hollywood formula of the body swap and so on.

equals, Hollywood is seen as an ally, not as an entity to be mocked as it was in the time of the *chanchadas* (see Chapter 2.1).

As consequence of the stronger alignment with the Hollywood style of narrative, more emphasis is given to the individual. The focus on the community loses its force — and its subversive potential for social mobilisation — and carnivalesque communal practices become highly organised, despite their apparent chaos. Chaotic moments are sanctioned, as long as they are contained, as seen in the case of the erotic fair and the women-only party in *De Pernas pro Ar*, the disco night outs in *De Pernas pro Ar* and *A Mulher Invisível* and the wedding party at the end of *Se Eu Fosse Você 2*. The traditionally Brazilian focus on multiple characters (the sextet in *Mulheres e Samba* and *Matar ou Correr*) or the truly chaotic, often nonsensical storylines of the *pornochanchadas* (and even the multitude of storylines of the telenovelas) shifts to the classical Hollywood storyline of protagonist(s) and secondary characters. In a way, the new phase of the *Globochanchada* reverts back to the time in the *chanchadas'* development when carnival was portrayed as isolated musical numbers, before Manga symbolically incorporated it into the films.

The relevant consequence of this new form of representation for feminism — or for any kind of minority activism — is that it disavows social mobilisation. Articulating gender representation around the individual, as seen in the case of *De Pernas pro Ar*, reduces social causes to the fulfilment of personal whims and desires that do not alter the system significantly. If already in the *chanchadas* women were seen working, in the *Globochanchadas* they go back to the household: Amanda of *A Mulher Invisível* updates the

ideal of the Amélia, Helena of *Se Eu Fosse Você* is a housewife whose dream is to see her daughter married (at the age of 18). In sum, none of the female characters of the films analysed here work. Alice of *De Pernas pro Ar* is the exception that proves the rule, as the film is precisely about working outside the home without disturbing the traditional domestic division of labour. Furthermore, fundamental concepts for democracy such as 'choice' and 'right' are co-opted by the same reactionary discourse that denies choice and rights to minorities, and vested in an alluring rhetoric of consumerism and apparent empowerment, they undermine the potential for social change inherent to the process of redemocratisation. As one of the participants of *The Century of the Self* summarises: "the notion that you could buy an identity replaced the original notion that you were perfectly free to create an identity and [that] you were perfectly free to change the world and make the world anything you wanted it to be."¹⁵¹

Strictly in relation to gender, these films, when considered as a whole, expose the contradictory discourses drawn upon to justify and naturalise gender differences and, consequently, gender inequality, as seen in the case of the evolutionary biology arguments put forward in films like *De Pernas pro Ar* and *Qualquer Gato Vira-lata*, or in *Se Eu Fosse Você* and the contradictions entailed in its location of gender identity in the mind. Whereas previous cycles were mainly reactive, this new trend in Brazilian popular cinema seems to consciously engage in setting normative practices. In terms of gender norms, this cycle updates the values associated with femininity to incorporate sexual activity, albeit mainly contained within the private sphere. As discussed regarding the film *A Mulher Invisível*

151. *The Century of the Self* (Adam Curtis, 2002).

(Chapter 4.1), if the 'ideal woman' is sexually experienced and liberated, she is also monogamous, heterosexual and, more than married, she 'belongs' to her man as she inhabits his imagination. Additionally, both Alice and Marcela end *De Pernas pro Ar* as mothers and wives. With the abundance of stay-at-home mothers in these films, it is not surprising that the word *mulher* in Brazil continues to signal the conflation between biology (female) and a gendered social role (wife), a confusion these films reflect as well as struggle to maintain.

As social changes effectively take place in Brazil in a consistent and increasing way, the *Globochanchadas* tend to modify the potentially destabilising elements of their original material to conform to more traditional conventions with the aim (or excuse) of attracting a wider audience. As demonstrated in the three films analysed in this chapter, the sequels tend to be more conservative than the original films from which they derive. As the movies become less transgressive, the subtle class struggle presented in the original films virtually disappear in their sequels: the maid who argues not to wear a uniform in *Se Eu Fosse Você* becomes a mere extra in *Se Eu Fosse Você 2*; the maid in *De Pernas pro Ar* gains a romantic plotline of her own in the sequel in New York, but only to have her English skills mocked, thus reinforcing linguistic prejudice — nothing compared to the transgression of stealing her *patroa's* vibrator presented in the first film. Downplaying the potentially unsettling elements of the original material, the sequels reveal the backlash swing of the pendulum, where edgy

elements are domesticated, curbing the facets that, however timidly, push the limits of the socially acceptable.¹⁵²

152. The same process of assimilation of potentially destabilising forms of representation is observed in other cinematic contexts, as seen in the recent case of Disney's decision to make Merida, the heroine of Oscar-winning *Brave* (Brenda Chapman and Mark Andrews, 2012), undergo a makeover that resulted in a skinnier, sexier and more sparkly princess. As director Brenda Chapman has argued, "[t]hey have been handed an opportunity on a silver platter to give their consumers something of more substance and quality — that will still sell — and they have a total disregard for it in the name of their narrow-minded view of what will make money" (Vejvoda 2013, n.p.).

5 CONCLUSION

This thesis has proposed to probe the influence of the historical and social contexts of a selected corpus of films and the wider role of cinema in social transformation. As the case studies and the reflections derived from them have demonstrated, the representation of gender and sexuality in Brazilian popular comedies constitute an insightful barometer for social and cultural transformations. It is not by chance that popular comedy, particularly that which stemmed from the *comédia de costumes* and its inherent focus on gender play, emerges as an immensely popular genre in Brazil at times of rapid social transformation. This was the case in the three periods investigated here, which were turning points in cultural terms, and indeed the analysis indicates shifts and trends in relation to behaviour and beliefs particularly perceived as a threat to a male authority. In the 1950s, the *chanchadas* reflect the massive rural-urban migrations and rapid industrialisation promoted a modern lifestyle with increased demands for men and new freedoms for women; the *pornochanchadas* of the 1970s disclose the international impact of the sexual revolution, the civil rights and feminist movements as well as the domestic turmoil of the beginnings of what would be a two-decade military dictatorship; since the first years of the Lula government, with an array of policies and governmental organs aiming at empowering minorities, thousands of white, educated young

males are voicing their perceived disempowerment by resorting to neonazism and masculinism, movements that claim to 'seek equal rights' for men while promoting hate speech against women and ethnic minorities.¹ It is significant that both the *chanchada* and the *pornochanchada* developed under totalitarian regimes, which suggests that comedy is a fruitful escape valve for political tensions, as evident in the Brazilian context. Unlike these two earlier periods, the *Globochanchadas* are not produced under a dictatorship but rather in a period when, for the first time since redemocratisation, the left has risen to power and the *classe média* is faced with the limits of their privilege, which has culminated in the 'crisis in values' described by Marilena Chauí.² As the vast majority of popular films have been produced by men and are about male desire, their context of production reveals that it is not a coincidence that recurring themes include issues surrounding women's emancipation and the reinscription of models of masculinity.

Considering these films were produced in Brazil specifically, concepts closely associated with Brazilian culture, namely the carnivalesque, *malandragem* and anthropophagy, play a pivotal role in the depiction of gender and sexuality on film. The Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque is essential to understanding these films not only in relation to gender and sexuality, but as cultural products in wider terms. As has been demonstrated, the carnivalesque constitutes a cosmic view based on temporary inversions that champion the body and the community over the individual, examples of which abound in the *chanchada* and in the *pornochanchada*. In the *Globochanchada*, a significant shift takes place and the

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1. Studies show that the number of neonazis has grown exponentially since 2002, from eight to 32 thousand, and they are profiled as white, educated young males (Roman n.d., n.p.).
 2. See Chapter 6.1.

focus moves to a "expressive individualism fundamentally at odds with the communalism"³ of the carnivalesque, which then is downplayed or contained. *Malandragem* in particular continues to be an ever-shifting concept around which masculinity reinvents itself as part of its recurrent cycles of crisis and resolution, as will be further elaborated below. The notion of anthropophagy furthers the understanding of the relationship between the national cinema and Hollywood, particularly during the time of the *chanchadas*.⁴ In the *chanchadas*, the relationship with hegemonic cinema was ambivalent, which some critics perceived as colonised mimicry and others as deprecating mockery. The case studies presented here support the latter opinion, as the *chanchadas* analysed seem to stand on their own, and at times even promote a rather self-conscious critique of the Hollywood films on which they are based. The *pornochanchada* has been counterposed to the national canonic cinematic movement, Cinema Novo, where a clear rebelliousness is observed in terms of aesthetics.⁵ Finally, Globo Filmes holds a rather different stance as in their production there is a closer relationship with Hollywood than ever.⁶ In the course of these three cycles then it is possible to see a transition from parody to trashy aesthetics to *padrão de qualidade*. In other words, in relation to their respective canonical counterparts, Brazilian cinema has evolved from parodical critique to *avacalhação* to assimilation.

The analysis has also shown that there are constant features that connect these three cycles of popular comedies in relation to gender and sexuality specifically. Firstly, all the films studied

3. Karnick and Jenkins 1995, p. 275.

4. See Chapter 4.1.

5. See Chapter 5.1.

6. See Chapter 6.

here operate within the strictly heteronormative framework and within binaries, particularly what have been termed 'the binaries of femininity,' which the films introduce as well as update. Indeed, these films rather self-consciously promote a relentless displacement, expansion and appropriation of the virgin/whore and the public/private dichotomies, with the ultimate aim of sustaining them. Secondly, female emancipation has also been a constant and upholds the view that sexuality is the main, if not the only, source of empowerment for women. Women's sexuality is portrayed for pure entertainment as a means to cope with the anxieties associated with their empowerment, and usually it is only conceived in relation to men and ultimately for men's profit — and often used to legitimise exploitation.⁷ Thirdly, an unchanging trope that is clearly observed in the three cycles analysed here is that of masculinity in crisis, be it in the form of infantilisation, hysteria or feminisation. Bakhtin sees the carnivalesque as renewal, unlike modern parody, which denies without renewing. In the case of the trope of masculinity in crisis, the carnivalesque operates in order to renew values and ideals associated with masculinity and femininity. Most importantly, the analyses provide a clear demonstration of the means whereby "male power is actually consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution, whereby men ultimately deal with the threat of female power by incorporating it."⁸ Finally, it is possible to observe the promotion of womanising and male unfaithfulness, specifically associated with *malandragem*,⁹ and the maintenance of double standards in relation to male and female sexuality.

7. See Chapter 5.2.2 and 6.2.4.

8. Modleski 1991, p. 7.

9. See Chapters 4.2.1, 5.2 and 6.1.3.

Other relevant findings relate to the naturalisation of sexual harassment and violence against women, which can be observed at least since the *chanchadas*.¹⁰ As the depiction of women as well as the behind-the-scenes tales of the production of the *pornochanchadas* suggest,¹¹ more violence is fostered when the threat — in this case, related to the emergence of feminism — becomes more real and immediate. Furthermore, the *chanchadas* also developed a close association between women and consumption — and consumerism more specifically¹² —, a topic which is recovered in the *Globochanchadas* with its overt promotion of a consumerist lifestyle, often coupled with class exploitation.¹³ Furthermore, as the comparison with Hollywood films has made evident, there is overall more leniency toward sexual experimentation in the Brazilian films than there is toward gender experimentation.

Whereas the historical, cultural and social context plays a crucial role in the way gender and sexuality are portrayed on film, the way the contrary (i.e. the role of popular cinema) has influenced such transformations is a more complex subject. While it is practically impossible to measure the concrete instances of impact or a direct relationship between cinema and social change, it seems fair to assume that cinema does play a crucial role in enabling — or resisting — such changes. This explains why popular comedies emerge with force at times of political and social tensions as humour exerts an ambiguous force that can be both subversive or reactionary. The popular films analysed from Hollywood are also, at best, ambiguous toward minorities. However, within the "monologic true-or-false thinking typical of Western

10. See Chapter 4.2.2.

11. See Chapter 5.

12. See Chapter 4.2.3.

13. See Chapters 6.2.3 and 6.3.3.

Enlightenment rationalism,"¹⁴ such ambivalence is silenced in favour of a single hegemonic voice that is premised and maintained. In the Brazilian films, the polyphonic sustainment of diverging voices inherent to the carnivalesque offers a peculiar landscape. At moments of rupture (what has been described here as liminal moments), these films introduce different and often contradictory views. In terms of effects, the space for subversion seems to be located in these marginal moments, which can reopen or expand the horizon of expectations. This is strikingly similar to the arguments related to the space of liminality discussed in previous chapters¹⁵ and also explains why apparent details of the films have emerged as key for the analyses. It is in the apparently unimportant details, in the margins, the breaches and the slips that subversive acts are situated, and it is also in these liminal moments that the horizon of expectations is expanded and subversive practices are naturalised. As an example, whilst the limitation of viewing women's empowerment through their sexuality has been discussed, these liminal moments nonetheless do provide women with modes of representation that expand the horizon of expectations in relation to their sexuality. Perhaps unwittingly, these films create models that actually make a world *de pernas pro ar* — a world where women are rich, powerful, lustful — a more conceivable one.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the main theoretical framework utilised in this thesis. If for Bakhtin a cultural domain is located upon boundaries, the analyses demonstrate that these films play with these boundaries and spectatorial pleasure seems to be derived precisely from testing, probing and pushing them. Indeed, a particularly pertinent way to extend the

14. Stam 1989, p. 22.

15. See, for example, Chapters 4.2.4, 5.1.1 and 6.3.4.

Bakhtinian framework into contemporary culture is placing the carnivalesque "under the larger umbrella of liminality,"¹⁶ a concept used to describe moments of social transformation, "when a culture explores the 'subjunctive' rather than the 'indicative' mode of its being."¹⁷ The Brazilian comedies analysed here are colourful examples of how comedies playfully reflect on a culture's own codes, working to expand, or unwittingly expanding, the horizon of expectations that enables social transformation to take place.

Furthermore, if according to Judith Butler "[t]here is no power that acts but only a reiterated act that is power in its persistence and instability,"¹⁸ then these transgressive acts, however minute, can work as a vehicle for transformation. Despite the overall reactionary and conservative stance of these films, the contrast with similar Hollywood films demonstrates that disruption does take place and, although transgressive acts are part of the instability that enables power to remain in power, it is only through these marginal moments of liminality that change might emerge. These filmmakers then are not necessarily consciously reproducing or resisting modes of domination, but rather working within them and constantly promoting their transgression. As Ken Hirschkop has argued, "[t]he popular culture which [Bakhtin] championed and theorized was a drama in which power was forced out of the wings and onto the stage where it could be displayed, mocked, contested and transformed."¹⁹ Popular cinema is quick to creatively incorporate and react to the changes of time, and it is precisely this reactive creativity that allows for imagining alternatives — if not as a conscious

16. Rowe 1995, p. 48.

17. Rowe 1995, p. 48.

18. Butler 2011, p. xviii.

19. Hirschkop 1986, p. 92.

gesture by directors, at least as an unintentional consequence of the elaboration and, an equally creative, appropriation by spectators.

As with the *pornochanchada*, the contemptuous view usually adopted by Brazilian critics does not take into account spectators' pleasure, dismissing it as the consumption of an uneducated mass who can be conned out of a revolution through cathartic laughter. Although some research has been conducted on the critical reception of the *chanchadas* and the *pornochanchadas*,²⁰ none has approached audience reception. Reception studies are also lacking in relation to the *Globochanchada*, a corpus to which there is easier access for contemporary audiences. Having seen that these films are remarkably popular, it seems essential that future research include spectatorial pleasure in its consideration of the genre, which in turn can reveal how these liminal moments can be potentially appropriated by spectators in potentially more subversive ways — and certainly more complex ones — than the view of critics.

In relation to representation, as the number of women in the creative roles of film production is limited throughout the history of Brazilian cinema,²¹ femininity is continually construed as an arena for relations between men²² and as a reflection of the anxieties and pressures associated with masculinity. Given that transgression is central to comedy, if stereotypical ideas about femininity and female sexuality are to be challenged, issues such as access and

20. For examples, see Adamatti 2011 and de Oliveira Neto 2007, p. 5.

21. See Chapter 2.2.

22. As argued by Günsberg 2005 in relation to Italian cinema (p. 62).

diversity must be problematised and included in the current debates of cultural production.

Transposing Clair Wills's argument from literature to cinema, while it is

valid to criticise modernism's 'transgression' as politically illusory, what this account omits is that 'authorship' is gendered, and for women writers, who were never able to shore up their identity in the institution of literature, it may be precisely through access to representation that the sites of discourse could be altered.²³

As the means of production become increasingly more democratised with easier and more affordable access to digital technologies, new initiatives are constantly emerging in Brazil.²⁴

This thesis therefore is positioned as a contributing study for the view of popular comedy as a worthy topic of investigation while advocating for further studies that investigate the portrayal of gender and sexuality in the digital age.

As with any analytical endeavour, academic enquiry on cinema should not only be restricted to issues around aesthetic value. As this thesis has demonstrated, there is a need to further problematise the divide between art cinema and popular cinema, as the latter can offer unique insights into a country's changing social, cultural and historical moment.

23. Wills 1989, p. 140.

24. An example of the new tendencies in Brazilian comedy is the largely popular comedy group *Porta dos Fundos*. While their sketches, which are entirely internet-based, still seem to reproduce the mainstream in relation to gender, they also push the boundaries more radically than the contemporary *Globochanchadas*, particularly in relation to male homosexuality.

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Que Bom Te Ver Viva (Lúcia Murat, 1989)

R

Rio (Carlos Saldanha, 2011)

Rio 40 Graus (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1955)

Ruby Sparks (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 2012)

S

A Saintly Switch (Peter Bogdanovich, 1999)

The Searchers (John Ford, 1956)

Se Eu Fosse Você 2 (Daniel Filho, 2009)

Sex and the City, Season 1, Episode 9: 'The Turtle and the Hare' (2 August 1998). TV series.

She's All That (Robert Iscove, 1999)

Sister Switch (Torrance Colvin, 2009)

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O Super Manso (Ary Fernandes, 1974)

T

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Trading Places (John Landis, 1984)

Treze Cadeiras (Francisco Eichhorn, 1957)

Tristezas Não Pagam Dívidas (José Carlos Burle, 1944)

Tropa de Elite (José Padilha, 2007)

Tropa de Elite 2 (José Padilha, 2010)

V

Vice Versa (Brian Gilbert, 1988)

Victor Victoria (Blake Edwards, 1982)

W

Weird Science (John Hughes, 1985)

Wish Upon a Star (Blair Treu, 1996)

X

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