

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Rethinking Stereotypes:  
Representations of Gender in  
Brazilian Comedies of the Post-Retomada

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

by

Natássia Guedes Alves Hott

2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic

Language and Literatures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor John Randal Johnson, Chair

This dissertation analyzes the representations of gender in Brazilian comedies of the post-Retomada period. I start by examining the *chanchada*, the genre which served as foundation for the humor that is used in the contemporary films that form the core of this dissertation's corpus. My dissertation moves beyond the commonplace attack on the emptiness of popular comedies and identifies social criticism, the deconstruction of stereotypical gender roles, as well as a desire to promote change in the expectations of gender portrayal in comedy films from 2003 to 2016. This study also observes similar trends within the LGBTQ community. Although the community is underrepresented in the comedies I analyze, the limited representation that does exist tends to transcend mainstream stereotypes. Chapter 1, "The Chanchada Through Time: The Chanchada

Influence in Brazilian Comedies,” investigates the influence of the *chanchada* in Brazilian comedies until the post-Retomada period. Chapter 2, “Reshaping Stereotypes: The Protagonists of Romantic Comedies,” analyzes the stereotypical characteristics that romantic comedies of the post-Retomada use to shape characters. By examining 34 films, and five in more detail, this chapter observes that such clichéd representations carry an intrinsic self-critique. Chapter 3, “LGBTQ Representation in Comedies of the post-Retomada,” investigates how comedies of the post-Retomada portray LGBTQ characters that occupy central roles through an analysis of 15 films and 26 characters. The analysis shows that recent comedies are slowly distancing themselves from a prejudiced, stereotypical portrayal of LGBTQ characters that have been historically underrepresented. My dissertation confirms how comedies go beyond a simple form of entertainment to become a way to promote societal change and a form of societal critique. I argue that gender representation in Brazilian cinema is slowly changing, with comedies showing a commitment to deliver a mix of humor and social awareness, which is a sign that a better future might be on the horizon for Brazilian films.

The dissertation of Natássia Guedes Alves Hott is approved.

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*For Sophia.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UCLA, for funding and support throughout the years and allowing me to complete this important step towards my Ph.D. degree. Thank you to the Graduate Research Mentorship and Graduate Summer Research Mentorship programs, which helped me improve my research by allowing me extra time and mentorship.

I would also like to thank my Dissertation Chair, Prof. Randal Johnson, who has encouraged me to continue even when I thought all was lost, and who was a rigorous and attentive reader throughout this entire process, helping me become a better writer and scholar. I could not have asked for a better advisor.

Thank you to my Dissertation committee members, Prof. Patricia Arroyo Calderón, Prof. Luciano Tosta, and Prof. José Luiz Passos who were kind enough to take me on as a mentee, and who have offered me wonderful suggestions during my qualifying exams, many of which I have incorporated in this final text.

I am grateful for all of my UCLA colleagues who have walked down this road side-by-side with me. Some of those who have encouraged me and helped me in different moments of my life, I would like to mention by name here: Ben Burt, Kristal Bivona, Juliana Espinal, and Jen Monti. I hope we will remain in each other's lives for a long time.

I would like to thank friends and family who have helped me when I needed the most. Without them, I would not have been able to graduate: Nancy Hott, Martha Weller, Luiz Otávio Guedes, Araci Guedes, Elenisia Meirelles, Aaron Flores, Alia Fierro, Lenore Matthew, Sondra Schreiber, Julie Nelson, Bárbara de Payá, Jhonni Carr, Mary Hood, Teresa Monroe, Fábio Esquivel, Jessica Zaldana, Aline Michielin, Neri Martins-West, and Ben Klarich.

My deepest gratitude goes to some of the most important people in my life, who have made me into who I am today. My sister Evelin, who has always been there for me no matter what; the 4,000 miles between us are merely physical, you are here with me every day. My mom, Maria Angélica, you are my main example of human being, of perseverance, and the basis of my support system. Thank you for being such a positive influence in our lives, and for giving us so much of yourself. My dad, José de Arimatéa, thank you for so much, for encouraging me every step of the way, for being a calming force, for bringing me back to reality, and for always believing in me more than I will ever believe in myself. I adore the three of you.

Finally, I will always be indebted to my husband, my life partner Adam, who has been on this journey with me since the beginning of this process, following me across the country, encouraging me, supporting me, and loving me. And thank you to the light of my life, my happiness, my daughter, my Pipia. She is the reason I wake up every day, and the main reason why I gathered forces to finish a Ph.D. while quarantined in the middle of a pandemic. For her, anything.

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## INTRODUCTION

Mel Brooks famously said, “Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you fall down an open sewer and die” (Stott 1). One way to interpret this quote is that comedy is not the same for everyone. What seems funny to me might not be funny to you, especially depending on our different backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. Comedy can come in different shapes, and depending on a person’s taste and culture, interpretation of humor might change considerably. Even though experiencing humor may seem to be an easy, casual, and uncompromised experience, making comedy is not so simple. It requires knowing who your audience is, what context you are in, and what your goals are. Following that same logic, analyzing comedies can also be quite complex. Nonetheless, it is a challenge that scholars need to face in various fields of study, as I do in this dissertation.

Comedies are the most successful cinematic genre in Brazil, yet they have not received significant scholarly attention, because they are often seen as nothing more than mere entertainment. An understanding of the genre’s mechanisms and its representation of society may help understand what forms of critique might exist behind the jokes and what triggers the laughs. Thus, comedies deserve careful attention from the academy.

In this dissertation, I focus on representation of humor and gender in recent Brazilian cinema. I will demonstrate how Brazilian comedies of the post-*Retomada* have relied on the *chanchada* tradition to create their humor. I also will show that these contemporary films, especially romantic comedies, portray stereotypical gendered characters who are starting to be used to produce a self-critique and social commentary on Brazilian society. Finally, I will observe how post-*Retomada* films represent another important gender-related group, the

LGBTQ, and how recent Brazilian comedies have depicted this group in a less stereotypical manner. Recent cinematic production has portrayed this minority in a less-biased light than in the past, even though plenty still needs to change. Based on all this, I can affirm that humor can be used as a form of criticism and reflection. My goal as I analyze films is to investigate how they portray the characters and what kind of messages they transmit, especially concerning gender and sex representation, and stereotypes.

### **Dissertation Corpus**

The time period that I have chosen for this investigation is known as the post-Retomada, which goes from 2003 to the present. My corpus includes all Brazilian comedies that made it to the top ten in terms of audience numbers, from the beginning of the post-Retomada until 2016. In the 14 years investigated in this research, I have come across a total of 73 comedy films that are among the top ten most-watched films each year (see Appendix). This means that, out of a total of 140 films, 52% are comedies, confirming that the Brazilian audience has a preference towards this genre (all data is from the Ancine [Agência Nacional de Cinema] website). Because it still is not very common to find scholarly work that analyzes representation of gender in the post-Retomada, I believe this is an original research in many respects.

### **Why Comedy?**

Comedies have been a constant in Brazilian cinema since the beginning of film production in the country. In his book, *Raízes do Riso*, Elias Thomé Saliba states that, “O humor está para o brasileiro assim como o camelo estava para Maomé: faz parte da vida, portanto é indistinguível” (33). Saliba explains how humor has long been present in Brazilian newspapers

and magazines and, in the beginning, mostly in the form of caricatures (43). According to Saliba: “No começo do século [XX] a expansão da caricatura e das páginas de humor esteve na razão direta de mudanças editoriais e iniciativas gráficas pioneiras. Nas primeiras décadas do século também a publicidade, o teatro de revista e as primeiras produções cinematográficas pareciam estreitamente vinculados” (43). Nonetheless, the intellectual elite tended to see humor as minor and degrading (Saliba 46). This continuous connection between Brazilian cinema and humor should not go unnoticed. As this dissertation will show, comedy is not only at the core of the most authentically Brazilian film genre, the *chanchada*, but it also remains a common theme for the entire course of the film history in the country to this day. Hence, together with the analysis of gender, humor is a focus of this research, as the corpus of this study is centered on films of the comedy genre only.

### **Comedy as Film Genre**

According to Barry Keith Grant, “genre movies are those commercial feature films which, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations” (1). Grant also explains that even though there are several film genres and they might differ from one country to another, the most important thing is that popular cinema embodies different kinds of films, different than art or experimental cinema. Rafael de Luna Freire develops a similar conversation in the introduction of his dissertation, where he discusses several definitions of genre films. According to Freire, the main difference between “genre film” and “art film” is that, while the former encompasses all films made for the masses (or commercial films), the latter is what scholars usually call “auteur film” (Freire, “Carnaval, Mistério e Gangsters” 13-14). Some examples of film genres are comedy, horror, sci-fi, musical, suspense,

and drama. In his study, Freire explains that a number of critics and scholars have attempted to conceptualize “genre,” and the definitions do not diverge from one another too radically:

Os gêneros cinematográficos foram continuamente classificados e analisados por estudiosos por meio de definições formalistas sustentadas, principalmente, pela identificação num certo conjunto de filme fosse de *temas* semelhantes (ênfase no conteúdo da história), de *elementos visuais* recorrentes (ênfase na “iconografia do gênero”) ou dos mesmo tipos de *estruturas narrativas* (ênfase nas tramas e situações narrativas dos filmes). (“Carnaval, Mistério e Gangsters” 22)

Therefore, all films that are part of the corpus of this present study are the genre type pertaining to the category of comedies. In the 1980s, a systematic analysis of genre proved to be popular, and most researchers agreed that Hollywood decided which genres to invest in depending on the audience response to a film (“Carnaval, Mistério e Gangsters” 24).

This is an important concept for this dissertation, as it is concerned with the messages that the films are transmitting and how comedy, as a film genre, is changing through time. In my research, I will look at how the same type of humor is used throughout the history of Brazilian cinema, but at the same time, how even though the representation of the same stock characters is still present, their images are used to deconstruct their own stereotypes and offer a form of criticism. According to Freire, we can infer that, if film production follows the desire of the audience, this transformation is a reflection of our current society, which does not sound very far-fetched according to the findings of this current study and how Brazilian comedies have been behaving contemporarily. The reception also has another very important job: to recognize and verify genres. According to Freire, most scholars (such as Edward Buscombe and Andrew Tudor) nowadays agree that the only way to know how a film belongs to a certain genre is by



collective cultural consensus, which, in other words, means the definition of a certain genre on which most people would agree (“Carnaval, Mistério e Gangsters” 26). Unfortunately, I did not undertake a study of reception in this dissertation; however, it is a gap that shows itself as an opportunity for future research.

Another concept that Freire defines and that is relevant for my research is that of subgenres. According to Freire, subgenres are “grupos ou tradições específicas dentro de gêneros tradicionais” (“Carnaval, Mistério e Gangsters” 24). He also explains that these films might be grouped together for various reasons, such as for their commercial value, or according to their qualities, themes, traditions, or even their directors, for example. It all depends on who is defining “subgenre” or, as Freire puts it, “cycles” (“Carnaval, Mistério e Gangsters” 25). And, as random as this categorization might seem and as Freire recognizes and points it out, the solution to any conflict lies in the audience’s consensus, as observed above. After I define comedy in the next section, I will follow that by identifying its subgenres in the cinema.

### **Defining Comedy**

According to Matthew Bevis, “The institutional birthdate of comedy is 486 BC, when space was made for it in the dramatic competitions at the festivals in Athens in honor of Dionysus” (9). Since its birth, comedy has been viewed disparagingly as a minor genre and had to follow stricter rules when compared to tragedy (Bevis 9). Tragedy has been historically considered superior, and for that reason deserving more consideration from the academia. Some of the characteristics or themes that have been present in comedies since the start are: puns, physical comedy (slapstick), caricature, scatology, and sex. Scatology and sex and two of the most common topics in comedies, because the former is a reminder that we are human beings

with “competing impulses,” and therefore, it is connected to the latter. Bevis explains that the comic imagination encourages fantasies about our bodies and what they are and what they can do, and that could be the reason why our sex lives invite humor (32).

Bevis discusses the invisible forms of masks that are present in all kinds of comedy routines; the comedians who seem to never know that they are comic and their identity can only be grasped by those who are watching (46). Therefore, comedy relies on surprises that are possible due to established routines. We expect something, and we encounter a different result, so our disappointment (and consequent surprise) is what makes us laugh. Moreover, laughter has a more primitive function: it might work as a way to announce to a group that a crisis has been averted. Our ancestors (apes) would turn their grimace towards an unknown individual into a smile when they recognized them as a friend (Bevis 77). According to Bevis, since its beginning, comedy has been used as a tool to promote critical thinking and create an ideal world, a joyful one (11), as comedy gives us a sense of permission, liberation (90). It is easier to criticize when we are provoking laughter at the same time: “Comedy can momentarily allow us to inhabit a world without shame, a world in which we are free from the pressure of needing to worry about causing or taking offense” (Bevis 91).

Eric Weitz, however, cautions that “humour alone does not automatically mark a text as comedy” (9). He explains that, simply because a text (whether in written form or a different format) makes us laugh, it does not mean it can be defined as a comedy. Various genres use humor as a tool in their development, and yet they are not considered comedy. Hence, in order for comedy to be considered as such, humor must be its main tone. Even more than that, according to Weitz, what characterizes this genre is a “sense of vitality,” which makes us want to live life to the fullest “past the awareness of our mortality” (9).

Finally, it is important to comment on how comedy may be used as a route to understand one's culture. As Weitz observes, "A popular joke tells us quite a bit about a culture or subculture — more, in a way, than many a social scientist's questionnaire, because so much of its activity reveals what is taken for granted among the participants." (68). Different cultures will laugh about distinct things. According to Horton and Rapf, "Comedy is one of the most important ways a culture talks to itself about itself" (4). These nuances and patterns, when observed carefully, offer an opportunity to draw conclusions about a society based on how their people see laughter and humor.

### **Subgenres of Comedy**

To understand the subgenres of comedy, I need to go back to the roots of the term. The word "comedy" comes from the Greek word "komos," which means "a drunken chorus in the Dionysian spirit, singing, drinking and calling out insults while dressed in costumes that Aristophanes' comedies suggest could be frogs, birds, angry women, and more" (Horton and Rapf 3). Horton and Rapf also mention the Latin origin of the word, "Comus," which means the spirited and lustful god of springtime merriment. The combination of these two origins, the carnivalesque meaning of the former and the idea of fertility and abundance (or sexuality) that the latter entices, show that the concepts that shape the word *comedy* can develop further into numerous branches and subthemes. Stott suggests that *comedy* actually has a complex meaning that has evolved and changed through time, since the medieval period (20-25). However, according to Stott, one thing that has remained constant is this concept's intimate relationship to carnivalization: "Comedy then, is a secularized version of all ritual that was a source of pleasure so entertaining that it could not be allowed to die out" (Stott 26-27). Because comedy is often

seen as a site of social disruption and temporary reformulation of power relationships (just as carnival is, as well), then those two concepts are closely associated (Stott 35-37).

Even though the subgenres of comedy are numerous, they all fall under the larger umbrella of comedy as a film genre (Grant 23), as discussed previously. All these films share a few similarities such as a fast pace, punchlines, and the presence of humor that may be revealed in different forms: satire, parody, dark, clever, physical, or even naïve, as in a children's film, for example. In *The Comedy Film Nerds Guide to Movies*, Suzy Nakamura observes that laughter is very personal, that comedy connects us, and that funny may be presented in many different ways (55-57), hence the several subgenres. According to Nakamura: "Comedy can be different kinds of funny. A good comedy can be so much more than laughs. Funny can be witty, satirical, lighthearted, or even dark. . . Shirley McLaine in *The Apartment* is really cute and fun and then she tried to kill herself. But you know what? Still funny. *Fargo* is slow moving and almost meditative at times – still funny. Smart is funny" (56).

Gerald Mast has identified eight comic structures that comedy film plots may include (5-9). The first one is the very familiar boy-meets-girl plot (boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl), which generally ends up in marriage. The second one is the parody. Mast calls the third type the "reductio ad absurdum," because it is the type in which a small flaw is magnified and an absurd situation ensues, frequently resulting in a lesson to be learned. He calls the fourth structure the Renoir film: it is more analytical and contrastive, and these plots have two or more parallel stories, such as in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The fifth principle is that which follows the protagonist's (the *picaro*'s) journey and all the actions and events that follow him, such as in Charles Chaplin's films. The sixth comic structure Mast calls "riffing," but he also calls it "goofing" or "improvised and anomalous gaggery." This one starts with a specific

place, object, event, or animal that unifies the story of the plot. A series of jokes follow, all related to that initial “thing.” The seventh type also can be found in a non-comedy film. In the words of Mast: “The central character either chooses to perform or is forced to accept a difficult task, often risking his life in the process. The plot then traces his successful accomplishment of the task, often with his winning the battle, the girl, and the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.” (8). If this plot had what Mast calls a “comic climate”<sup>1</sup> that will provoke laughter, then it would be a comedy. The last structure also can be found in non-comedy films: “the story of the central figure who eventually discovers an error he has been committing in the course of his life” (Mast 8). As a comedy, it is possible to see this plot in the film, *The Freshman* (Andrew Bergman, 1990), for example.

Horton criticizes this categorization due to its apparent restrictive and incomplete examination of the comic structures (1). However, Mast’s initial analysis may serve as a basis to understand the number of subgenres that may derive from the main comedy genre. It is not all-encompassing and definitive, but it is a first step to building a framework for a more detailed category, like looking through a telescope. Horton himself cannot offer a better substitute for Mast’s comic structures. According to Horton, “No totalizing theory of comedy has proved successful. The vastness of the territory, which includes the nature of laughter, humor, the comic, satire, parody, farce, burlesque, the grotesque, the lyrical, romance, metacomedy, and wit, precludes facile generalizations” (2). Tim Dirks, in his well-known website, [filmsite.org](http://filmsite.org), enumerates six types of comedy:

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<sup>1</sup> Mast defines “comic climate” as “the notion that an artist builds signs into a work to let us know that he considers it a comedy and wishes us to take it as such” (9).

- slapstick: which was predominant during the silent film period, since it privileges the physical comedy;
- deadpan: which focuses on expressionless/emotionless faces, such as those of the comic Buster Keaton;
- verbal comedy: which is characterized by humor present through jokes and funny dialogues, such as Woody Allen's comedies;
- screwball: predominant from the 1930s to the 1940s, it is a romantic comedy subgenre, marked by lunacy and unpredictable behavior;
- dark comedy: characterized by dark, sarcastic plots;
- parody: this type mimics another work or its style, creating a humorous caricature, that may have the goal of mocking, criticizing, or create a sociopolitical commentary.

Before I present the basic subgenres of comedy, it is important to remember that, based on this background material from the literature, it is evident that comedy and its subgenres are constantly mutating, they are not unchangeable. Hence, the subgenres that are commonly found today may look different a few decades from now, and new ones may be added to the list.

The lines among the subgenres of comedy are not so harshly clear either. Sometimes a film is self-classified as a comedy-drama, or a dramedy, but critics or scholars may categorize it as a romantic comedy, for example. Other critics may even label the very same film as a drama (for instance, *500 Days of Summer*, Marc Webb, 2009). Because it is art, and not an exact science, it is not possible to use a code to place films in categories that will please everyone. Hence, some disagreement and fluidity are expected. The subgenres of comedy used in this dissertation derive from the plots and types described previously. According to Terry Lindvall, J. Dennis Bounds, and Chris Lindvall, the basic subgenres of comedy are: slapstick, adventure

comedy, romantic comedy, screwball comedy, musical comedy, family comedy, picaro comedy (character), *reductio ad absurdum*, multi-leveled comedy, parody, satire, Dionysian comedy (transgressive), and mockumentary (5). While most of these are either obvious or have been explained above, some of these deserve further explanation. Multi-leveled comedy may also be called ensemble comedy, and it is akin to the plot structure that Mast called “riffing,” in which all characters are gathered over one event (Lindvall, et al. 211). Dionysian or transgressive comedy is that which breaks cultural taboos and tests common sense (Lindvall, et al. 251). Finally, mockumentary is the type of comedy that presents itself as a factual narrative; however, it is nothing but a made-up playful story that has a serious yet mocking tone (Lindvall, et al. 271-272). In the introduction of their work, the authors observe that their list of the basic film comedy subgenres also includes religious comedy sub-genres (Lindvall, et al. 5), as their book is called *Divine Film Comedies: Biblical Narratives, Film Sub-Genres, and the Comic Spirit*. Those I have deliberately decided to leave out of this short list as they reference a very specific theme that is not applicable to the boundaries of this particular study. They also mention that the subgenres that they list overlap and co-mingle (Lindvall, et al. 5). I can deduce that they are referring mainly to romantic comedy/screwball, and to parody/satire, even though the other sub-genres may not occur on their own and might also fuse with other sub-genres in a comedy film. All these basic categories stem from the plot structures and comedy types described previously, as they are not static. As they combine with each other and the culture aspect intervenes, new sub-genres are likely to appear.

## Why Gender?

Gender, as the other focus of analysis of this dissertation, is significant because important contemporary discourses see gender as one of the main organizing systems in most societies. Gender studies and the study of women are key in promoting debates and raising gender-related issues, as well as looking for solutions that will be positive and enriching to foster a more equal, fair, and constructive society. The representation of women in cinema has been a topic of interest for a number of scholars, who have used feminist critique among other theories to develop their analyses. E. Ann Kaplan explains in her book, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, that women are recurrently placed in certain stereotypical positions that reinforce patriarchy and are demeaning for the female subject, consequently placing them in a marginalized position (18-21). Because this is considered a tendency, it is vital to continue to analyze how these issues are being dealt with, especially in current productions.

Women have always been present in Brazilian cinema, primarily as actors but also as filmmakers and producers, and they have had several other behind-the-scenes roles as well. In the early days, women participated as actors more frequently than as directors or producers (Munerato and Oliveira 342). Leslie Marsh observes that “They [female directors] often began as actresses who learned the craft of filmmaking and influenced a film’s production while on set” (16). Some of the females who were pioneers in Brazil and started directing between the 1930s and 1940s are Cléo de Verberena (1904–1972), Gilda de Abreu (1904–1979), and Carmen Santos (1904–1952). Verberena directed, produced, and starred in *O Mistério do Dominó Preto* (1930), which, according to Munerato and Oliveira, was mostly likely the first Brazilian film ever directed by a woman (340–341). Gilda de Abreu wrote, directed and co-produced the very successful *O Ébrio* (1946). Carmen Santos directed, produced, and starred in *Inconfidência*



*Mineira* (1948). Munerato and Oliveira point out that Cléo de Verberena reportedly “sold her own jewelry and property in order to finance her only film” (341), as financing was not as available back then, and many early filmmakers in Brazil had to pay for their own films. Other areas in which women presumably were active in the cinema was working with costumes, makeup, and décor, to mention a few. However, since they did not receive credit for those jobs, it did not leave any paper trail and it is not possible to prove that today (Munerato and Oliveira 343).

The forties were a very challenging time to be a female making films. When Gilda de Abreu made *O Ébrio*, she needed to wear pants in order to try to make the technicians respect her as they would a man, as they were not completely onboard with the idea of receiving orders from a woman (Munerato and Oliveira 343). At that time, it was considerably more difficult for a woman to be behind the cameras than in front of them. For example, Carmen Miranda went from being a radio performer to a cinema star in the 1930s, and in the next decade she was making films in Hollywood. However, even though Miranda had the limelight, we can say she was an instrument and had “her energy exploited by the Fox machine,” as Randal Johnson and Robert Stam affirm (“The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 27). These are only a few examples of the challenges faced by women that show the importance of studying the representation of gender in Brazilian cinema.

During the two decades between 1940 and 1960, it was rare to encounter a female filmmaker, but it was common to find women in other roles such as choreographers, production assistants, editors (Munerato and Oliveira 344), and of course, as actresses. Women still were very present between the 1930s and the 1950s as actors during the *chanchadas*, as this dissertation will show in Chapter 1. For female directors, the 1960s were even grimmer:

For good or for ill, women in the preceding decades had managed to direct one or more films. In the sixties, however, we find only one feature-length fiction film directed by a woman: *As Testemunhas Não Condenam* (“The Witnesses Do Not Condemn” [1962]) by Zélia Costa. The contribution of women to the cinema in the sixties was more noticeable in the increased number of women involved in editing, production, assistant camerawork, and music, not to mention, of course, the ever-present “script-girls” and makeup people. (Munerato and Oliveira 345)<sup>2</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, Ana Carolina is a filmmaker “who trained with Cinema Novo directors, [and] is considered a groundbreaking auteur” (Marsh 20). Ana Carolina directed a number of politically engaged documentaries during the 1960s and 1970s; for example, the documentary *Getúlio Vargas* (1974). She was born in 1943 and continues to direct today. Marsh argues that Ana Carolina’s filmmaking technique uses adaptation of surrealism in order to “critique repressive ideological constructions of femininity and seek emancipation of the female psyche” (20). Through her films, she sends messages that urge for an equal society in which gender equality is in full effect, which is in tune with the second wave of feminism and the search for freedom from authoritarian regimes (20).

In the 1970s, the presence of female actors is very visible, especially in the *pornochanchadas*. Some of the actresses who made films during that period are: Vera Fischer (born in 1951), Selma Egrei (born in 1949), Regina Casé (born in 1954). All of them are well known and still active today. Sônia Braga, who also made several films in the 1970s and 1980s, was the star of a number of the first adaptations of Jorge Amado’s novels: *Dona Flor e Seus Dois*

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<sup>2</sup> The text I am referring to by Munerato and Oliveira focuses on the participation of women behind the cameras, especially as directors, and that is why they do not mention the actresses.

*Maridos* (Bruno Barreto, 1976), *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (Bruno Barreto, 1983), and *Tieta do Agreste* (Cacá Diegues, 1996). Among the several other films in which she participated, she was in the heavily awarded *O Beijo da Mulher Aranha* (Héctor Babenco, 1985), in which she plays the lead role, and more recently, *Aquarius* (Kleber Mendonça, 2016), in which she also plays the protagonist. Braga remains active to this day in both television and the cinema and is frequently filming in the United States.

More recently, during the Retomada and post-Retomada periods, women in the film industry have become very present both behind and in front of the cameras. They have even gained recognition from President Dilma Rousseff, who set aside “a special event to meet with Brazilian actresses and women directors” in 2011 (Marsh 14). Marsh also points out that this was a remarkable event because only two decades earlier such a reunion would not have happened, as, at that time, Brazilian cinema was coming to a halt right before the Retomada (explained later in this introduction). Moreover, even though several of the female directors who joined President Rousseff had already been active during the 1970s and 1980s, back then, they broke into the industry quite differently than in the Retomada period when the State was helping finance film productions.<sup>3</sup> According to Marsh, “The contemporary successes of women in political life and the increasing numbers of women directors in Brazil can be attributed in part to the broad, sweeping changes in political policies and ideologies that feminism and the second-wave women’s movement in Brazil called for starting in the 1960s” (14). Each time period before then posed its challenges for women in film, but they have always found ways to be a constant and

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<sup>3</sup> Even though in the 1970s and 1980s the State was financing films during the dictatorship, as this introduction will show later on, censorship played a decisive role in deciding which films would be released and which would not.

vital part of Brazilian cinema. That is why this dissertation is interested in investigating how the characters that the female actors portray represent women on the big screen.<sup>4</sup>

As is evident by their body of work, women have left their mark in Brazilian cinema from its establishment, and ever since then, their involvement with cinema has only increased. Because of their continual presence and the contribution that women have offered to Brazilian cinema, gender is one of the primary focal points of this dissertation. In order to develop a more thoughtful and inclusive work, this study will discuss stereotypical gender-role characters, and gender role inversions, as well as LGBTQ characters, as these topics are at the core of contemporary gender studies discussions.

Andrew Stott observes that, traditionally, for female bodies to be in comedies, they have been “required to stand outside normative notions of female beauty. Kathleen Rowe has called these ‘unruly women’” (Stott 80). This is no longer true, and it is possible to see several female comedians breaking these norms. An example of a television comedy show that has won several awards and discusses this exact theme is *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. It was created by and is written by a female screenwriter, Amy Sherman-Palladino, and stars a female comedian, Rachel Brosnahan, whose character fights against the kind of stereotype just described, in a story set in the 1950s. Brosnahan plays the witty and beautiful Miriam “Midge” Maisel, housewife turned stand-up comedian (and divorcée). It is an Amazon Studios show that has aired three seasons and has been renewed for a fourth. By setting the show in the 1950s, it establishes the challenges at a

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<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, for a lack of space and time, this study does not take into consideration the analysis of female directors, producers, and adjacent positions. This dissertation and its timeline could not encompass the level of attention and scrutiny that this expanded theme deserves.

new level, with Midge being forced to navigate layers of patriarchy that many people may have forgotten about by now or never known.

Stott discusses that patriarchy tends to work in comedies, placing women in roles that reinforce the male authority such as those in which women have to dress as men or in role-reversals, delivering masculine female characters, “which ultimately only serves to draw out the subordination of women” (Stott 87). A few of the techniques used by comedy that reinforce patriarchy are: marriage as a way of framing the designated domestic space of women (Stott 88, 91), sexually liberated women as deviants who deserve to be punished (Stott 89), and the idea that women should remain silent, as “talkative women stand in violation of their presumed role as sexually attractive objects who are subservient to men” (Stott 96).

## **Keywords**

Throughout this dissertation, I will be using and defining keywords as necessary. However, this research will tacitly evoke a few common terms throughout its text. I will mostly use those inside a general thematic or approach. Even though the reader might have a general, previous understanding of these words, as they are regularly used in studies in the humanities, in this section I will offer brief definitions of them for the purposes of supporting my investigation. My goal by providing these explanations is to help clarify my arguments and draw a guide of my thought process for the next chapters. These definitions are not intended to be all-encompassing but aim at helping build a basic foundation for this dissertation.

### *To represent*

“To represent” means to make something or someone present “in the shape or form of another,”<sup>5</sup> as Sadie Wearing explains (location 3826), either because of its absence or for political reasons (i.e., standing in for a larger group, which is related to accountability, ethics, and responsibility). Wearing affirms that the process of representing produces a resignification of the subject or object represented, as this process is dynamic and causes social effects and affects. Then, to re-present literally means to present again. Aristotle also wrote about representation in his *Poetics*. According to him, “Representation is natural to human beings from childhood. They differ from the other animals in this: man tends most towards representation and learns his first lessons through representation.” (90). Aristotle also sustains that representations amuse people because they are able to refer back to that which is being represented and make connections. Hence, if the person has never seen the original image, thing, person, or idea being represented, then it can only produce pleasure “because of its accomplishment, colour, or some other such cause” (90).

Wearing also explains that representation has been an important concept for those studying culture and media. In the scholarly context, this term must be thought of in relation to the idea of power (Wearing location 3860). In this sense, representing may be a form of presenting, as the agent who is performing the action chooses how they will act and what they will display. That is a demonstration of power, as a process of resignification takes place, and it may affect the understanding of the observer, or in the media context, the audience. Edward

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<sup>5</sup> This definition is from the book, *Gender: The Key Concepts*, edited by Mary Evans and Carolyn H. Williams, an e-book in Kindle version. This version does not provide page numbers; therefore, all quotes referencing *Gender: The Key Concepts* that have “location” instead of page number were extracted from this book.

W. Said affirms that, “language itself is a highly organized and encoded system, which employs many devices to express, indicate, exchange messages and information, represent, and so forth” (1883). Cinema is not just written film as a mediatic form, it also is a form of a language, and therefore, it also works as a system which has its own tools and ways of negotiating meaning, building images and contexts, and ultimately, delivering representations that are based on someone’s interpretations of the world.

### *Stereotyping*

Wearing explains that “Stereotyping is an ordering process which distils specific characteristics and generalizes these as pertaining to a group . . . repeated across a range of contexts over time and texts.” (location 3917). Even if the stereotype apparently seems to be harmless (for example, saying that “all Brazilians are good at soccer”), it still is problematic because it implies a “symbolic violence,” as Stuart Hall explains. This is because it places the others in a box, reducing them to a certain stationary expected form (259). Hence, “positive stereotyping” does not exist and does not counterbalance the negative effects of “negative stereotyping,” as all stereotyping is undesirable.

### *Gender and Sex*

Initially, I had placed these two words in separate entries, but because they are still commonly misinterpreted, I have decided to define them side by side. Simone de Beauvoir affirms that “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one” (301). This is a famous quote, usually cited by researchers in gender studies and related fields. It means that biology does not define one’s gender, sex does, and that becoming a woman (or a man) is a process. Even though in the past few decades, the scholarly community has engaged in numerous discussions surrounding sex and gender, these two concepts still seem to be misinterpreted frequently. Judith

Butler, in her famous work *Gender Trouble* has explained that gender is a cultural construction and not biological, and it is performative, and that is the main difference between *gender* and *sex*. According to Butler: “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (33). If one must express their gender, and they are not born a woman (or a man), then becoming a certain gender is an “ongoing discursive practice” (Butler 43) that might go through processes of reinterpretations and resignifications through time. Hence, since gender culturally interprets the sexed body, then sex is “produced and established as ‘prediscursive,’ prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts” (Butler 11). Lastly, it is important to point out that, even though it might be customary to think of both gender and sex in binaries (man vs. woman, female vs. male), gender studies scholars today have been focusing on the study of the fluidity of these concepts, and binary systems do not apply any longer, as Butler observes (10).

### *Patriarchy*

Gwendolyn Beetham explains that patriarchy, “the organization of society according to men’s dominance and control,” is one of the main paths for violence against women, which can happen in the public and private spheres, and can be physical or psychological (location 2082). This happens because, in a patriarchal society, women are oppressed and often placed in a subaltern position. This clarification is relevant in the context of this study because Brazil is historically a patriarchal society, as are most cultures of the world. As Eni de Mesquita Samara and Dora Isabel Paiva da Costa observe, patriarchy is “an ideological model and a model of social behavior of Brazilians” (219), based on their review of extensive studies conducted by Muriel Nazzari (*The Disappearance of the Dowry: Women, Families, and Social Change in São Paulo, 1600-1900*), Alida C. Metcalf (*Family and Frontier in Colonial Brazil: Santana de*



*Parnaíba, 1580-1822*), Dain Borges (*The Family in Bahia, Brazil, 1870-1945*) and Angela Mendes de Almeida (*Gosto do Pecado: Casamento e Sexualidade Nos Manuais de Confessores dos Séculos XVI e XVII*). For this reason, the stereotypes and gender roles' representations that this dissertation analyzes are significant and impactful, as they happen inside the context of a patriarchal society.

### **Historical Background, Retomada and Post-Retomada**

In the course of this dissertation, I will be discussing the history of Brazilian film through the investigation of the presence and evolution of humor during the various cinema periods in Brazil. I also will analyze specific titles, under different themes, in all three chapters. Hence, in this introduction and more particularly in this subsection, I will present a brief overview of Brazilian film history to provide historical context. This subsection specifically aims at placing this present study in time and offering a background to the phase which is the focus of this investigation: the post-Retomada period.

Brazilian cinema is over 120 years old. It started to develop at the very end of the XIX century, at the same time other countries started to make films. The first screening of films in Brazil took place in 1896, only six months after the very first Lumière Brothers showing in Paris, and two years later, Brazil started making its own films: “Italo-Brazilian Affonso Segreto introduced the first filmmaking equipment in 1898” (Johnson and Stam, “The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 19). In the beginning of the twentieth century, Brazil was already producing over one hundred films each year, mostly rudimentary, one-reel films. At first, cinema in Brazil was considered a form of entertainment for the wealthy, and since its establishment it has had foreign influence. Johnson and Stam elaborate: “Maintained and subsidized by the wealthy and well-

traveled members of Brazil's urban elite, cinema was first seen as a sign of status and class. Only later, with increased urbanization and industrialization, did it become a form of mass entertainment" ("The Shape of Brazilian Film History" 22).

As a year of intense cinematic production activity, 1908 marks the beginning of what is now called the *Golden Age* ("Bela Época" or "Belle Époque") of Brazilian cinema, which lasted until 1912. The first comedy was also released that same year, *Nhô Anastácio Chegou de Viagem* (Júlio Ferraz, 1908), as Brazilian cinema scholars Johnson and Stam explain ("The Shape of Brazilian Film History" 20).

The first sound feature film in Brazil was the comedy *Acabaram-se os Otários* (Luiz de Barros, 1929). Rafael de Luna Freire explains how Barros came up with the title after a conversation he had with João Antônio Bruno, director of the Empresas Cinematográficas Reunidas. Barros was telling Bruno that he wanted to make a film to show the Americans how Brazilians could also make a sound feature.<sup>6</sup> At this point, it was all just a joke. When asked about the title of the film, Barros answered: "Suckers no More" (Correio 107). And that is how a joke became a reality. *Acabaram-se os Otários* was released in São Paulo, on August 2, 1929, and it became a box office hit, playing for fifty-two days (Correio 115). During that time, the country started to be hopeful that Brazilians, and not foreigners, would dominate a larger share of the market. The first commercially successful sound feature was called *Coisas Nossas* (Wallace Downey, 1931), and it was ironically directed by an American (Augusto 87; Johnson and Stam 26). This film is also a comedy but a musical-comedy feature.

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<sup>6</sup> Sérgio Augusto tells the same story in *Este Mundo é um Pandeiro: a Chanchada de Getúlio a JK*.

Peter Rist explains that, with the coming of sound, Brazil felt the need to make its own sound features because the Hollywood films introduced a language barrier. He observes, in his online article, “A Brief Introduction to Brazilian Cinema,” that this was how “a new, very Brazilian genre came to dominate its [Brazilian cinema’s] output, the *chanchada*, which derived from the Hollywood ‘revue’ and backstage musicals mixed with Brazilian comic theatre and carnival” (Rist). The 1930s marked the debut of Carmen Miranda, who was already a popular radio performer. Once again, the United States exerted its influence over Brazilian culture, and Carmen Miranda packed up and moved to Hollywood to work as a singer and actor, representing not just Brazil, but Latin American culture in general: “Musical after musical was set in Brazil and Argentina to provide the proper setting for the Brazilian Bombshell” (Johnson and Stam, “The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 27). The film that initially brought Miranda great visibility was the musical comedy, *Alô, Alô, Carnaval* (Adhemar Gonzaga, 1936), as Johnson and Stam point out (“The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 27). The *chanchadas* dominated Brazilian cinema from the 1930s to the 1950s, portraying Brazilian culture in an idealized and inconsequential way (Johnson and Stam, “The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 27). During that period, Brazil also tried to emulate Hollywood’s studio system, which lasted from 1930 to 1962 but was ultimately unsuccessful. Chapter 1 will develop a more careful discussion of the *chanchada* genre as well as the studio period, and that is why this is just a short commentary. As a reminder, in this introduction, I offer a brief recapitulation of the history of Brazilian cinema only in order to retrace the facts that lead to the period that interests this dissertation: the post-Retomada.

The 1960s ushered in the urbanization process and growing nationalist sentiment consequent of the changing politics with the imminent redemocratization after the end of Getúlio

Vargas' Estado Novo, and the promises that Juscelino Kubitschek (president from 1956 to 1961) made with his "fifty years of development in five" slogan. These significant changes steered new ideas in artists' minds. The *chanchada* started to lose its appeal, and a new period began in Brazilian cinema: the Cinema Novo phase. This was a much more politically engaged era, and that is evident in its cinema. Cinema Novo started before the military dictatorship and continued during it until about 1972 (Johnson, "Brazilian Cinema Novo" 98).

Brazil went through a military dictatorship from 1964 through 1985, which started with a coup d'état in 1964. The most repressive years, called "anos de chumbo" ("years of lead"), started after the government issued a decree, the Ato Institucional número 5 (AI5), the Fifth Institutional Act, in December of 1968. Dictator Artur da Costa e Silva, president at the time, signed the AI5, which institutionalized the government's most repressive acts, such as censorship and even torture. This posed a barrier to artistic productions that the government considered a threat to the regime, as explained Johnson and Stam ("The Shape of Brazilian Film History" 38). With the AI5, during the harshest phase of the military regime, "it was difficult for filmmakers to express opinions directly, and allegory became the preferred mode of cinematic discourse of what is known as 'Tropicalism' in Brazilian Cinema" (Johnson, "Brazilian Cinema Novo" 98).

In 1969, the State created the Embrafilme (Empresa Brasileira de Filmes), whose main objective was to advertise and distribute Brazilian films abroad with financial incentive from the State. The State financed Brazilian cinema then and exerted heavy control over censorship at that moment in time. According to Johnson, "As early as 1970, Embrafilme began granting producers low-interest loans for film production financing, and between 1970 and 1979, when the loan program was phased out, Embrafilme partially financed over 25 percent of total national production in this manner" (*The Film Industry in Brazil* 368). In those first years, Embrafilme

treated cinema strictly as business, favoring technical matters such as the history of the production company as an enterprise over the films' artistic and cultural contribution, which eventually lead to its reorganization and policy shift (Johnson, *The Film Industry in Brazil* 368). Such focus on technical issues rather than on quality allowed for the emergence of a low-quality Brazilian film genre: the *pornochanchada*. The *pornochanchadas* took advantage of Embrafilme's funding opportunities and were very popular in the '70s and '80s, as Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison observe:

*Pornochanchada* is a catch-all term used to determine a large group of films with popular appeal that were produced in Brazil in the 1970s and in 1980s, which, given a certain move towards more liberal social codes, took as their main focus the subject of sex and sexuality. . . *Pornochanchada*, like many popular film genres, has been condemned to the dustbin of Brazilian cinema, given its supposed lack of aesthetic qualities. (*Brazilian National Cinema* 90)

Tunico Amâncio explains that Embrafilme inherited Cinema Novo's nationalist ideology and that the policy reforms brought cinema professionals and the State closer together (176). At the same time, Cinema Novo took advantage of Embrafilme's sponsorship for a short while towards the end of that movement (1969 to 1972). Producers and filmmakers began to see Embrafilme as an ally, as it started co-producing, screening, and distributing films in the country as well. As other institutions started to be extinguished (such as the Instituto Nacional de Cinema), Embrafilme began to accumulate other responsibilities (Amâncio 177). National films started to benefit from Embrafilme's investment in exhibition and distribution, and between 1974 and 1979, box offices recorded an increase of 16% in ticket sales for Brazilian films: "A Embrafilme conduzia o processo, distribuindo nacionalmente curtas e longas-metragens. Sua

distribuidora chegou a ser considerada a maior da América Latina, em determinado momento” (Amâncio 178).

The '80s saw Brazilian redemocratization once again, as the military dictatorship came to an end in 1985. Embrafilme experienced new transformations: “Em julho de 1986 é criada a Lei Sarney, dispondo sobre a renúncia fiscal para a produção de projetos culturais. Os filmes da Embrafilme precisam ter seus orçamentos completados com verba externa, dos benefícios fiscais concedidos a operações de caráter cultural ou artístico, disputando com as outras artes as verbas para patrocínio” (Amâncio 181). Johnson explains that Sarney restructured Embrafilme, assigning its commercial activities to Embrafilme – Distribuidora de Filmes S.A. (a mixed-ownership enterprise) and its cultural activities to the Fundação Brasileira de Cinema (“The Rise and Fall of Brazilian Cinema” 376).

However, the government of President Fernando Collor de Mello (1990–1992) stopped funding all film production in Brazil. In the name of a neo-liberal agenda, Collor decided to withdraw government support from the cultural arena, and in 1990 he dismantled the state film agencies Embrafilme and Concine (Conselho Nacional do Cinema, created during the dictatorship, in 1976), in an attempt to lead the country towards privatization. Amâncio comments that, “O cinema brasileiro perdeu suas agências financiadoras, sua capacidade de produção e de distribuição e finalmente seu público, embora isto se tenha dado também por conta da modernização tecnológica (TV a cores e home video), que mudou radicalmente o panorama do mercado de cinema” (181). According to Luiz Zanin Oricchio:

A extinção da Embrafilme no começo da presidência de Fernando Collor foi apenas o ato final de um processo já em curso. Naquele momento, não havia mais nenhuma justificativa ideológica para manter a empresa. E o cinema brasileiro também não

dispunha de nenhum apoio, do público ou dos formadores de opinião, para que fosse preservado. (216)

Another important factor that contributed to the decline of Brazilian cinema at that time was its weakened basis. Brazil tried to copy the Hollywood studio-based film industry during the *chanchada* period, but it was an unsuccessful attempt, as this dissertation will show in Chapter 1. Hence, the lack of a solid support system for its national cinema deterred Brazil from having a more certain, prosperous future.

Johnson explains that, in the beginning of the '90s, Brazilian cinema was “back to square one, a retrogression echoed (but not entirely caused) by Fernando Collor de Mello’s 1990 extinction of Embrafilme, Concine (the Conselho Nacional do Cinema), and the Fundação Brasileira de Cinema in one of his initial acts as Brazil’s first democratic elected president since 1960” (“The Rise and Fall of Brazilian Cinema” 364). According to Johnson, some of the issues that lead Brazilian cinema to a collapse were the tensions between producers and exhibitors (who were one and the same in the early 1900s), the flawed screen quota for Brazilian films (which did not take into consideration the total number of films produced in a year), the declining number of movie theaters in the country, and the distortions of the auteur model for the context of Brazilian cinema (“The Rise and Fall of Brazilian Cinema” 376-383).

Just before Collor’s impeachment in 1992, the first law offering financial incentives to the national film industry started to take shape, the Federal Law for Cultural Incentive (1991). More commonly known as the Rouanet Law, after its writer, then minister of culture Sérgio Paulo Rouanet, it encourages individuals and companies to invest in cultural productions by allowing tax deductions. The Audiovisual Law, introduced in 1993, offered a broader program of fiscal incentives for audiovisual productions, as well as for international co-productions. It was

intended to be a ten-year program, but it was renewed since reaching its ten-year mark in 2003, and again most recently in 2016. It is currently slated to expire in 2022. The Rouanet and the Audiovisual laws facilitated the rebirth of Brazilian cinema after the country's hiatus in film production. Oricchio explains that, during the 1990s, foreign production companies became interested in investing in Brazilian films (28), supported by Article 3 of the Audiovisual Law, which facilitated co-productions and foreign investments in Brazilian audiovisual productions.

Hence, the years between 1992 and 2002 are known as the *Retomada* (or the Renaissance) of Brazilian cinema. Since the *Retomada*, Brazilian cinema has not followed any specific ideology, any unified political ideals, or a specific style. In *Cinema Brasileiro: 1995–2005*, Daniel Caetano observes that, “Se a produção de cinema no Brasil sempre mantivera várias facetas simultâneas desde os anos 60, esta produção que se organizou a partir de 1995 e durou até o início de 1999 teve, de fato, a ausência de predomínio temático ou estético como característica” (28). Caetano continues by saying that if we could identify a specific type of esthetic format for such movies, it would be “a estética do salve-se quem puder” (28), which could be roughly translated as the “everyone for themselves” esthetics.

During the *Retomada*, women started to have more space as filmmakers, producers, and actors. The laws that encouraged incentives in the arts and cinema facilitated the production of movies and promoted the emergence of new directors. As new faces started to appear with the easier access to funding, more women had the opportunity to participate in this male-dominated industry. With these tax incentive measures, Brazilian cinema was revived. According to film scholars Stephanie Dennison and Lisa Shaw, the *Retomada* offered Brazilian national cinema a new chance to be reborn, and the laws created encouraged filmmakers as well as sponsors (204). Between 1995 and 2002, Brazil produced about two hundred feature films, while in the



beginning of the previous decade, less than 30 were produced (Oricchio 27). The first successful film of the Retomada was *Carlota Joaquina: Princesa do Brasil* (Carla Camurati, 1995), which I will discuss briefly in Chapter 1.

With the new laws and tax incentive measures, a number of filmmakers created award-winning films such as *Carlota Joaquina: Princesa do Brasil* (Carla Camurati, 1995), *O Quatrilho* (Fábio Barreto, 1995), *Central do Brasil* (Walter Salles, 1998), *Abril Despedaçado* (Walter Salles, 2001), *Carandiru* (Héctor Babenco, 2003), *Madame Satã* (Karim Aïnouz, 2003), and *Cidade de Deus* (Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, 2002). Many of these films presented social and political criticism, which is a characteristic inherited from the Cinema Novo.

According to Melina Marson, “Com a regulamentação da Lei do Audiovisual, ficou sacramentada a visão do cinema (e da cultura em geral) como um negócio. E como negócio, o cinema precisava ser lucrativo, devia ser produzido seguindo as normas do mercado e da indústria cultural” (64). This divided filmmakers and producers, some of whom believed that cinema was strictly business, and others that it was a cultural endeavor (“cinema comercial x cinema autoral”).

The film period that follows the Retomada is called the post-Retomada. *Cidade de Deus* (Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, 2002) marks the end of the Retomada phase. Both cinema periods share the lack of unified political ideology, the search for an identity, and the diversity of themes. The post-Retomada is a contemporary, eclectic phase in Brazilian cinema, and the focus of my research in this dissertation. While a great many researches have focused on diverse aspects of the Retomada, there are still gaps to be filled in the study of the more contemporary, post-Retomada period. The post-Retomada follows a similar stylistic path of the Retomada. Oricchio observes that the variety of themes present in national films of the '90s represents an

attempt to build an identity, even if a fragmented one: "O cinema continua querendo desenhar a cara deste país e, se agora o faz de maneira fragmentada, o processo nem por isso é menos intenso" (238). This clarification helps explain my desire to look into how this contemporary cinema phase portrays gender and gender stereotypes through the use of humor, as well as its various themes, scenarios, and situations.

### **Television and Cinema in Brazil (Globo Filmes)**

Until the 1990s, television and cinema tended to go their separate ways. However, during the Retomada, television served as a model for the films being produced. According to Ismail Xavier in an interview to academic journal *Praga*, such influence started to be seen long before that, with *Dona Flor e seus Dois Maridos* (Bruno Barreto, 1976), due to the usual focus on national themes that had been a characteristic of television (106). Randal Johnson explains that *Dona Flor* came out immediately after the soap opera *Gabriela*, which generated huge popularity for Sônia Braga (who plays both Gabriela and Flor). According to Johnson, "The film's advertising campaign included TV commercials for Flor margarine featuring Braga as Dona Flor (Ramos 2004, 37). The film was seen by around 12 million people in its first ten years of theatrical distribution. More than twice that number saw the film in a single screening on TV Globo in 1985" ("Television and the Transformation of Star System" 28).

Globo Filmes was established in 1998, marking a definite change in the history of Brazilian film. Before then, Globo TV had barely interfered with film production in Brazil. Butcher says that Globo Filmes was created under two main arguments, the first being that it was an attempt to help Brazilian cinema reach excellence and audience satisfaction, and the second that it was interested in defending national identity (53). Since audience appeal has always been

a very important factor for Globo, its goal was to produce marketable films that would sell. Globo Filmes' first official film was the children's comedy film, *Simão, o Fantasma Trapalhão* (Paulo Aragão, 1998), in which famous television comedian Renato Aragão (Didi) played the protagonist. Since then, Globo Filmes has successfully invested in such comedies as *O Auto da Compadecida* (Guel Arraes, 2000), *Caramuru, a Invenção do Brasil* (Guel Arraes, 2001), *Deus é Brasileiro* (Carlos Diegues, 2003), *Os Normais: O Filme* (José Alvarenga Jr, 2003), *Se Eu Fosse Você* (Daniel Filho, 2006), *De Pernas pro Ar* (Roberto Santucci, 2010), and *Minha Mãe é uma Peça* (André Pellenz, 2013), among many others. In 2016 alone, out of the 23 non-documentary feature films produced by Globo Filmes, nine were comedies (almost 40%).

With the establishment of Globo Filmes, a gap emerged between films co-produced by this company and those produced by others (Caetano 29). Globo Filmes started to invest heavily in its own directors and in well-known filmmakers that most frequently made box office hits (Caetano 30). This organization has changed the face of Brazilian film business, as well as facilitated the production and distribution of several types of films, a number of those being comedies. Today, a new film genre has emerged: it is called *globochanchada*,<sup>7</sup> and it is already the subject of some scholarly research. According to Márcio Rodrigo Ribeiro, the *globochanchadas* are comedies written for the middle-class and therefore tackle themes that are of interest for this audience, are produced (or co-produced) by Globo, released after *Se Eu Fosse Você* (Daniel Filho, 2006), and always have at least one sequel (311). Examples include: *De Pernas Para o Ar* (Roberto Santucci, 2010), *Até que a Sorte nos Separe* (Roberto Santucci, 2012), *Meu Passado me Condena* (Júlia Rezende, 2013), and *Minha Mãe é uma Peça* (André

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<sup>7</sup> Filmmaker Guilherme de Almeida Prado coined the term *globochanchada* in 2008 (Ribeiro 311).

Pellenz, 2013). Similarly to the *chanchadas*, the *globochanchadas* are popular among their main spectators, and they also focus on simple, nonsense talk but are directed at a different social class than the *chanchada* was. Ribeiro explains:

Além de normalmente serem estreladas por atores ligados à própria Rede Globo de Televisão, essas comédias também têm tido continuação, ou sequências, como é o caso de *Se Eu Fosse Você*, que em sua segunda parte, lançada em 2009, ultrapassou os 6,1 milhões de ingressos vendidos. Já o longa *De Pernas pro Ar*, lançado em 2010, ultrapassou mais de 3,5 milhões de bilhetes, chegando a atingir a marca de mais de 3,7 milhões de ingressos vendidos no circuito comercial em 2013, ano de lançamento de sua continuação. (311)

Although film critics might criticize these comedies, as they do many other films of this same genre, they still attract a large number of people to the theaters, which proves that they are, indeed, successful. As the *globochanchadas* take shape, a new middle class also is starting to appear in Brazilian society. The people in this group are interested in seeing Brazilian films that speak to their reality and are shown in a nice shopping mall movie theater, and they are the main consumers of the *globochanchadas* (Ribeiro 322).

## **Chapter Breakdown**

Chapter 1, “The Chanchada Through Time: The Chanchada Influence in Brazilian Comedies,” contextualizes humor in Brazilian cinema and offers an overview of the role that the *chanchada* has played in Brazilian culture. As it is the only true Brazilian genre, in this chapter, I will show historically how the *chanchada* tradition has left its marks in all Brazilian cinema periods until the post-Retomada phase. In order to do so, I point out how *chanchadas* started, the

main elements of this genre, and I analyze comedies from various times to show the *chanchada* inheritance in them. That analysis serves as a background to understand how those early comedies influenced the more contemporary ones. Hence, I will be able to offer a general framework to understanding Brazilian comedies and show how the contemporary comedies arrived at the moment where they are today. From that point, I will be able to proceed to more detailed textual analysis of films in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2, “Reshaping Stereotypes: The Protagonists of Romantic Comedies,” concentrates on textual analyses of romantic comedies, the most popular subgenre of comedy in Brazilian cinema in the post-*Retomada*. I will analyze how, even though these films tend to use expected cliché images, they do so to reshape the stereotypical ideas and gender roles traditionally attached to them. There are 34 romantic comedies in the corpus of this dissertation, and I start by offering an overview of how these films represent the main characters in terms of their jobs or occupations and the main plot themes. Following that, I dedicate a section to the characterization of the maid in romantic comedies (romcoms), as this is an important representative of the Brazilian culture and is frequently present in comedies produced since the *chanchada* period. Lastly, I move on to the textual analysis of the five most popular films in audience terms among the 34 romcoms in my corpus. I perform a detailed analysis of each of them, starting by observing who are their directors and main actors and then proceed to identify if and how they are working to offer a criticism of Brazilian society and gender roles through the depiction of traditional stereotypical images.

Finally, in Chapter 3, “LGBTQ Representation in Comedies of the post-*Retomada*,” as the title suggests, I analyze the representation of a very specific group: the LGBTQ. By selecting films that present LGBTQ characters in standout roles that are not necessarily protagonists, I

argue that post-Retomada comedy films are starting to attempt to portray these characters in a less stereotyped, more wholistic way, than Brazilian cinema historically does. Sometimes clichéd representations still prioritize the stereotypical depiction in order to favor the humor. However, as I will show with the analysis of selected films, recent films of the post-Retomada period are making an effort to escape the prejudiced conventional portrayals of LGBTQ. The corpus of this chapter includes 15 films and 26 characters.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **The *Chanchada* Through Time: The *Chanchada* Influence in Brazilian Comedies**

#### **Introduction**

During the last World Cup, Brazil played against Belgium, and when the Brazilian team was eliminated, two elderly Brazilian women in the stadium looked at each other and said, “Now we can only hope we will win next World Cup, in Qatar. Our team will mature and be even better.” The other one replied: “Just like us!” And they both laughed. German journalist Philipp Lichterbeck told this story in his article “O Humor Indestrutível dos Brasileiros.” He moved to Brazil in 2012 and has since been writing about his observations of Brazilian society and culture. Lichterbeck says Brazilians’ sense of humor never ceases to amaze him. In his article, he gives several other examples of how he has witnessed Brazilians using humor in the most unexpected and creative situations. This well-known sense of humor, so characteristic of Brazilians, is found in literature, TV, music, cinema, and even in the rhymes used by the popsicle salesman on the beach. The first chapter of this dissertation is not about soccer or Germans, however; it is about Brazilian humor and its roots. According to data provided by the Agência Nacional do Cinema (ANCINE), Brazilians’ preferred national film genre during the current post-*Retomada* period in Brazilian cinema is comedy. At the time of this writing, in February 2020, the biggest box office hit in Brazil is the comedy, *Minha Mãe é uma Peça 3* (Susana Garcia, 2019), which has already generated more than 40 million dollars, also according to ANCINE. But where does this humor come from? What are its characteristics? When did this all start?

In this chapter, I argue that Brazilian comedies of the post-*Retomada* period have characteristics that are rooted in the humor of the *chanchada*, an important cinematic genre that

emerged in Brazil in the 1930s. Moreover, we can find traces of the *chanchada* in national comedy films throughout all periods of Brazilian cinema since then. Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison include a chapter in their book, *Brazilian National Cinema*, that is dedicated to discussing how the *chanchada* is “the only truly Brazilian genre” (70), and Rafael de Luna Freire affirms that “hoje a *chanchada* é o principal gênero cinematográfico brasileiro ampla e consensualmente reconhecido como tal por críticos, pesquisadores, jornalistas e também por grande parte do público de cinema brasileiro” (66). To prove my argument, I start by identifying the characteristics of the humor that films used during the *chanchada* period and then move through time towards the present. Then I examine a few titles of each period of Brazilian cinema in order to confirm that it is possible to see the *chanchada* roots in all phases and show that this is the main comedy genre that Brazilian comedies have drawn influence and are based on, to the present days.

First, I reiterate the importance of studying humor and comedies, as well as opening space in the academy for this discussion. In their book, *Humor, Língua e Linguagem: Representações Culturais*,<sup>8</sup> João Pedro Rosa Ferreira and Thaís Leão Vieira explain how comedy has been a constant in all forms of media in Brazilian culture but also is a target for criticism and prejudiced remarks. They call these comments *preconceitos elitistas* or “elitist prejudices,” as the remarks show disdain for the ingrained Brazilian taste for farce and comedy. One example Ferreira and Vieira provide is in the commentary of modernist writer and theater critic Antônio de Alcântara Machado on Brazil’s affair with comedy in the early 20s:

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<sup>8</sup> This book is only available as an e-book, with no page numbers or markers.



Eu acho uma graça enorme nas revistas nacionais. Boas ou más, sempre me fazem rir. Quase todas são ignóbeis, deliciosamente estúpidas. Em geral, a revista brasileira é um compêndio de pornografia, sem nenhuma graça. Mas, assim mesmo, eu rio. Não com a peça. Mas com a interpretação. As companhias de revista são, no Brasil, de decimal ordem. E é aí que está a graça. Gente que em tudo na vida falhou, vem para a cena encarnar coisas sérias: a história, o povo, o maxixe, o país, a arte, o carnaval, e assim por diante. É delicioso. (Machado 267)

In this excerpt, Machado considers the humorous productions of Brazilian revue theater “stupid” but “delicious” at the same time. According to him, regardless of their quality, the productions never fail to be funny even when, paradoxically, they are not. He criticizes the fact that those who are writing for revue theater have failed everywhere else and are making fun of “serious things” such as history, the people, the country. However, by suggesting that Brazilian revues are failing in the way they discuss important subjects (such as history, society, and art), but still are successful at being comical, Machado seems to ignore the fact that comedy is not just intended to make people laugh. It is also a form of social criticism that fosters critical thinking, as pointed out by literature scholar Matthew Bevis in *Comedy: A Very Short Introduction*. Comedy is characteristic of Brazilian cultural productions and, as such, its existence is an important part of Brazilian identity. Even though studying comedy is no longer a taboo, it still is not a widely accepted idea, and I still witness shock and confused faces when I explain that I investigate humor and comedy. That reaction alone is enough reason to continue going down this path.

## The *Chanchada* and the Studio Era

The *chanchada* emerged during the studio era in Brazilian cinema, which lasted from 1930 to 1962.<sup>9</sup> One characteristic of Brazilian cinema is that it has often tried to copy Hollywood, and the studio era provides evidence of that, as the Brazilian film industry tried to reproduce the Hollywood studio system.

The first studio to produce *chanchadas* was Cinédia, a production company founded by journalist, producer, and director Adhemar Gonzaga in 1930, and which operated until 1951. Located in Rio de Janeiro, where Brazilian cinema was mainly produced at the time, it appeared alongside two other studios, Brasil Vita-Filmes (1933) and Sonofilmes (1937), but Cinédia was the most successful of the three (Lino 170). According to the website *Carta Maior*, Cinédia made over 950 films, including features, short films, and documentaries.<sup>10</sup> Augusto points out that in 1933, when Gonzaga's semi-documentary, *A Voz do Carnaval* was released, other studios found it difficult to compete with Cinédia, as it used the most recent technology in sound films at the time: “Não dava para competir com os estúdios de Adhemar Gonzaga, já então equipados com a última palavra em material de som ótico, o processo Movietone, importado dos EUA” (90). In 1935, Cinédia partnered with American director Wallace Downey and made the first carnaval-inspired musicals: *Alô, Alô, Brasil!* (Wallace Downey, 1935), *Estudantes* (Wallace Downey, 1935) and *Alô, Alô, Carnaval!* (Wallace Downey, 1936). Lino observes: “É interessante notar que a influência do rádio se fazia até no título — Alô — uma inflexão característica dos locutores de rádio quando iniciam suas transmissões” (174). Such influence

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<sup>9</sup> Atlântida Empresa Cinematográfica de Brasil, the last studio to cease operations, produced its last film in 1962, and that is why this year marks the end of the studio era.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cartamaior.com.br/?/Editoria/Midia-e-Redes-Sociais/A-Cinedia/12/6552>

carried on to the 1940s, when humor became a constant in radio and the cinema, especially with the beginning of sound films. These new films featured the same characteristics as previous productions, such as puns and parody (mainly using the United States as a model), according to Saliba (276-287).

The largest Brazilian production company at that time was the Atlântida Empresa Cinematográfica de Brasil S.A. Founded in 1941 by Moacir Fenelon, Alinor Azevedo, and José Carlos Burle in Rio de Janeiro, Atlântida was known as the studio that produced the largest number of *chanchadas* (more than forty). In total, Atlântida produced 62 fiction films and two documentaries in 20 years (Augusto 30). Its last movie debuted in 1962, *Os Apavorados* (Ismar Porto, 1962). The Atlântida studios wanted to use Brazilian culture in its productions in an attempt to help build a Brazilian identity. According to Shaw and Dennison: “Atlântida set out to establish a national cinema industry and to reach a level of production comparable with that achieved in the USA. It also aimed to represent real life on screen, and to introduce an element of social commentary into its films” (62). According to Vieira, Atlântida allowed the *chanchadas* to reach a significant level of popularity, and this was possible because the studio was “linked to a major film distributor and exhibitor [Luís Severiano Ribeiro Jr.] in Brazil, which supported the production of the *chanchadas* to exhibit in his own cinema” (“From High to Noon” 268). As Shaw and Dennison observe, with the Atlântida Cinematográfica, the *chanchada* tradition was finally consolidated in Brazil (*Popular Cinema in Brazil* 62).

The Companhia Cinematográfica Vera Cruz, which produced films from different genres and focused on technical excellence, had a shorter lifespan, from 1949 to 1954. Vera Cruz, described as a “Brazilian Hollywood” by Maria Rita Galvão (270), was known for its artistic standards that were comparable to those of the United States or Europe, according to Johnson

and Stam (“The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 28). Among its many errors, Vera Cruz tried to make First World cinema in a Third World country, which demanded high financial investments that it could not uphold (“The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 28-29). Another consequence of the focus on making a “classy cinema” was that it ignored the real experiences and preferences of the Brazilian audience (“The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 29). Johnson and Stam point out:

Although Vera Cruz improved the technical level of Brazilian cinema, it made many serious errors. Too ambitious, it aimed at conquering the world market before consolidating the Brazilian market. In order to reach the international market, it naively left distribution in the hands of Columbia Pictures, an organization more interested in promoting its own films than in fostering a vital Brazilian industry. (“The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 28)

Johnson explains that Vera Cruz’s quick demise destroyed many people’s expectations that Brazil would be able to build a studio-based model on a large scale (*The Film Industry in Brazil* 63). An example of its effort to focus on the technical aspects was its most famous production, the award-winning *O Cangaceiro* (Lima Barreto, 1953). Although not a comedy, this film is a very important one in Brazilian cinema history. Inspired by American Western films, *O Cangaceiro* tells the story of a group of bandits in the 1940s in the *sertão* (backlands of Brazil, in the northeast). In this film, the region’s integrity is shaken when, during a robbery, a teacher is kidnapped and then falls in love with one of the bandits, Teodoro, the right arm of the group’s leader, Captain Galdino. *O Cangaceiro* was the first Brazilian film to win an award at the Cannes Film Festival (Best Adventure Film). In an article for the online newspaper Estadão, Luiz Zanin Orichio said this film had such an important impact in Brazilian cinema that it started a new

genre, “nordestern,” (a combination of the words that describe the Northeast of Brazil, where the bandits come from, and the Hollywood Western films) a name coined by Salvyano Cavalcante de Paiva. According to Oricchio, in this same article:

O gênero gerou derivados também nas comédias, sob a forma da paródia. O folhetim de Dumas, *Os Três Mosqueteiros*, inspirou *Os Três Cangaceiros*, o famigerado Lampião tornou-se *O Lamparina*, e o clássico *Dom Quixote*, de Cervantes, deu as mãos a um personagem cômico da TV e, da fusão, nasceu *Pedro Bó, o Caçador de Cangaceiros*. Nem a pornochanchada ignorou a matriz inaugurada por Lima Barreto e lançou no mercado títulos como *As Cangaceiras Eróticas* e *A Ilha das Cangaceiras Virgens*.<sup>11</sup>

It is safe to assume that *O Cangaceiro*, and therefore the Companhia Cinematográfica Vera Cruz, were significant for Brazilian cinema. By investing in the *sertão* theme, Vera Cruz was able to create a genre that is still alive today and has influenced a large number of other genres such as action films, comedies, and dramas. See, for instance, *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (Glauber Rocha, 1964), *Baile Perfumado* (Paulo Caldas and Lírio Ferreira, 1997), the comedy *O Auto da Compadecida* (Guel Arraes, 2000), and even the more recent *O Shaolin do Sertão* (Helder Gomes, 2016), which is in the corpus of this dissertation.

Vera Cruz also produced the comedy *Sai da Frente* (Abílio Pereira de Almeida, 1952), which is the first film that featured comic Amácio Mazzaropi. Mazzaropi played the part of a hillbilly figure, a so-called “Jeca Tatu.” According to Lisa Shaw and Tim Bergfelder, Mazzaropi’s “film stardom drew on his acute understanding of the expectations of his audience, who were invited to identify with his character Jeca, the comic *caipira* or country bumpkin that

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<sup>11</sup> Quote extracted from online newspaper article, without page numbers.

he embodied in countless films” (9). *Jeca Tatu* is a character from the book *Urupês* (1918), by Brazilian writer Monteiro Lobato, which tells stories about rural poor from the state of São Paulo who suffer the consequences of the lack of governmental support and must survive by overcoming illnesses and poverty. Jeca Tatu is one of these workers. Nonetheless, he is a caricature. Jeca not only is afflicted by all the same issues as his peers but he also does not do much to change his situation; he is lazy, has bad hygiene, and is not the brightest of men. Jeca Tatu became an archetype, a representative of all *caipiras* (hillbillies) who struggle to find work and make sure they have something to eat, to live. According to Shaw and Dennison, “The figure of Jeca represents the oppressed and marginalized rural poor who moved to the cities in search for work” (*Popular Cinema in Brazil* 12). However, before Mazaropi’s Jeca, Genésio Arruda served as inspiration to Mazaropi (Shaw and Dennison, *Popular Cinema in Brazil* 12). This comedian was the Jeca character in the famous revue *Moinho do Jeca* (1931) in São Paulo. As Walter de Sousa Junior describes him, “Tipo caipira amalandrado, de chapéu de palha e camisa xadrez” (48). Even though Arruda was a talented comedian, “o reconhecimento de Genésio Arruda como ator cômico só veio na década de 1960, após atuar no filme *Tristeza do Jeca* [The Sadness of Armadillo Joe, 1961], de Amácio Mazaroppi.” In 1960, the film *Jeca Tatu*, by Milton Amaral included Mazaropi as the main character. After that, he was in a number of films with “Jeca” in the titles, even though his character had a different name in such films as *O Jeca Macumbeiro* (Amácio Mazaropi and Pio Zamuner, 1975), in which he played the character Pirola.

*Sai da Frente* takes place in one day and tells the story of Isidoro Colepicola (Mazaropi), who must transport a very large amount of furniture from São Paulo to the city of Santos on his truck, nicknamed Anastácio, along with his dog Coroné. On the way, Isidoro gets

himself in a great deal of trouble and several comical situations, one of which has him chasing his truck down a slope, and another in which he finds out that a bride is hiding among the furniture he is transporting. Isidoro lives a very humble life in a small, one-room house, but ironically, the name of his street is “rua do Conforto” (Street of Comfort). Irony is present in many other moments of this film. The title, “Sai da frente,” is written in large letters on the bumper of the truck, and Isidoro (as well as other characters) also screams the words several times during the story, symbolizing the animosity that urbanization incites in a society.

Mazzaropi’s character follows the archetype of a “caipira” who needs to brave the city in order to achieve his goals. He is a naïve, humble man of little means living in a time during which urbanization is changing everything around him, and that is represented by the names of his vehicle and his dog. While he calls his truck by a very human name (Anastácio), his dog is named after a law enforcement rank (“Colonel”), which also can mean a political commander or a powerful landowner in rural areas. This may indicate that machines begin to gain a space in society at a level similar to that of humans’, and that all these transformations lessen the value of human beings; even animals are considered superior. He also repeatedly talks to the truck as if it were a person. Eufrásio (A. C. Carvalho), the man who hires Isidoro to transport his furniture, is not a hillbilly like Isidoro. He represents the bourgeoisie, albeit a fallen representative of it, as he needs to move because his landlord evicted him and his wife. Hence, the story clearly presents a social commentary.

As Isidoro and Eufrásio start their journey, Eufrásio initially is unhappy with the poor condition of Isidoro’s truck. They stop to use a restroom, and Isidoro forgets to engage the brake. The truck slips down a slope, and they lose Anastácio, Coroné, and all the furniture. This is one characteristic of *chanchadas*: an object ends up as someone else’s property. The two men go

everywhere looking for Anastácio and Coroné, including a government building where they see a government employee at the reception desk who is more interested in doing a crossword puzzle than his job: a criticism of urbanization and a parody of the government. Isidoro knows the answer to every question that the receptionist asks about his puzzle, even the more complicated ones. The irony is obvious, and we could call this a “troca-troca,” a humble hillbilly who openly admits in the beginning of this story that he does not have much education yet knows complex information about history and world culture, while the employee does not know any of the answers. Viewers perceive an inversion of values, or expectations. When they finally find the truck, a police officer wants to arrest Isidoro because he allowed a dog to drive the truck. Isidoro is able to get out of the situation by having the dog show a “viva” to Getúlio (Vargas): the dog stands on his two back paws, and everyone cheers. So the officer lets Isidoro go. This is a commentary on the political situation at the time and a criticism as well in the form of a satire, as it is a well-known fact that Vargas’ second democratic government was characterized by a general social tension that led to his suicide in 1954.

Despite its many qualities, women also are objectified in *Sai da Frente*. For example, when Isidoro is parking his truck in line to wait for someone to come hire him for a job, a smiling unnamed woman walks by, and he stares at her from head to toes, almost tripping while looking at her. In another instance, he is chasing after the man who stole his dog in a carnival, and he opens a curtain and finds a woman in a bikini, who we will learn later is Samson’s Delilah (Leila Parisi). In a third example, he and Delilah go out dancing and Delilah hurts her leg. Isidoro gets down on one knee and massages her leg lovingly, even though he had left his wife and sick child back home. A fight breaks out in the place where they went dancing, and Isidoro faints. While he is passed out, he dreams that Delilah sensually belly dances for him, and



just when she is about to kiss him, he wakes up. Albeit amusing, these three scenes are unnecessary for the plot itself, even while they brilliantly add humor to the film. The story still would be understandable if they were completely edited out of the film. Hence, we can attest that the objectification of women is a commonly used tool to promote laughs, not only in *Sai da Frente* but also in many other Brazilian comedies, as it is a trait of the *chanchada*.

By the time Isidoro agrees to take Delilah back to São Paulo with him, he already had delivered the furniture in Santos, and the bride who was hiding in his truck had been discovered on the way and was reunited with her significant other. Finally, the last *chanchada* characteristic that we can recognize is towards the very end of the film, when Isidoro is driving back to São Paulo with Delilah. A gorilla escapes from the freight that he was transporting this time. The animal chases after all the females it can find (another objectification of women), and Isidoro has a great idea to lure the gorilla back to the truck: he cross-dresses as a woman and jumps into the gorilla cage. The gorilla follows, and Isidoro locks the beast back in. While driving back to São Paulo, Delilah asks Isidoro to turn on the radio, and the artist singing is Mazzaropi himself, to which Delilah reacts by saying: “Eu gosto dele!” and they both sing together, “A trompa do Elefante.” Isidoro finally drops Delilah off and he reunites with his family.

Even though *Sai da Frente* is somewhat different from other *chanchadas* in the sense that it presents some societal commentary and criticism, it does so by using a great dose of humor. More importantly, it includes several *chanchada* characteristics that help place this film within the same group of other *chanchadas* of the same period. *Sai da Frente* is an influential film in Brazilian cinema history because it is the first film starring the talented Brazilian comic Mazzaropi, marking his debut on the big screen.

## The *Chanchada* as a Genre

João Luiz Vieira explains the origin of the word *chanchada*, which comes from the Italian word *cianciata* that means nonsense talk, false argument, or vulgar comment (“O Corpo Popular” 46). According to the journalist Sérgio Augusto: “A *cianciata* teria chegado a Portugal através da Espanha, por volta do século XVI, quando por lá expandiu-se a *chanza*, uma mobilidade de ‘fala caricata feita para recrear o espírito e exercitar a criatividade,’ baseada na falsidade e na mentira” (17). Initially, the term *chanchada* was used in a pejorative way, as its origin implies; however, “the label *chanchada* gradually lost its implications of poor quality and worthlessness, and came to be the accepted way of referring to this emerging tradition” (Shaw and Dennison 71). Freire observes that, until 1940, the term *chanchada*, while it was applied with a negative connotation, was not used exclusively in reference to films; it was a multimedia expression used to disqualify cinema, theater, or radio material. Freire adds that only in the late 1940s did *chanchada* start to designate films only, but still poor-quality ones (73). He also observes that *chanchada* still carried its negative intrinsic meaning with the emergence of Cinema Novo (74). It was only in the end of the 1960s and during the following decade that the *chanchada* would finally find redemption:

A partir da revalorização do seu apelo junto às plateias populares—assim como da sua continuidade de produção—, teve lugar a partir do final dos anos 1960 e, sobretudo, ao longo da década seguinte uma ‘recuperação do gênero,’ na expressão de Sérgio Augusto (1989, p. 28), tanto por textos de estudiosos e críticos, quanto também através da reapropriação de elementos diretamente associados às *chanchadas* (certos temas, canções, atores, estúdios e cenários) por filmes de diretores como Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Rogério Sganzerla, Carlos Diegues e Júlio Bressane. Através desse processo, um

conjunto grande de filmes passou a ser agrupado sob a chancela de chanchada. (Freire 76-77)

The *chanchada* drew its inspiration from the *teatro de revista*, Brazil's version of vaudeville, which emerged around the mid-nineteenth century but gained real popularity in the first three decades of the twentieth century, and which presented a variety of stock characters, everyday themes, music and dance, and a grand finale with the whole cast on stage, according to Shaw (*Tropical Travels* 190). Elias Thomé Saliba explains that, with the advent of sound, the *teatro de revista* started to use a few cinematic techniques, during the first decade of the twentieth century, such as recording short films from the stage and presenting a combination of both theater and film during the revue performances (89).

Shaw and Dennison explain that the roots of the *chanchada* “lie in a tradition of documentary films about Rio de Janeiro’s famous carnival. Even during the silent era, carnival was the focus of great interest among Brazilian filmmakers” (70). The *chanchadas* were not exclusively musicals, but in the beginning especially they were heavily dominated by musical performances that interrupted the story, and everything ended up in singing and dancing (Augusto 121-124). With time, *chanchada*’s association with carnival started to become less intense. However, this connection would remain an intrinsic characteristic of these films, and even if the party itself and its music were not present anymore *carnivalization* would remain a trait of the *chanchadas*.

*Carnivalization* is a concept introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin that can be defined as the shaping effect of popular culture over social norms in the form of parody, mocking, and laughter, causing disruption and inversion of values. According to The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (online version):

[Carnivalization is] The liberating and subversive influence of popular humour on the literary tradition, according to the theory propounded by the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin in his works *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929) and *Rabelais and his World* (1965). Bakhtin argued that the overturning of hierarchies in popular carnival—its mingling of the sacred with the profane, the sublime with the ridiculous—lies behind the most ‘open’ (dialogic or polyphonic) literary genres, notably Menippean satire and the novel, especially since the Renaissance. Carnivalized literary forms allow alternative voices to dethrone the authority of official culture: Rabelais, for example, subverts the asceticism of the medieval Church by giving free rein to the bodily profanity of folk festivities.

Hence, carnivalization is an opportunity for blurred lines, bending of social rules, parody, corruption, laughter, and joyful celebration. The carnival celebration may be a symbol of carnivalization, but it is not the only way that the *chanchada* films reflect this concept. Other ways in which films portray *carnivalization*, for example, are with inversion of values, sensuality, criticism of morality, and displaced rules.

With the *teatro de revista*, popular humor stopped being as political as it was during the Belle Époque era and started to branch out, as its audience became more eclectic (Saliba 89). According to Elias Saliba, Brazilian humor during the Belle Époque (1908-1912) differed greatly from humor during the *chanchada* period, as the former inserted public matters into the personal sphere in order to comment on how Brazilian people felt about the politics and historical events at the time (75). Thus, humor maintained a close dialogue with politics in the first decades of the nineteenth century in the form of the “sátira política” (Saliba 57). At that time, politics was going through intense changes, as Brazil was becoming a Republic (November 15, 1889) after almost

70 years of Monarchy rule. Brazil was still trying to find its own identity and understand how the political transformation from Monarchy to Republic had created a disillusion in its people (Saliba 57). Saliba calls this the *humor da ilusão republicana*, as most Brazilians were expecting that everything would change after the country became a republic: Brazil would be modernized and improved and would grow economically. Upon realizing that the Republican promise was a utopia, the intellectual class in Brazil saw the opportunity to make art with social commentary. Saliba explains that, although humor already existed in various types of cultural productions in Brazil, the Belle Époque encouraged a different type of humor, born from a place of frustration, and a need to criticize the government and mirror the impasses of the time in a satirical way (69). Until then, humor was not frequently part of the daily press; however, as Saliba points out, the political conflicts that came up with the proclamation of the Republic resulted in newspapers starting to dedicate a section to humor and caricatures slowly growing in popularity, “embora esta seja de ritmo mais lento dada a sua dependência dos processos de impressão” (57). Conflicts filled the first years of the Republic, which served as an inspiration to produce humorous pieces of work (57). Hence, humor during Belle Époque was far from a form of art production that lacked intellectual content. In fact, it was just the opposite.

With the *teatro de revista*, humor started to be less politicized, and comedy began to develop a deep association with carnival, as well as to be present in the *marchas carnavalescas*, or *marchinhas*. This denomination is a satire of military marches and these songs became a typical carnival music genre. They also were used in the *teatro de revista*, and cinema started to become heavily influenced by the sort of humor present in the *marchinhas* (Saliba 89), which is characterized by lyrics full of double meanings that tend to include sexual innuendos or just

lightly erotic/flirtatious lyrics. An example of a *marcha de carnaval* from 1926, is “Zizinha,” by José Francisco de Freitas:

Por ser deveras conhecida / palavra, eu ando aborrecida  
em qualquer lugar / quando passear  
sou muito perseguida / o meu tormento não tem fim  
nunca pensei sofrer assim / velhos e mocinhos  
pedem-me beijinhos / dizendo, enfim, pra mim

Zizinha, Zizinha / Zizinha, Zizinha  
ó, vem comigo, vem / minha santinha  
também quero tirar uma casquinha

Noutro dia num bondinho / um coronel muito velhinho  
deu-me um beliscão / pegou-me na mão  
tais coisas fez enfim / que quando olhei admirada  
até parece caçoada / ainda suspirou  
os olhos revirou / dizendo assim pra mim

Zizinha, Zizinha...

The type of humor presented by this *marchinha* is typically seen in many *marchinhas de carnaval*. It objectifies the woman by portraying her as the object of desire of a man (or several men); however, at the same time, it is more innocently flirtatious than pornographic. This is one

of the traits of the humor that we will see in the *chanchadas*, and later on in a more erotic manner in the *porno-chanchadas*.

Some of the important names that emerged during the *chanchada* period are: actors Oscarito and Grande Otelo, a well-known comic duo; comedian, actor, and filmmaker Amácio Mazzaropi; screenwriter, director, and producer Watson Macedo; director and producer Moacyr Fenelon; director and screenwriter Cajado Filho; director, actor, and composer José Carlos Burle; and actors and singers Eliana Macedo, Dircinha Batista, and Linda Batista. This list also includes director and producer Wallace Downey, from the United States. Most of women involved in the *chanchada* were actors, and their roles normally were stereotyped. Throughout his book, Augusto mentions many stereotypical roles that were assigned to female actors in the *chanchadas*, such as the bitter spinster (140) the gold-digger (142 and 175), the cabaret dancer (175), and the maid (93), to mention a few.

Grande Otelo is one of the greatest names of the *chanchada* period, and he started his career in the cinema with the comedy, *Noites Cariocas* (Enrique Cardicamo, 1935). Before that, he worked in the theater, television, and even in the circus. However, films became his main profession. Peter H. Rist asserts that Otelo was “the finest South American comic actor of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” and says that Orson Welles once affirmed the same in the early 1940s (*Historical Dictionary* 288). David Hanley explains that success was guaranteed when Grande Otelo and Oscarito became a comic pair:

The first Atlântida *chanchada* was *Tristezas não Pagam Dívidas* (Sadness doesn't Pay Debts, aka “Won't Pay Your Debts,” 1944, José Carlos Burle and Ruy Costa), a big hit pairing Grande Otelo and Oscarito for the first of 13 films together. The new comedy team returned to solidify their success in *Não Adianta Chorar* (It's no Good Crying,

1945, Watson Macedo) and their biggest hit of the decade, *Este Mundo é um Pandeiro* (This World is a Tambourine, 1946, Macedo). (137)

In no time, Grande Otelo and Oscarito starred in most of the popular *chanchadas* of the late 1940s (Hanley 137). Rist observes that Grande Otelo was the greatest Afro-Brazilian film star until at least the 1960s; however, he tended to receive lower pay than Oscarito, who was white, and played characters who served as subordinate to Oscarito's characters, which made him resentful (289). Grande Otelo continued to work actively in TV and cinema as a humorist for a couple of years until he passed away in 1993.

Oscarito, born in Spain, went to Brazil when he was only one year old and also worked in the circus and revues, as did Grande Otelo (Rist, *Historical Dictionary* 435). He learned a lot about being a comic while working in the circus and performing as the clown "Excêntrico" (Eccentric), as João Luiz Vieira and Leonardo Côrtes Macario observe (113). His cinema debut was in the short, semi-documentary, *A Voz do Carnaval* (Adhemar Gonzaga and Humberto Mauro, 1933), produced by Cinédia. He made nine films with Cinédia, "and in 1944 he signed an exclusive contract with the Atlântida studios, for whom he worked until 1962, appearing in thirty-three films, invariably in a starring role, becoming the company's unofficial trademark, and according to Severino Ribeiro, its 'gold mine'" (Vieira and Macario 114). Oscarito was well known for his ability to make several faces and for physical humor and slapstick. According to Vieira and Macario, "popular television—more specifically the comic quartet *Os Trapalhões* (The Goofy Gang), the most successful comic performers to emerge on Brazilian television and subsequently in the cinema throughout the 1970s and 1980s, clearly owed a debt of gratitude to Oscarito's screen performances" (116). Oscarito died in 1970 due to a heart condition, and his last film was the comedy, *Jovens Pra Frente* (Alcino Diniz, 1968).



According to Augusto, some of the *chanchada*'s main characteristics are the *troca-troca* (a situation in which one thing is switched with another), doppelgangers, cross-dressing (Oscarito is widely known for dressing up as a woman), a lost object that ends up as someone else's property, parody, caricature, Hollywood influence, and patriarchy (15). Lisa Shaw also lists a few other features, such as the representation of a Utopian democracy, mocking of elite culture, and celebration of popular culture ("The Brazilian Chanchada" 74), all characteristics of the carnivalesque. Vieira adds the rapid pace of the narrative, the lack of continuity of the events, and the absurd narrative ("Chanchada e a Estética do Lixo" 176); also, it was not unusual to find a con artist as one of the main characters of the plot (54). These characteristics, so commonly found in *chanchadas*, break the time barrier and became a staple of Brazilian comedy films, as they continue to live on through other films in different time periods even to this day. Throughout this chapter, I will analyze these and other *chanchada* traits present in comedy films of subsequent periods of Brazilian cinema.

According to Vieira, Brazil holds a long-standing tradition of creating parody film versions of Hollywood films in order to provoke laughter ("From *High Noon* to *Jaws*" 256). He explains that, while the *chanchada* genre has influenced Brazilian film throughout its cinema periods, it is evident that one element constantly present is the parody (Vieira, "Chanchada e a Estética do Lixo" 170). Vieira believes that this translates a desire to transform a weakness into a strategy, and he affirms that it aligns with what Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes calls a "criativa incapacidade de copiar." According to Vieira, this is because parody undertakes a major artistic role in the film, sometimes working as the structuring piece itself (Vieira, "Chanchada e a Estética do Lixo" 170). Thus, according to Salles Gomes, parody is the creative (in)capacity to copy. Vieira also points out another reason why the parody remained a tool used in Brazilian

film: because it goes hand in hand with social criticism (Vieira, “Chanchada e a Estética do Lixo” 170). Films belonging to more politically engaged cinema periods (such as the Tropicalist phase of the Cinema Novo) will recycle the *chanchada* humor and its techniques in order to associate comedy and still convey social criticism, as I will show later in this chapter.

In such parodies, the film uses a target film (generally a famous title) to recreate the story in a humorous and generally absurd way. It is more than a simple imitation, as Shaw and Dennison elaborate:

The work of Dan Harries on film parody is equally of interest in this context, as it provides a framework within which to analyse the mechanisms of film parody. As Harries argues, parody is characterized by the oscillation between similarity to and difference from a target, and it ‘operates in terms of a system centred on “logical absurdity”, with one dimension needed to ensure a logic and another for difference-creating absurdity’. In general terms, film parodies employ similarity to and difference from the original film (the target, to use Harries’s term) at the level of lexicon, syntax and style. (*Popular Cinema in Brazil* 104).

The informed viewer is aware of the parody because it is obvious and absurd. As Vieira observes, parodies most often give the idea of “being crude, poorly-made, second-rate” and having a nonsensical type of humor. He elaborates: “The word ‘parody’ immediately reminds us of its pre-existing object, the very reason for its existence. From the original artistic object—whether a play, a novel, a music or a film—to the new object, a process of transformation occurs in which the parody imitates the original, generally in a comic form” (Vieira, “From *High Noon* to *Jaws*” 257). In the *chanchada*, the giveaway is generally present in the titles; for example: *Matar ou Correr* (Carlos Manga, 1954), a parody of *Matar ou Morrer* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952),

and *Nem Sansão, Nem Dalila*, (Carlos Manga, 1955), a parody of *Sansão e Dalila* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1949). João Luiz Vieira explains that in the case of *Nem Sansão, Nem Dalila*, for instance, Samson's (Oscarito's) strength is not in his hair, but in his wig. Thus, we can see the wig versus the natural hair strength as a metaphor to what Brazilian cinema is when compared to the Hollywood super-productions: "The wig characterizes, at the same time, a formal aspect of a costume, an organic element of Carnavalesque language that, for its part, defines the basic type of parody in Brazilian cinema" (Vieira, "From *High Noon* to *Jaws*" 257). This parody tradition carries on throughout the Brazilian film phases and becomes a frequently found trace of national comedies.

The *chanchadas* were never pornographic; they were actually rather conservative and used a naïve sense of humor. Augusto observes that, "As chanchadas eram, quase sem exceções, comédias morigeradas, perfeitamente afinadas com os padrões morais da época" (184). That did not prevent the objectification of women, which was actually very commonplace in these films. And it only worsened during the *pornochanchadas*, which came a few decades later, and which I will discuss soon in this chapter. Some scholars present a very critical point of view of the representation of the female subject during the *chanchadas*. Shaw states that, "The epitome of sexual temptation in the chanchada was the exotic foreign beauty, particularly the lascivious Latina, a stereotype that the Brazilian film industry took from Hollywood" (*The Brazilian Chanchada* 76). Examples of this assertion can be found in the *sereia de Copacabana* (mermaid from Copacabana) scene, in *Aviso aos Navegantes* (Watson Macedo, 1950); in the character of the young Cuban woman Lolita who seduces the Greek mythology professor Xenofontes (Oscarito) in *Carnaval Atlântida* (José Carlos Burle e Carlos Manga, 1952); and in Norma

Bengell's character in *O Homem do Sputnik* (Carlos Manga, 1959). I will observe other *chanchada* characteristics in a few of these films as well.

*Aviso aos Navegantes* tells the story of Federico, who hides in a ship from Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro but ends up discovered by the cook, who makes him work in the kitchen. Matters get more complicated when it is revealed that an international spy also is aboard. In the "mermaid of Copacabana" scene, Jorge Goulart's character sings about his encounters with several foreign women. He appears on a stage in a nightclub against a backdrop of the Copacabana beach, wearing a suit and carrying a suitcase. He says that none of the other ladies can live up to a mermaid of Copacabana. Numerous women walk around in bikinis, playing, sunbathing, and smiling at the man as he flirtatiously sings to them from an elevated bridge that imitates a boardwalk and places him higher than everyone else. There are only four men in the scene other than the singer, so the vast majority of people are female actors. He sings:

O meu coração não me engana

Eu quero uma sereia de Copacabana

A francesa

Me chamou de "mon chéri"

Eu senti um frenesi!

Atrás de uma espanhola,

Eu quase fui a Madri.

Uma cachopa em Lisboa

Me cantou a Madragoa.

Ai, quase morri!

The only characteristic that the singer mentions about the women is where they come from, as if highlighting that their exoticness is all that matters. This reduces women to one thing, their origin, and objectifies them at the same time, suggesting that they have no value other than that which is connected to their birthplace. The females in the scene seem oblivious to all that, and smile to the song in a carefree way. In addition to that, they do not seem to be uncomfortable with a man in a suit singing and staring at them at the beach while they lounge in their swimsuits, even though they are semi-naked in the presence of a very well-dressed man who is singing about how he wants one of them, as if he is choosing a rotisserie chicken. This somewhat subtle objectification of women is a characteristic of the *chanchada* humor that is later amplified during the *pornochanchada* phase. The objectification of women will continue to be a trait of the Brazilian comedies until the post-Retomada phase. However, as I will demonstrate later, some deconstruction of these stereotypes has started to happen.

In *Carnaval Atlândida*, the owner of Acrópole Filmes, Cecílio B. de Milho (a parody of the name of American filmmaker Cecil B. DeMille) intends to make a film about Helen of Troy and hires a Greek professor to help him, but it turns out that most of the crew prefers to do a musical comedy about carnaval instead, much to Milho's dismay. The producer's niece, the Cuban girl Lolita (María Antonieta Pons), makes several advances towards the quirky professor, Xenofontes (Oscarito), even though she has a fiancé. Her flirtations make him so uncomfortable that he asks her to slow down over and over again, even though he is obviously attracted to her.<sup>12</sup> As film scholars Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison observe, "Only moments after they meet,

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<sup>12</sup> This type of behavior is expected from characters played by Oscarito; according to Shaw and Dennison, "in countless examples of the *chanchada* tradition, Oscarito plays an emasculated coward, who is afraid of life and more importantly, women" (69).

Oscarito's character is dancing to Latin rhythms and surrendering to the physical pleasures of carnival" (102). Lolita's romantic endeavors make her fiancé so jealous that he plots against Xenofontes, who finds himself in many challenging situations, such as fights, and he is even led to believe that he is seriously ill. Ultimately, she turns the very academic Xenofontes into a carnival lover and he ends up supporting the idea of making a film about carnival instead of Helen of Troy. This leaves the audience wondering about the extent of her influence on him, which possibly provoked a deep change in his personality.

*Carnaval Atlântida* introduced many traits that would stay in Brazilian cinema until the present day. Vieira explains: "A importância desse filme deve ser salientada justamente por ter instaurado 'galã-mocinha-vilão' associado a atores que formariam o núcleo central da maioria das chanchadas posteriores, numa relação de redundância necessária a um esquema de produção contínuo, visando ao maior lucro possível" ("O Corpo Popular" 51). Hence, the *chanchada* established typecasting as a norm that would become habit in Brazilian cinema. In addition, the *chanchadas* also reproduced a Hollywoodian star system, and both those things combined to help advertise and sell films (Vieira, *O Corpo Popular* 50, 52).

*Carnaval Atlântida* portrays the typical representation of the *chanchada* hero as a naïve man who is not very well-versed in the bureaucracy of the new world that surrounds him. Normally the hero of the *chanchada* is from the country and finds himself in the middle of the big city, lost and disoriented; but Prof. Xenofontes is a version of that, as a good representative of the innocent man who is about to be "devoured" by the novelty that surrounds him (for Xenofontes, Lolita will represent that). He is also a borderline character because, even though he starts off on one side of the spectrum as the serious professor who is committed to knowledge, he ends up on the other side completely corrupted by Lolita and by *carnaval*.

Being a *personagem limiar* is another characteristic of the hero of the *chanchada* who, in subversive behavior, refuses to be in a stagnant position, as Vieira points out (“O Corpo Popular” 54). Another typical characteristic of this genre that is present in this film is the figure of the trickster, or the *malandro*, represented by the pair, Grande Otelo and Colé. Nonetheless, Grande Otelo’s character is more than just a *malandro*. In *Carnaval Atlântida*, both Grande Otelo and Colé are janitors in the studio, and in direct contrast with the character of Renato Restier (Cecílio B. de Milho), the pair represents the lower social class, who need to do whatever is necessary to make ends meet. However, Grande Otelo’s character wears different hats in this film. In one scene, for example, he works as a pawn to Lolita’s fiancé, who makes the characters of Grande Otelo and Colé lead Prof. Xenofontes to believe that he is severely sick. In another scene, he dances the samba dressed in a Greek toga, in a classic *chanchada* scene, where carnivalization is perceivable. Finally, Grande Otelo’s character used to be a screenwriter, and that also explains why he interferes with Cecílio B. de Milho’s plans to make a serious film about Helen of Troy. He is the one who originally plants the idea of making a film about carnival instead, showing the conflict between the high culture and the popular one and the ultimate victory of the latter over the former. This character is a trickster but also a *personagem limiar*, as he is never just in one place (metaphorically or physically). As I will show in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, to this day, tricking and cheating are typical traits of Brazilian comedies and were inherited from the *chanchadas*. And obviously, the way everything ends up in a carnival party in this film is a clear characteristic of the *chanchada*.

*Carnaval Atlântida* is also a parody of Hollywood film production, and it starts with Milho’s name, inspired by American filmmaker Cecil B. DeMille. Even though Milho desired to make a very intellectual film about Helen of Troy and hires a fancy Greek professor to help him

fulfill his goal, the film that they make in the end is about a very different Helena: a samba dancer from Morro da Formiga. As Luis Felipe Kojima Hirano analyzes it:

Esse filme não só ilustra a polêmica do período, como “carnavaliza” a própria discussão, ao satirizar a incapacidade da produção nacional de se igualar ao gênero épico hollywoodiano. “Carnaval Atlântida”, assim, inverte os valores: o modelo desejado pelos críticos é debochado, enquanto a “imoral” chanchada é valorizada. Tal inversão também promove, nas entrelinhas, a reflexão sobre uma certa brasilidade do cinema nacional, buscando determinados elementos da cultura negra como o samba, o frevo e o balançado “caliente” dos trópicos como símbolos diferenciados e originais para a construção de uma identidade nacional em nosso cinema. (157)

It is possible to see another clear inversion of values during the party scene in which Cecílio B. de Milho’s daughter, Regina (played by Eliana Macedo) is celebrating her twenty-first birthday. Regina is dancing in a ballroom among many other people, when she starts singing a *marchinha* called “Queria ser patroa” (written by Manoel Pinto, Adair Almeida Airão, and Jorge Gonçalves). Even though Regina’s father represents traditional and conservative values, the song that Regina sings is about a woman who looks like a *empregada* (maid), but wants to be a *patroa* (boss), which, in this case, insinuates that she wanted to marry the man she worked for:

Era uma vez uma garota muita boa

Com pinta de empregada, mas queria ser patroa.

E o seu sonho quase se realizou

Ela deu sopa e o patrão não bobeceu.

Coitada! Coitada!



Depois de muito tempo que o patrão não quis mais nada.

Coitada! Coitada!

Fez tanto sacrificio, nem ficou como empregada!

The song suggests that the girl had sexual relations with her boss, hoping that he would marry her. However, in the end he did not even keep her as a maid. It also uses a pun with the word *boa* that could mean *nice* or *sexy*. While Regina symbolizes an inversion of values in contrast with the figure of her father, which is a *chanchada* characteristic, at the same time, her song embodies a very clear objectification of women. Combined with that is the representation of the female in the *marchinha* as a maid, and all of these are typical traits of the *chanchada*.

This film is a good example of how the *chanchada* uses humor by presenting some of the main elements of this genre, such as parody, carnival (both in the form of the party itself and the carnivalesque), the inversion of values with the popular culture winning over the elite, and the imitation of Hollywood. Vieira comments on the importance of parody in *Carnaval Atlântida*:

*Carnaval Atlântida* is the film where one can best trace the relationships between parody, *chanchada*, and Carnival, presented so that each is absorbed and explained within the limits and sphere of the others, This, parody arises as the only possible underdeveloped response of a cinema that imitates and laughs at itself, within a specific and well-known genre, the *chanchada*, which, in its turn, is inserted in a Carnivalesque universe, a universe with a long tradition in Brazil. The parody/*chanchada*/Carnival phenomenon is a mechanism of compensation that, due to popular success, also defines areas in which Brazilian cinema could develop and survive in the market. (“From *High Noon* to *Jaws*” 265)

Parody also reflects Brazil's fascination with Hollywood, which lingers to this day, and it is not just seen in the cinema but also in Brazilian society. This infatuation is clear, for example, in the way in which Brazilians tried to copy the Hollywood studio system.

Finally, in *O Homem do Sputnik*, a UFO falls in the backyard of Anastácio (Oscarito) and he tries to sell it, as he believes that it might be the Russian satellite, the Sputnik. A seductive French woman, Bebé (Norma Bengell), arrives in Brazil with her elderly French male partner who wants to retrieve the satellite. Anastácio and the gang accompanying Bebé arrive simultaneously at the same hotel. As they spot the man that supposedly has the Sputnik, the elderly French man sends Bebé to seduce Anastácio in order to have access to the satellite. Bebé puts on a very sensual private show for Anastácio and sings about love while she strips for him. Halfway through the song, she says “eu não sei porque, ao mostrar meu decoté [sic], les homes querem brincar com Bebé,” to which Anastácio responds “gostosa!” Hence, Bebé is simply bait, and her body is a form of exchange currency. Moreover, the film makes it seem like she does so willingly, because she is mischievous. The scene is very humorous, and Oscarito plays an archetypal role of the *chanchada* hero, the naïve man from the countryside who arrives at the city and is confused because he does not know how things work; in this case, he even seems perplexed with the sight of a beautiful, partially naked woman. And this woman intends to take advantage of him. Therefore, she is not just objectified, but the film also portrays her as a con artist. All these are features that continue to appear in Brazilian comedies throughout all cinema phases.

## The End of the *Chanchada*

When television started to become more popular in the late 1950s, the *chanchada* began to disappear, As Augusto describes the situation: “A chanchada deu o seu último suspiro (ou sua última gargalhada) quando a televisão cooptou de vez o seu humor e até mesmo alguns de seus luminares, no começo dos anos 60” (201). TV absorbed the *chanchada* style and cannibalized it, delivering a specific type of comic Globo soap opera (a *novela das sete*) that, according to Augusto, started with *Feijão Maravilha*<sup>13</sup> in 1979 and continues today (203). However, it was not just TV but also the cinema that led to the *chanchada*'s demise, as I will discuss in the next section on Cinema Novo. Comedy films have been revisiting the genre since that time.

By the 1960s, the production companies that had appeared in the 1930s and 1940s died out, and the *chanchada* started to lose its allure. With the urbanization process and the national development plans announced by President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961), the minimal political engagement of the *chanchadas* could not respond to people's need for social criticism. Augusto points out how Brazilian issues were left out of the *chanchadas*: “Eram demasiadas estreitas, às vezes mínimas, as frestas por onde o Brasil e suas coisas conseguiam penetrar nas chanchadas” (166), underlining the scarcity of socially relevant content. During Kubitschek's mandate, Brazil saw political stability and economic prosperity. His slogan was “cinquenta anos de progresso em cinco,” which meant he intended to enable the country to develop the equivalent

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<sup>13</sup> “Em 1979, um ano depois de a escola de samba carioca Império Serrano cantar as glórias de Oscarito e Grande Otelo na avenida, a telenovela *Feijão Maravilha*, escrita por Bráulio Pedroso e produzida pela Globo, tentou restaurar no vídeo a zorra das chanchadas, inclusive assimilando ao seu elenco vários ídolos da velha Atlântida: José Lewgoy, Anselmo Duarte, Grande Otelo, Ivon Curi e as atrizes Eliana e Adelaide Chiozzo. A partir de *Feijão Maravilha*, o folhetim global das sete praticamente firmou um pacto com a chanchada, cuja influência sobre Sílvio Abreu não se esgota nos títulos de suas sátiras” (Augusto 203).

of 50 years in his five-year term (Couto 141). However, his audacious plans for Brazil did not come without drawbacks. According to Johnson and Stam:

Developmentalist ideology was, by its nature, riddled with contradictions. A powerful catalyst for popular mobilization, it was also an effective way of controlling and defusing social and political conflict. The government fanned nationalist sentiment, but at the same time based its economic policy on foreign investment. The administration's open-handed generosity to foreign investors increasingly alienated the left, and the end of Kubitschek's presidency was marked by vocal opposition from many sectors. By 1959, virtually all governmental crises revolved around economic questions such as inflation (one result of developmentalist policies) and the role of foreign capital in the nation's economy. The middle class became increasingly politicized, and power became consolidated in the hands of the industrial bourgeoisie. ("The Shape of Brazilian Film History" 30)

The more politicized the population became, the more those politics affected the country's cultural and artistic production. Brazilian people yearned for more political engagement and social commentary in the arts, which the *chanchadas* lacked. As the *chanchadas* ceased to appeal to the population's needs and expectations, a new phase of Brazilian cinema started to flourish.

### **Cinema Novo and Brazilian Dictatorship**

The climate of the 1960s opened the doors to a new era in the cinema with the *Cinema Novo* movement, which many view as the greatest period of Brazilian film history. At first, *Cinema Novo* emerged as a result of the "cultural euphoria of Brazil's developmentalist period" (Shaw and Dennison 132). Glauber Rocha, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Ruy Guerra, Joaquim

Pedro de Andrade, Cacá Diegues, Leon Hirszman, and Paulo César Saraceni are some of the most important directors associated with the movement. In this period, the importance and influence of President Kubitschek's nationalism and his developmentalist philosophy were crucial for Brazilian ideology. Kubitschek mandated the construction of Brasília, Brazil's capital city, between 1956 and 1960.

Influenced by Italian neo-realism and the Brazilian left-wing regionalist literary movement of the 1930s and 1940s, the auteurs of the cinema novo movement sought to transform society by applying a new, critical and modernist vision of the nation, and to find a new cinematic language that better reflected Brazilian reality, as a challenge to what they considered the vacuous, derivative and industrially produced chanchada films that had dominated film production since the 1930s. (Shaw and Dennison 132)

In the early 1960s, nationalism continued to be present in Brazilian minds. Following Kubitschek's presidency, President Jânio Quadros tried to continue with the plans for Brazil's modernization. However, the Brazilian economy had already started to slow down, and after struggling to make economic decisions and lacking support from the Congress, Quadros resigned after eight months, hoping but failing to be granted more power (Shaw and Dennison 128). Before Vice-President João Goulart could take office, a parliamentary system was installed. At the time, Goulart was on a trip to socialist China, and only after a plebiscite Goulart took office in 1963 with support of the left-wing parties, plans moved forward which favored the working class along with "laws to protect the less well-off and nationalization schemes" (Shaw and Dennison 128). Hence, the right wing felt that their expectations for the country were being threatened and decided to overthrow the government, leading to the military coup d'état in 1964, which established a dictatorship that would last for twenty-one years (1964-1985).

Johnson and Stam divide *Cinema Novo* into three phases that follow the preliminary phase of 1954–1960: 1960–1964, 1964–1968, and 1968–1972. After 1972, Johnson and Stam say we cannot speak about *Cinema Novo* anymore but, rather, about “Brazilian Cinema,” marked by esthetic pluralism (32). *Cinema Novo* initially differed greatly from the *chanchada*, as the reflexive and tough images, and music of *Cinema Novo*'s films aimed to show the real social issues of Brazilian society, its poverty, urban and rural issues, violence, and economic marginalization. The new films rejected the paradisiac and surreal depiction of Brazil as an idealized land. Hence, *Cinema Novo* is not generally characterized by a comedic tone, which does not mean there are no comedies in the period. Johnson and Stam observe: “Made for the people by an educated middle-class radical elite, these films occasionally transmitted a paternalistic vision of the Brazilian masses” (“The Shape of Brazilian Film History” 34). By the second phase of *Cinema Novo*, filmmakers started to become more concerned with the fact that, although their films tried to have a popular perspective, they did not have the masses as their audience.

In January 1967, a new Constitution was presented and approved. The “Constituição de 1967” was the sixth Brazilian Constitution. It aimed at endorsing and validating the military dictatorship and empowering the Executive branch of the government. Between 1968 and 1975, Brazil suffered its most repressive time, or the “coup within the coup,” as observed by Shaw and Dennison (133). In 1968, the Brazilian government introduced the “Ato Institucional n. 5” (Fifth Institutional Act), which remained operative for almost ten years. The AI-5 marked the beginning of the *anos de chumbo*. This authoritarian Act provided the president with unrestricted authority and stripped citizens of their freedom by severely censoring any artistic production that

was considered a threat to the military regime. Shaw and Dennison explain that filmmakers had to try different tactics in order to continue working:

The key to reaching the public at this time was, according to Fernão Ramos, via “spectacle,” inspired by a new cultural movement that had appeared in 1967:

Tropicalism. As it happens, Cinema Novo’s tropicalist project was a box-office failure, with the notable exception of one film: Joaquim Pedro de Andrade’s *Macunaíma* [Jungle Freaks, 1969], possibly the most vibrant, entertaining and challenging film to emerge in the 1960s in Brazil. (135)

Although Glauber Rocha also made other very challenging films, such as *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (Glauber Rocha, 1964) and *Terra em Transe* (Glauber Rocha, 1967), *Macunaíma* differentiated itself from those because its social critique was disguised in its sense of humor, influenced by the *chanchada*. Moreover, this film is also unique when compared to other films by Rocha because it stems from the very famous and challenging novel of same name by Brazilian modernist writer Mário de Andrade. Stam, Vieira, and Xavier observe that the use of *chanchada* strategies, actors, and music, alongside social criticism, enabled *Macunaíma* to reach an accomplishment that many other *Cinema Novo* directors were not able to achieve, “the reconciliation of political and aesthetic avant-gardism with popular and box office appeal” (“The Shape of Brazilian Cinema” 404). These are a few of the reasons why I chose this film to analyze more closely in the next subsection.

For the entertainment industry, censorship was a challenge to be overcome. In an attempt to make their movies more popular, filmmakers started to invest in productions that would be more attractive for the masses. That was when Leon Hirszman made *Garota de Ipanema* (1967). Antônio Carlos Jobim’s and Vinícius de Moraes’s famous 1962 song, “The Girl From Ipanema,”

served as inspiration for this movie, which presents a typically middle-class *carioca* girl (a girl born in Rio de Janeiro), struggling with her own bourgeois issues. The film intended to problematize and deconstruct the stereotype of the sun-bronzed Brazilian girl. However, according to Artur Autran, it did not achieve the expected success and made little to no profit (88). Brazilian cinema then reached the Tropicalist phase in its *Cinema Novo* period, which offered a more political and rebellious contribution to Brazilian cinema. Several *Cinema Novo* filmmakers had to abandon the country and their projects and change their approach, as the military dictatorship posed a bigger barrier to all forms of cultural production in the country. Finally, the marginal cinema (called *Udigrudi*, or “underground”) emerged as a way to protest against its very own marginalization, supporting “garbage” esthetics, as Johnson and Stam point out. The filmmakers chose to be marginalized and were highly censored as a result.

*Cinema Novo* was highly politically engaged, and yet it was not very popular among the masses, as its productions usually were not commercially appealing films. Among the few comedies produced by *Cinema Novo* directors are: *El Justicero*, (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1967), *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1969), *Azyllo Muito Louco* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1970), *Quando o Carnaval Chegar* (Cacá Diegues, 1972). In the Tropicalist phase (after 1968), humor and social criticism existed side by side. Thus, some of the films in *Cinema Novo*, especially in its Tropicalist phase, inherited the *chanchada*'s sense of humor. From the last two decades of the twentieth century until the present day, Brazilian cinema consistently has mixed humor and debate about society in its productions.



### ***Macunaíma and Quando o Carnaval Chegar***

Mário de Andrade published the novel *Macunaíma* in 1928, and it is one of the most important texts of the Brazilian Modernism, a cultural and artistic movement that started during the Semana de Arte Moderna in 1922 in São Paulo. As Alfredo Bosi explains:

As inovações atingem os vários extratos da linguagem literária, desde os caracteres materiais da pontuação e do traçado gráfico do texto até as estruturas fônicas, léxicas e sintáticas do discurso. Um poema da *Pauliceia Desvairada* ou um trecho de prosa das *Memórias Sentimentais de João Miramar*, um passo qualquer extraído de *Macunaíma*, ou um conto ítalo-paulista de Antônio de Alcântara Machado nos dão de chofre a impressão de algo novo em relação a toda a literatura anterior a 22: eles ferem a intimidade da expressão artística, a corrente dos significantes. (369)

This movement sought to create original national cultural productions that rejected foreign ideologies in favor of a national culture. It believed that trending European forms of expressions should be consumed but transformed (cannibalized) in order to produce something that was truly national, advocating “the creation of a genuine culture through the consumption and critical re-elaboration of both national and foreign influences. Imported cultural influences were to be devoured, digested, and reworked in terms of local conditions” (Johnson and Stam, *Brazilian Cinema* 82). It also advocated for a break with tradition and a return to what is truly Brazilian, for example, indigenous language and folklore (Johnson, “Cinema Novo and Cannibalism” 179). With *Macunaíma*, Andrade gathers all these expectations for the Modernist movement and combines them in the form of a novel, allowing for a discussion of the national identity through a very Brazilian, albeit flawed hero: “o herói sem nenhum caráter,” as the subtitle of the book explains. Throughout the hero’s quest, the story reveals several details

surrounding Brazil's racial identity, geography, and folklore. Hence, this novel is an excellent representative of Brazil, and as such, of the Brazilian Modernist Movement feelings. In 1969, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade adapted it into a film.

Joaquim Pedro de Andrade himself states that “*Macunaíma* is the story of a Brazilian devoured by Brazil” (“Cannibalism and Self-Cannibalism” 83). The director suggests that the metaphorical cannibalistic ideology perpetuated by the Modernists in their Cannibal Manifesto was still alive when he made the film. “The traditionally dominant, conservative social classes continue their control of the power structure – and we rediscover cannibalism” (“Cannibalism and Self-Cannibalism” 82). Andrade explains that those who have power will consume others through the purchase of products, their positions in society, or even through sex, while the weak ones will be devoured. According to Johnson, “*Macunaíma* is perhaps the first Cinema Novo film to be formally innovative, politically radical, *and* immensely popular with the Brazilian masses” (*Brazilian Cinema* 178). *Macunaíma* is an excellent representative of a *Cinema Novo* film that carries traits of the *chanchada* sense of humor and includes one of *chanchada*'s best representatives in its main role, with actor Grande Otelo playing Macunaíma as a child. As Johnson points out: “The use of actor Grande Otelo, who, together with Oscarito, epitomized the *chanchada* in Brazilian cinema, as Macunaíma-child creates an immediate empathy among the spectators for the character, an identification important for the potential success of the film as a political statement” (*Brazilian Cinema* 184). Other actors who also started their careers with *chanchada* films and are part of this film include: Jardel Filho (as Venceslau Pietro Pietra), Rodolfo Arena (as Maanape), Rafael de Carvalho (as Caapora), Wilza Carla (as “Fat Lady”), Zezé Macedo (as “Thin woman”), and Hugo Caravana (as “Man with the duck”). To show that *Macunaíma* uses *chanchada* techniques in order to produce humor while maintaining *Cinema*

*Novo*'s political critique and translating the cannibalistic ideology of the Modernist Movement to the screen, I will review one specific scene. First, it is important to understand the basic narrative of the story.

Macunaíma was born in the Brazilian jungle, a full-grown black man (Grande Otelo), son of an old indigenous woman, and he immediately shows signs of his main characteristic, his laziness. His laziness manifests itself in the fact that he does not speak until he is six years old, among other things. Later, he magically transforms into a beautiful white man (Paulo José), after smoking a magical cigarette that his sister-in-law Sofará (Joana Fomm) gives him. With his two older brothers, Jiguê and Maanape, he migrates to the city and faces a number of adventures along the way. In the big city, he meets Ci, an urban guerrilla, who has his baby, a black boy (also played by Grande Otelo). Unfortunately, both mother and son die after Ci's homemade bomb explodes. After her death, Macunaíma starts to look for Ci's talisman, a magical stone called the *muiraquitã*, which he initially thought had exploded with her. He discovers that the giant Venceslau Pietro Pietra has the stone and goes on a quest to recover it. It is quite challenging, but Macunaíma is finally successful. He returns home with the *muiraquitã*, only to meet his own death at the hands of the siren Iara, as she devours him. In the novel, Macunaíma does not die at that moment; he collects the parts of his body that are floating in the river, and after planting a seed that grows into an enormous tree all the way up to the sky, he climbs it and becomes the constellation, the Ursa Major.

Even though I could explore various scenes to identify the humor that is typical from the *chanchada* period, many scholars have already made this connection. Hence, I will concentrate on the cross-dressing *muiraquitã* recovery-attempt scene. After a number of failed attempts to recover the *muiraquitã*, Macunaíma comes up with a new plan: he will dress up as a (divorced)

French woman and seduce Venceslau to retrieve the talisman. He shows up wearing a bright pink dress and green hat with blue plumage, pink tights, high heels, exaggerated makeup, blonde wig, an animal fur around his neck, and too much jewelry, while the giant Venceslau receives his guest in nothing but a burgundy robe with a big red heart on the left side and bright green boxer briefs. In the background, an Argentinian tango is playing, and Venceslau slowly advances towards the “Frenchwoman” as if he is an animal approaching its prey. While he explains that he also collects precious stones and is interested in the *muiraquitã*, he takes her to an equally exaggerated and colorful table set for tea. Macunaíma sits down and starts eating furiously (or nervously?). This scene presents the inversion of values and the twisting of social rules as a main theme.

Both Venceslau’s and Macunaíma’s behavior can be viewed as representations of the Tropicalist anthropophagy, inherited from the Modernists and reconstructed in *Macunaíma* as a tool to help build its critique. This ideology sustained the idea that, in order to achieve artistic independence, the characters needed to perform a metaphorical cannibalism “through the consumption and critical re-elaboration of both national and foreign influences. Imported cultural influences were to be devoured, digested, and reworked in terms of local conditions” (Johnson and Stam, *Brazilian Cinema* 82). Christopher Dunn explains that the idea of *antropofagia* was very attractive for the tropicalists “as a strategy for critically devouring foreign cultural products and technologies in order to create art that was both locally inscribed and cosmopolitan” (74). This allegory and its metaphorical sense carry a strong connection to carnivalization, and therefore is a path for the construction of humor and for the *chanchada* tradition. According to Johnson, “The carnivalesque is profoundly subversive of the official, dominant ideology, since it abolishes hierarchies, levels social classes, and creates an alternative, second life, free from the

rules and restrictions of official cultural life” (“Cinema Novo and Cannibalism” 183). Thus, in the context of the Tropicalist movement and especially when analyzing *Macunaíma*, the carnivalesque and the Modernist anthropophagy notions complement each other.

In the scene with the table set for tea, everything is over the top, too colorful, mismatched, very carnivalesque. In this sense, the whole scene follows the tone of the *chanchada* and of carnivalization, as well as the more obvious characteristics of cross-dressing, the lost object that ends up in someone else’s ownership, and the objectification of women, as Venceslau pursues the “Frenchwoman” tirelessly. After the tea, Macunaíma runs from the giant again, sits down with a book, and seems quite shocked with what he reads. Pietro Pietra approaches him and says that he also owns a great film based on that same book, a “free adaptation,” and starts preparing to screen it. Johnson comments that this is “an obvious reference to the film ourselves are watching, a free adaptation of Mário de Andrade’s rhapsody” (“Cinema Novo and Cannibalism” 187). This interaction is a satire and a criticism of morality and of the bourgeoisie, represented in this scene by Venceslau Pietro Pietra. Satire is not only a trait of the *chanchadas* but also an important characteristic of *Macunaíma*, and it walks side by side with parody in Brazilian cinema. According to Vieira, “Unlike satire, parody is not necessary a critical form. Nevertheless, in Brazilian cinema the line between parody and satire is often a fine one. In a general sense, parody sometimes becomes a satire of itself, criticizing Brazilian cinema” (“From *High Noon* to *Jaws*” 257). The satire also leads to ridicule and laughter, both of which are *chanchada*-like attributes.

The giant promises that he will give “her” the *muiraquitã* if “she” strips for him, which Macunaíma does, naïvely hoping that Pietro Pietra will want nothing else and just give him the stone after he takes off all his clothes (our naïve *chanchada* hero). But once the hero understands

that the giant wants more than just seeing him naked, he runs off, naked and empty-handed. As Johnson observes, “the entire episode is a tour de force of carnivalesque inversion and ambivalence” (*Brazilian Cinema* 188).

Vieira explains that Joaquim Pedro de Andrade uses an array of techniques in order to revitalize the *chanchada* through *Macunaíma*, because he recognizes the value of placing that type of humor in a central position in Brazilian cinema (“Chanchada e a Estética do Lixo” 174).

Vieira elaborates:

O débito à *chanchada* em *Macunaíma* é evidente em suas estratégias narrativas. O ritmo ágil da ação, por exemplo, lembra, com certeza, da rapidez e do *momentum* com quem eram resolvidas muitas cenas cômicas das *chanchadas*. As frequentes e inesperadas reviravoltas das narrativas episódicas daquelas comédias, o absurdo de inúmeras situações, a descontinuidade desajeitada da ação, tudo isso evoca o descompromisso com o realismo, marcas de um estilo narrativo algo rudimentar, típico do gênero. Para completar, um estilo de interpretação hiperbólico restaura no filme a garantia de empatia direta e familiar com o público. (“Chanchada e a Estética do Lixo” 176)

Stam, Vieira, and Xavier explain that in the late 1970s and 1980s the *chanchada*'s influence on many films is evident and is a process that started in the 1960s with a revalorization of Brazilian culture and “Tropicalism’s aggressive leveling, in the 1960’s, of high (erudite) and low (mass) culture...” often using “the collage of disparate discourses, the result of the ‘cannibalistic’ ingestion of the most heterogeneous cultural stimuli” (“The Shape of Brazilian Cinema” 404). Among the films which these scholars discuss that have the *chanchada* as inspiration is *Quando o Carnaval Chegar* (Cacá Diegues, 1972). This film follows the story of Lourival (Hugo Carvana), a manager of a traveling group of singers. Lourival is able to secure a

gig for the whole band as well as the driver of their bus for the “Festa do Rei” during carnival. However, a few members of the group start complicated romantic affairs that lead to disagreements within the group. As they begin to risk breaking the contract for the gig, the rest of the musicians learn that the consequences might put them in danger, as a crime lord, “Angel,” is the one who hired them. Stam, Vieira, and Xavier point out that this film takes up the *chanchada* in a romantic vein (“The Shape of Brazilian Cinema” 404).

The opening credits of *Quando o Carnaval Chegar* show women in bikini-bottoms and regular, small tops, dancing to samba music on a stage that looks like the set of a talk show. This seems to be referencing the famous *chacretes*, the dancers and stage assistants to Chacrinha.<sup>14</sup> The credits are introduced by each *chacrete* turning around, one at a time, with a plaque in each one’s hands. This scene uses the female body as an object at the same time that it creates a parody of how standard credits usually show on the screen and how that is done when the budget is not that of a Hollywood production. Both the objectification and the parody are traits of the *chanchada*. Another characteristic of the *chanchada* that appears in this film are the musical numbers that come out of nowhere in the middle of the story. (I should also point out that most of the major stars in this film are both actors and musicians.) They are supposed to represent performances by the group; however, that is not always clearly explained and the only glimpse of that representation is provided by the interruption of the narrative with singing and dancing. Most of the singing in this film, though, is more mellow and romantic than the typical *chanchada*-style music. The film is in the musical genre, and it could be argued that it is a

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<sup>14</sup> Chacrinha was the nickname of comedian José Abelardo Barbosa de Medeiros, who had several talk-shows between the end of the 1950s and the 1980s, on several networks, such as TV Rio, TV Tupi, TV Bandeirantes and Rede Globo.

romantic type of *chanchada*. A mix of the Tropicalist phase ideology with the *chanchada* sense of humor is detected in the scene in which Paulo (Chico Buarque) meets up with his girlfriend Virgínia (Ana Maria Magalhães) for the second time and sings “Caçada,” by Chico Buarque. The chorus says, “Hoje é o dia da graça, hoje é o dia da caça e do caçador.” They chase each other around on a grassy field like wild animals, or like hunter and prey, in an allusion to anthropophagy. However, at the same time, their cavorting also creates a carnivalesque scene, with the image of two humans flirting in an odd manner like feral beasts.

This reference to carnivalization is also present in other scenes. For example, when, out of jealousy, Mimi (Nara Leão) decides not to be part of the gig that Lourival organizes because Paulo is dating Virgínia, she lies down with her eyes closed on the floor of a dark room in her house, wearing all black. Lourival arrives and hurries to help her, and we assume that he thinks she is dead. He kneels down next to her, worried, and then in a duet they sing the beginning of Carmen Miranda’s *marchinha* “Eu dei,” which is a joyful, carnival-style song, and therefore, is not very appropriate for the moment (“Eu dei / O que foi que você deu, meu bem?”). It causes confusion in the audience but turns a sad scene into a comic one.

Finally, one reference that cannot go unmentioned is what the character of Virgínia represents. She is the only character who is obviously of indigenous descent and even wears an indigenous costume when preparing for the “festa do Rei” (which does not happen, ultimately). Because of her, the group falls apart and does not perform in the gig. Among all the discord that she brings, one scene in particular is worth mentioning: When the group is all back together and rehearsing for the “festa do Rei,” Virgínia asks Cuíca, the driver (played by Antônio Pitanga) about his French girlfriend, and he tells her that she is waiting for him to move to Paris together. The film does not show what Virgínia says in response, but, in an overconfident manner, she



convinces him to leave immediately. He turns to Lourival and declares that he does not care about the gig or the consequences with Anjo, and that his name is Charles, not Cuíca, after Charles De Gaulle. He also explains that he has no further business there while his beautiful French actress is waiting to take him to Paris where he belongs. Then he stomps out. Fast-forward and we find out that the French actress left him for a *berimbau* musician, and he never went to Paris. He comes back to Lourival, humbly asking to take him back. If we see Virgínia's behavior as a representation of Brazil's traditional attitude of deifying what is foreign, this interaction shows that the Tropicalism believes that the result is not always positive. Relying on the foreign or European influence will only leave you hoping for more. The French woman left Cuíca full of hopes and dreams. Comparatively, in the main parallel story, the group decides that they do not want to be part of a big performance and prefer to remain a group of traveling singers, valuing their own tradition and skills, a clear allusion to the Modernist thinking. Lastly, another connection of *Quando o Carnaval Chegar* to the *chanchada* is that this film recycles actors from that genre, such as Hugo Carvana, Wilson Grey, and José Lewgoy. In *Carnaval no Fogo* (Watson Macedo, 1949), Lewgoy plays the exact same character as in *Quando o Carnaval Chegar*, the gang leader "Anjo," which is a direct, obvious reference to the *chanchada* tradition.

In conclusion, even during the more politicized and not very comedy-populated *Cinema Novo* phase, the *chanchada* still left its traces. With *Macunaíma*, the use of *chanchada* techniques, carnivalization, and metaphorical cannibalism results not only in a comical outcome but also in a critique of society and politics. *Quando o Carnaval Chegar* is a very politicized film that uses anthropophagy and the carnivalesque to build not only a critique but also to produce humor, as well as including other *chanchada* elements such as the carnival music, the actors, even the character of Anjo, and the objectification of the female body, as seen in the opening

scene. In the few comedies that this period saw, the films used techniques, specific humor-inducing characteristics, a certain hero archetype, and other techniques whose roots are in the *chanchada* tradition.

### **The *Pornochanchada***

In the 1970s, another comedy subgenre emerged, the *pornochanchada*, which comprised insipid, low-quality comedies filled with eroticism. The *pornochanchada* did not have a long life, disappearing in the 1980s. This mix of comedy (*-chanchada*) with erotism (*porno-*) was highly popular among a largely male audience, for obvious reasons, and debuted when many artistic productions were censored (due to the “anos de chumbo,” explained in the introduction). It portrayed Brazilian culture through the sexualization of women, who appear as “the coy sex object” in these films, according to Stam, Vieira, and Xavier (“The Shape of Brazilian Cinema in the Postmodern Age” 405). Therefore, the messages sent by these movies are shallow and reinforce the Brazilian patriarchal structure, placing women in a subordinate position and empowering the voyeuristic gaze. The female subject was highly objectified, and the constant shots of their skimpily dressed bodies were pleasing for the voyeuristic gaze of the audience, defined by Laura Mulvey as the gaze associated with the male fantasy (838). Claudio Bertolli Filho disagrees with this perspective. He believes that, even though it is true that *pornochanchada* films tend to portray women in sexually subservient positions, it is possible to pinpoint a number of other titles which do the exact opposite and show women taking charge of their sexual choices, using their agency on their own (sexual) behalf, and even objectifying men (34). According to Bertolli Filho, “Não era exclusivamente no plano sexual que as mulheres buscavam liberdade e autonomia. No campo do trabalho, várias protagonistas desempenhavam

funções tipicamente masculinas” (35). Among the films that Bertolli Filho mentions as examples of stories that depict females as active rather than passive are: *Nos Tempos da Vaselina* (José Miziara, 1979), *Me Deixa de Quatro* (Fauzi Mansur, 1981), *A Árvore dos Sexos* (Sílvio de Abreu, 1977), *Gisele* (Victor di Mello, 1980), and *A Super Fêmea* (Anibal Massaini Neto, 1973). While it is important to take Bertolli Filho’s argument into consideration and look at facts avoiding bias, it is also necessary to observe that these films are all written and directed<sup>15</sup> by men. Hence, while not all *pornochanchada* films necessarily placed women in a subservient position, the ones that introduced a new format did so from a male perspective.

The *pornochanchadas* emerged during the military dictatorship. As Marcel de Almeida Freitas indicates:

Tendo como temas recorrentes a malandragem, o adultério, o travestismo, a homossexualidade (entendida como o papel passivo), o tráfico de drogas, a bissexualidade feminina e se valendo de uma linguagem que, do besteirol, passando pela brejeirice (1ª fase) ia até a picardia (2ª fase), nascia, no final da década de 1960, o cinema pré-erótico nacional, que se convencionou denominar ‘*Pornochanchada*’, herdeira direta das *chanchadas* dos anos 1950 e da repressão instituída pelo AI-5. (5)

Freitas also believes that the government encouraged *pornochanchadas* because they worked as an alienation tool in a moment of political repression (5). However, this opinion is not equally shared by all scholars. *Pornochanchada* producers and directors found more space to produce during the military dictatorship because it was possible to be funded based solely on

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<sup>15</sup> With the exception of *A Árvore dos Sexos*, which has six people in its writing credits, five of them men, and one woman (who is listed last on IMDB): Rubens Ewald Filho, Santos Fernando, Maurício Rittner, Carlos Alberto Sofredini, Sílvio de Abreu, and Eugênia de Domênico.

technical criteria and not content. This coincided with political persecution by the military dictatorship and the exile of some Brazilian filmmakers. These films took advantage of the government's financing programs, and the military regime welcomed the absence of political remarks in those productions (Johnson and Stam, "The Shape of Brazilian Film History" 40).

Some examples of films of this period are: *Como é Boa Nossa Empregada* (Ismar Porto, Victor di Mello, 1973), *Banana Mecânica* (Braz Chediak, 1974), *Ainda Agarro Esta Vizinha* (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1974), *Empregada para Todo o Serviço* (Geraldo Gonzaga, 1977), *Bem Dotado, o Homem de Itu* (José Miziara, 1978), *Histórias que Nossas Babás não Contavam* (Oswaldo de Oliveira, 1979), and *Mulher Objeto* (Sílvio de Abreu, 1981). These titles offer an overview of how misogynistic and vulgar this type of film tended to be, as well as showing how the *chanchada*'s characteristic parodic sense of humor (as well as Hollywood influence) carried over to the *pornochanchadas*. As Stam, Vieira, and Xavier observe, several of Hollywood's most popular films of the 1970s drew the attention of Brazilian filmmakers and inspired them to create parodies:

*Bacalhau* ("Codfish," 1976) parodies *Jaws*; *A Banana Mecânica* ("The Mechanical Banana," 1973) parodies *A Clockwork Orange*; *O Jeca Contra o Capeta* ("The Bumpkin Against the Devil," 1976) parodies *The Exorcist*, and so forth. These films can properly be termed allegorical, as we have seen, in that they explicitly thematize the relatively weak position of Brazilian cinema vis-à-vis Hollywood, either by directing laughter against dominant cinema in a kind of aesthetic exorcism or a part of a ritual of self-degradation ("The Shape of Brazilian Cinema in the Postmodern Age" 398).

*Histórias que Nossas Babás não Contavam* also can be added to this list, as it is a parody of the famous Snow White story, featuring an Afro-Brazilian Snow White (called Clara das Neves in

this version, even though she is not “clara” but Black), who has several love encounters throughout the story with the prince, the hunter, and the dwarves. In the end, she chooses to stay with the dwarf Dopey and not the Prince, while the prince runs away with another dwarf, Grumpy, the only one who does not try to sleep with Clara because he is gay. The use of parody is a common mechanism in Brazilian comedies, and it is used to either make the target film laughable or to create a self-criticism. In this case, in which the parody does not target one specific film but, rather, a well-known story, the parody is certainly used for self-criticism as well as for laughter in its imitation of the well-known tale, nonsensical humor, and poorly made, low-quality result.

In the *pornochanchadas*, female characters wear skimpy clothes, and the camera tends to focus on their deep cleavage and short skirts. The female subject is associated with promiscuity and subservience or presented as an object of male desire. Shaw and Dennison observe how Brazil’s conservative patriarchal structure was the main backbone of these films, which portray women in a degrading and sexualized manner and allow men to have the power in the stories (see, in particular, Chapter 8). The comedic tone of these films makes the misogynous portrayals of women seem trivial and inconsequential, normalizing patriarchy and validating the idea that women should have subservient roles and satisfy the male sexual desire. Hence, the objectification of women that was already a trait of the *chanchada* is exacerbated by the *pornochanchadas*.

*Como é Boa Nossa Empregada* (Ismar Porto, Victor di Mello, 1973), for example, includes three short episodes showing housemaids having sexual relations with their bosses. In all of them the maids are sexualized, shown as inferior, and even when they resist the advances of their bosses, the men take them by force and the female characters seem to be enjoying it,

even though it constitutes sexual assault. The third episode, “O Melhor da Festa,” introduces us to Naná (played by Jorge Dória), a very conservative husband to an obedient wife (Neusa Amaral), who finds himself uncontrollably attracted to a friend’s housemaid (played by Aizita Nascimento). The attraction takes root during a party, while she is wearing a very small uniform that the camera makes sure to show in a closeup shot, in case it was not already obvious. He sets up a date with her, but in a turn of events, his wife and the maid switch places by mistake. Naná is not aware of that, and he thinks that his wife knows that he is about to cheat. So he asks a friend to take the woman in his car “for a ride,” believing it is the maid, not his wife. Thus, his friend takes Naná's very faithful and obedient wife “for a ride,” and in the end, Naná is the one who is cheated on.

Some of the *chanchada* characteristics evident in this film are the *troca-troca*, when the maid and the wife switch places; the loss of an object that is under someone else’s possession, in the figure of the wife who is treated as an object by Naná and simply handed over to his friend; and the very objectification of women. The character of the maid, present in all three episodes of this film, is also an archetypal character of the *chanchadas* who will appear later in a sexualized version in the *pornochanchada* period. In this episode there is a role inversion, as the husband is the one who is a cheater even though he pretends to be a very conservative man, and, in the end, he hands his wife over on a platter to a stranger. And his wife, who is usually very submissive and respectful of patriarchal norms, has a free ticket to disrupt the norms. Even though the audience is led to believe that the wife finally got her revenge, it is not certain if she had any desire to cheat on her husband. Thus, even when she gets revenge over an unfaithful and controlling husband, it is in a disguised patriarchal form, as she did not have a choice. Did she want to be unfaithful, or was she put in a situation where she thought she had no choice?

Shaw and Dennison observe that mistaken identity is a common topic in both the *chanchada* and the *pornochanchada* (170). The use of the housemaid as a sex object is also a usual trait of the *pornochanchada*, in that it not only objectifies the female subject but also reinforces her inferiority, as she is constantly fetishized. In this specific film, even though there is no evidence of parody, it does use irony in the figure of a very strict and conservative husband who continuously controls everyone in his family but then decides to have an affair. He dictates what his wife wears and controls all of his children's actions, as well, including his son's affair with a maid. But when the husband wants to have an affair, things go so wrong that, in the end, he has no affair but facilitates his wife starting an affair of her own. Or, on a different level, it appears that the wife's adultery is a parody of her husband's original plan.

### **The Collapse and Revival of Brazilian Cinema**

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, Brazilian cinema collapsed during the 1980s for many reasons. One of the main causes was President Fernando Collor de Mello's (1990-1992) decision to withdraw government support for the arts. The term *Retomada* is used to characterize the reemergence of Brazilian cinema after it was nearly extinct during a critical period in the 1990s. New incentive laws allowed Brazilian filmmakers to make films again, which marked the beginning of a new era in Brazilian cinema. The film that marked the beginning of this new era, the *Retomada*, was *Carlota Joaquina, Princesa do Brasil* (Carla Camurati, 1995).

This comedy was directed, written, produced, and edited by women, but numerous men served on the crew, as well. This departure from the ways of previous films and cinematic eras marks a stark difference in comparison, especially from the *chanchada* period. The *Retomada*

defined a moment when women became more visible both behind and in front of the cameras. The laws that encouraged tax incentives for the arts and cinema facilitated the production of movies and promoted the emergence of new directors. As new faces started to appear while funding was easier to access, more women had the opportunity to participate in this previously male-dominated industry.

*Carlota Joaquina* cast a famous Brazilian actor in the lead role, Marieta Severo, who played Carlota, the Spanish princess with a difficult temperament and a desire to become a queen more than anything else. Oricchio points out that most scholars consider *Carlota Joaquina* ground zero for the Retomada (*Cinema de Novo* 26). This film tells the story of a Spanish Monarch who became a Brazilian princess after the Portuguese royal family moved to Brazil in 1808. It is based on historical facts, but it also is a satire. Princess Carlota is rude, arrogant, racist, and depraved. Her husband, D. João (Marco Nanini), is portrayed as a man of very limited intellect, which is a reference to the jokes surrounding the Portuguese community that are commonly found in the *chanchada*, a tradition that started with the ethnic jokes typical included in the *teatro de revista* (Shaw and Dennison 219-220). It also is a representation of a common stock character from the *chanchada* tradition. All those characteristics combined make up most of the humor in the film.

A Scotsman narrates the story to his niece, all the way from Scotland, and that is one of the first hints that points to the *chanchada* legacy: the Brazilian obsession with Hollywood, and consequently, a fascination for all things that are foreign. Moreover, Shaw and Dennison observe that “the presence of foreign actors in Brazilian films could easily be explained by concern for breaking into the international market and by the larger budgets currently available to producers. But it also hints at a desire to reveal the cosmopolitan side to the country” (206). A return to the



*chanchada* tradition and the use of several of its key characteristics is also a feature that Shaw and Dennison point out as belonging to the Retomada phase (206) and which are easily identifiable in *Carlota Joaquina* (219). The main characters, for example, are classic *chanchada* archetypes. Shaw and Dennison also note how this film includes several of the stock characters of the *chanchada* tradition:

Carlota herself, a domineering, foul-mouthed fishwife (in spite of her status) in the style of countless anti-heroines played by the likes of Dercy Gonçalves and Zezé Macedo; secondly, Carlota's page, a black clown, who constantly sports an inane grin and is treated with racist condescension by his mistress, and this has much in common with the down-trodden characters played by Grande Otelo; finally, the infantile, gauche and idle Dom João, with his comic facial expressions, owes much to Oscarito's screen persona. (220)

In a more detailed assessment of the presence of the *chanchada* sense of humor in this comedy, I will examine one specific scene. Since many scholars have analyzed the film and identified *chanchada* characteristics in it, I present a less obvious passage that has not yet been extensively discussed.

During the entire course of *Carlota Joaquina*, the audience anticipates D. João becoming king, but when it happens, his coronation is not shown on screen. What the audience sees instead is only the Scottish narrator retelling the occurrence. The previous scene ends with D. João's and Carlota's eldest son Pedro fainting because he could not see his lover Noemi anymore, as his father had arranged for him to marry someone else, Leopoldina of Austria. Then, rather abruptly, the next scene plays out with a completely different tone, even though the same character is present: it is cheerful, and fully disconnected from the one just shown, as if to intentionally

remind that audience that it is watching a work of fiction. The narrator then says that D. João became king, that Carlota was finally left without a lover (as she had had many until this point), and that Pedro and Leopoldina got married. All of the royal family is staring at their portrait on a wall, as the narrator recounts these facts. It all happens at a fast pace, *chanchada* style. Then they are suddenly interrupted by a messenger bringing a present for the king. As the man is announcing his presence and what he is bringing, everyone repeats what he is saying after him loudly and asynchronously, in a clownish manner, which contributes to the pace of the scene (and adds humor to it as well), and also makes the interaction quite chaotic, once again, precisely like what the *chanchada* films used to do. Next, the messenger reads the letter he brought from Noemi, Pedro's ex-lover, that says "Eis aqui o fruto do amor que Vossa Alteza matou." When they open the gift, it is a dead baby who Noemi probably miscarried when D. João separated the couple so Pedro could marry Leopoldina. And again, the scene ends with Pedro fainting. The scene that follows is quite disconnected, starting by showing Pedro joyful and well, strolling down a very colorful street market on a sunny day.

Other *chanchada* characteristics in this scene are: the fast pace of the action, which is borderline unnatural, especially in the dialogues; the character of Pedro, who is a ladies' man, but at the same time keeps fainting when he is heartbroken, which gives him an inoffensive quality that is typical of the *chanchada* hero; the unexpected object that ends up in someone else's possession, represented here by Noemi's baby; the carnivalization in the form of the dead baby being brought to the middle of a comic scene and very doubtfully bringing tears to the eyes of anyone who is watching; and the sudden and discontinuous narrative change.

According to Vieira, many of the *chanchada* scenes were resolved rather quickly: "as frequentes e inesperadas reviravoltas nas narrativas episódicas daquelas comédias, o absurdo de

inúmeras situações, a descontinuidade desajeitada da ação, tudo isso evoca o descompromisso com o realismo, marcas de um estilo narrativo algo rudimentar, típico do gênero” (“Chanchada e a Estética do Lixo” 176). Hence, we can see how *Carlota Joaquina, Princesa do Brasil* uses many characteristics of the *chanchada*, as did other comedies in the Retomada period. *Carlota Joaquina* is a good representative of the Retomada, since it marked its beginning and it was blockbuster.

Curiously, the actors who play the protagonists, Marieta Severo and Marco Nanini, were cast as the main couple in a very successful comedic sitcom that Rede Globo aired between 2001 and 2014, *A Grande Família*. It was adapted into a feature-length film in 2007 with the same title, directed by Maurício Farias, with much of the same casting. *A Grande Família* is one of the 73 most-watched comedy films of the post-Retomada period (see Appendix).

Other Retomada comedies that present *chanchada*-like characteristics are: *O Noviço Rebelde* (Tizuka Yamasaki, 1997), *Simão, o Fantasma Trapalhão* (Paulo Aragão, 1998), *Xuxa Requebra* (Tizuka Yamasaki, 1999), *Eu, Tu, Eles* (Andrucha Waddington, 2000), and *Um Anjo Trapalhão* (Alexandre Boury and Marcelo Travesso, 2001). Renato Aragão, nicknamed Didi, protagonizes *O Noviço Rebelde*, *Simão, o Fantasma Trapalhão* and *Um Anjo Trapalhão*. For several years, Didi was the leader of the comedy group called “Os Trapalhões” (The Goofy Gang) with three other actors. They starred in a television show that Rede Globo aired from 1977 to 1993. Their jokes were very much inspired by the *chanchada*. Shaw and Dennison observe how Didi, Aragão’s screen persona, “is very reminiscent of the stock *chanchada* hero. Like the *chanchada* stars before him, Aragão is not famed for his matinée idol looks or elegant speech. To compensate, his performances as Didi are often very physical (acrobatics, stunts and pratfalls, often shot in fast-forward)” (142). In these three, quite successful films, Aragão uses the same

type of *chanchada*-like humor to build his characters, even though he is playing different characters in each of them. The film *Xuxa Requebra* has one very obvious trait of the early *chanchadas*, which is the presence of music and dancing. Even though it is not necessarily carnival music, it is influenced by the same type of films, and there is not much else to the story in terms of plotline. The protagonist is Xuxa Meneghel, a famous Brazilian host of children's shows. Finally, *Eu, Tu, Eles* is a story of a very atypical family formed by a woman who lives in the countryside with her three male partners and their children. It is based on a true story. Oddly enough, they all accept the living situation, and they do not have romantic relationships among themselves, only with her. Some of the *chanchada* characteristics in the film include the absurd story, the naïve hero or heroes in this case, and the oversexualization of the female. Even though she is not portrayed as promiscuous nor is she hypersexualized, in one way or another the film says something about her sexual drive by showing her in a polyamorous relationship, in which she maintains constant sexual relations with three partners, and no one wants to give her up.

### **Post-Retomada and *Lisbela e o Prisioneiro***

The post-Retomada period starts immediately after the Retomada, whose end, as most researchers agree, is marked by *Cidade de Deus* (Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, 2002): “*Cidade de Deus* é o filme que assinala o período chamado de pós-Retomada do cinema brasileiro. Embora com ressalvas em vista de uma possível estetização da pobreza e da violência, a crítica especializada assevera que nenhum filme causa tanto impacto no início dos anos 2000 quanto a adaptação do romance homônimo de Paulo Lins,” explains Janie K. Pacheco (150). This film inherited the disperse political ideology, search for an identity, and diversity of themes

typically seen in the previous period. Therefore, it is a good example of films of the post-Retomada period, a contemporary, eclectic phase in Brazilian cinema.

As explained in the introduction, the post-Retomada constitutes the focus of this dissertation. All 73 films of my corpus belong to this phase (see Appendix). Hence, in the next chapters, all the films that will be analyzed more closely are from the post-Retomada period. In order to avoid repetition and offer a more comprehensive examination of the presence of the *chanchada* characteristics in comedies of the post-Retomada, in this chapter I will examine more in depth a scene of a film that is not discussed in the next chapters: *Lisbela e o Prisioneiro*<sup>16</sup> (Guel Arraes, 2003).

The influence of the *chanchada* in this film is evident since its conception: it is based on a play by the same title written by Osman Lins and dated 1964. The film, released in 2003 at the beginning of the post-Retomada period, was a box office hit, with 3,164.643 people watching it in the movie theaters. Guel Arraes, the director, is a Brazilian from Pernambuco, where the story of the film takes place. He started working as a director in 1981 for the Globo telenovela *Baila Comigo*, written by Manoel Carlos. Arraes works mostly in television, and thus far in his career has directed more than twenty telenovelas or miniseries and five films. *Lisbela e o Prisioneiro* was his third feature-length film.

This story is about con artist and womanizer Leléu (played by Selton Melo) who travels from town to town trying to make a living by offering a number of different services. When he arrives at a city in Pernambuco, he falls in love with an innocent young woman, Lisbela (Débora Falabella), who is engaged to be married to another man. But Lisbela's fiancé, Douglas (Bruno

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<sup>16</sup> The Appendix contains all translated titles of the post-*Retomada* comedy films in the corpus of this dissertation.

Garcia), is not a very likeable man and believes he is above everyone else in that little country town because he had spent some time in Rio de Janeiro and even speaks with a Rio de Janeiro accent. Lisbela loves the cinema, especially American films, and will watch the same films over and over again. She wishes her own life was a film, which is ironic, as it actually is, and the audience is watching it. She falls for Leléu and decides to fight for their love, even though her father, the sheriff, does not approve of it. The seductive and married Inaura (Virgínia Cavendish) also develops a love interest in Leléu. She is married and her husband is professional killer Frederico Evandro (Marco Nanini). A number of other characters help shape this story in *chanchada* style.

This film uses several *chanchada* characteristics. The most obvious one is that the hero, the character of Leléu, is a con artist, as well as a ladies' man. He has a strong Pernambuco accent and is very quick to come up with rhymes to seduce the ladies, which leads to the character of Inaura. Lustful and promiscuous, Inaura seems to be a character from a *pornochanchada* film. At a certain point in the film, a rather natural conversation reveals that her husband met her at a brothel. She is the one who starts an affair with Leléu, even though she knows he is really in love with Lisbela. In the protagonist, another *chanchada* characteristic is presented: the obsession with Hollywood, represented by her love for American films. When Leléu is courting her in the movie theater, he asks Lisbela whether she has ever heard of Brazilian actors, and she responds that she prefers American ones because their love stories are much better. At that moment, Leléu confesses his love for her by poetically comparing her to Brazilian nature. In the end, he says that Lisbela is the Brazilian flag and he is her flagpole, which leads them to their first kiss. This film might not be a parody itself; however, Leléu's praise of Brazilian culture and his attempt to convince Lisbela of his worth together are a parody

of the sentiment embedded in the *chanchadas*. As explained earlier, the parody mechanism in the *chanchada* period represented a struggle between making fun of the foreign (target) film and laughing at their own lower-quality national productions. We see this same struggle depicted in the interaction between the main characters of *Lisbela e o Prisioneiro*. While Lisbela believes that the American films are superior to Brazilian national ones, we see her watching several films that are parodies of well-known films, such as *Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Superman*, for example. Lisbela watches versions of these films in black-and-white, and even though they are not real films, they seem similar to *chanchadas* from their tone and Lisbela's explanations of them, or at the very least they are comedy films that are parodies of the originals, so the resemblance is undeniable.

The presence of carnival is one more clear inheritance of the *chanchada* tradition. Leléu organizes a carnival in town with several attractions, one of them being “Monga, a mulher Gorila,” in which a woman transforms herself into a gorilla in front of everyone's eyes, which can be considered a *troca-troca*. Before Leléu sets up this fair, the film makes one more reference to carnivalization. When Leléu arrives to town, he recruits people to join his open-air one-night performance of “The Passion of the Christ.” He is playing the role of Jesus Christ, and he casts Inaura as Mary Magdalene, even though she wants to be the Virgin Mary. Not only are the costumes very colorful and extravagant, but the scene that Leléu and Inaura interpret, the one in which Jesus is crucified, becomes an opportunity for an exchange of flirtatious comments between Leléu and Inaura. They whisper provocative rhymes at each other between their lines taking the scene far from its religious origins, and creating something quite sinful instead: carnivalized. Finally, one specific character is a *chanchada* archetype, the corporal Citonho (played by comedian Tadeu Mello). He works with Lisbela's father at the police station. Even

though Citonho is on the police force, he is a bit of a coward, naïve, and somewhat effeminate with a high-pitched, nasal voice and a small, weak physique. But ironically, he is a ladies' man who starts a romance with a married woman and takes her from her husband to live with him, even though he is married himself; this is a detail she only finds out after she runs away with him.

*Lisbela e o Prisioneiro* forms part of the “nordestern” tradition that *O Cangaceiro* (Lima Barreto, 1953) started, with professional killer Frederico Evandro representing a modern-day “cangaceiro.” At the very least, this genre partially inspired this film. Guel Arraes has directed other films that are part of the “nordestern” genre such as *O Auto da Compadecida* (Guel Arraes, 2000) and *O Bem Amado* (Guel Arraes, 2010). *Lisbela e o Prisioneiro* is a good illustration of how the *chanchada* spirit remains alive in the post-Retomada phase of the Brazilian cinema.

A few other films exemplify how the *chanchada*-inherited characteristics are present in the comedies of the post-Retomada period. *Se Eu Fosse Você* (Daniel Filho, 2006) tells a story of a couple in a patriarchal household who experiences the ultimate *troca-troca*: they switch bodies. This film includes another typical trait of the *chanchadas*, the Hollywood influence, as this type of switching is a common storyline in Hollywood comedies. I will examine this film more closely in Chapter 2. *Ó Pai Ó* (Monique Gardenberg, 2007) is an example of carnivalization, as this comedy is also a musical whose story starts on the first day of carnival, in the city of Salvador, Bahia. It also includes many stock characters of the *chanchada*. *A Mulher Invisível* (Cláudio Torres, 2009), uses a mix of the *chanchada* and the *pornochanchada* sense of humor to create a story showing a man who was cheated on feeling too self-conscious to get romantically involved with someone else, so he makes up the perfect woman, who is not only gorgeous but is also crazy about him, lustful, and an amazing housewife. The woman is extremely objectified,



and the “hero” is so naïve that it takes him the whole film to find out that the woman is just a figment of his imagination. *Os Penetras* (Andrucha Waddington, 2012) is a story of a con artist who perpetually pretends to be someone else in order to get what he wants or to get out of difficult situations, very *chanchada*-like characteristics. He even influences others to do the same. As I will present in Chapter 3, *Minha Mãe é uma Peça* (André Pellenz, 2013) includes as a protagonist a male actor playing the role of a female, in other words, a cross-dresser. *Copa de Elite* (Vitor Brandt, 2014) is a parody of the action film *Tropa de Elite* (José Padilha, 2007).

## Conclusion

Johnson and Stam emphasize in their book *Brazilian Cinema* that the Brazilian sense of humor is continuously present in its cinema and observe that politics and humor can work together in these films and often do so. Even though this statement was made a couple of decades ago, it still is true today, in the post-Retomada. In this chapter, I observed that not only is Brazilian humor continuously present in its films but it is rooted in one type of humor: the *chanchada* style. Through all of its phases, comedy films in Brazil continued to maintain traits of the *chanchada*, a very Brazilian film genre that, as time passed, was revisited and reconstructed but never abandoned. Characteristics of the *chanchada* are still alive today, in the post-Retomada period, and several scholars continue to discuss the contribution that the *chanchada* left for Brazilian cinema, especially for Brazilian comedy. Freire believes that, “hoje a *chanchada* é o principal gênero cinematográfico brasileiro ampla e consensualmente reconhecido como tal por críticos, pesquisadores, jornalistas e também por grande parte do público de cinema brasileiro” (66).

Even though cinema today may explore a large variety of themes, films tend to transmit messages about society and send an opinion on polemic matters such as diversity, gender roles, and gender representation. Sometimes these topics might not be taken seriously when they are discussed through laughter and jokes. It is our job as scholars to understand what messages are being transmitted through the humorous tone; which themes are being explored and which are forsaken; and what jokes might perpetuate, create, or change the image of our country. That is why it is important to demonstrate that Brazilian comedy films are still using and reinventing *chanchada* humor.

## CHAPTER 2

### Reshaping Stereotypes: The Protagonists of Romantic Comedies

#### Introduction

This chapter analyzes protagonists of romantic comedies, the most popular type of national film in Brazil during the post-*Retomada* period, which continues to follow clichéd representations that are typical of the genre. I investigate the reason behind those representations, other than the obvious ability to provoke laughter, and whether these stereotypical images are intentionally creating self-criticism. In this chapter, I show that the titles investigated do not portray their protagonists according to a preformulated pattern; instead, they have a more significant intention in mind. I argue that these comedies use stereotypical images in order to reshape them and defy the idea of stereotype itself. I will attest that these romantic comedies reshape a number of preconceived ideas and therefore walk a fine line between pleasing the middle class and protesting against conservative norms. In order to prove my argument, I will analyze the 34 romantic comedies that are part the corpus of this dissertation, and I will look more in depth at the five films with the highest audience numbers.

According to Claire Mortimer, a romantic comedy, or romcom, “can be regarded as a hybrid of the romance and comedy genres, featuring a narrative that centres on the progress of a relationship, and, being a comedy, resulting in a happy ending. The dynamic of the film rests on the central quest, the pursuit of love, and almost always leads to a successful resolution” (4). Why choose this particular genre for analysis? First, almost half of the 73 films that belong to the corpus of this research are romantic comedies (34 films specifically, which equals 46.5% of the total). Hence, data proves (see Appendix) that not only are comedies the most consumed national

film genre in Brazil, but romantic comedies are especially well received by audiences. Thus, this chapter is dedicated to discussing the protagonists of the romantic comedies from 2003 to 2016. Due to lack of space, it will not be possible to cover all 34 films in detail, so I will analyze more closely the five films with the highest audience numbers. However, I will first mention all the most important details of all romcoms in the corpus in order to understand which characters are the most usual protagonists in Brazilian romantic comedies. The focus of this initial analysis will be to examine the most recurring roles played by the lead actor (female/male) in each film, including (but not limited to), their jobs or careers, romantic relationships, sexuality, and the themes commonly shown in these films. After that, and before analyzing the five most popular romcoms, I will take a closer look at how these films represent an important figure of Brazilian culture: the *empregada doméstica*.

Another reason why romcoms are such a rich source of material involves the themes that this film genre typically discusses. As Mortimer points out, a romcom generally tells a story about a couple who wants to be together but obstacles prevent them from that, and such obstacles “may arise from social status, wealth, conflicting lifestyles and attitudes, or even purely their differing expectations of relationships” (4). Hence, these everyday themes allow us to identify stereotypical images and observe how and if they are reshaped in the stories that we will analyze. One of the reasons for this reshaping might be what John Alberti calls “gender as genre.” According to him, contemporary romantic comedies see men themselves as a genre (3). As nowadays romcoms tend to avoid assigning specific gender roles to their characters and yet typically the protagonists are still, more often than not, a heterosexual couple, in this film genre the male is going through a transitional phase of restructuring his identity. This is because, in these films, traditionally he used to be described by jobs, behaviors, and situations that defined

his masculinity. However, he no longer has a specific role, and neither does his female counterpart. In the past, the male gender with clearly defined roles in the romcom realm made the man comfortable in his own genre, mostly because women were not allowed to navigate areas such as being the breadwinner, placing her professional dreams above her family, or adopting a makeup-free look in public. However, as the lines are becoming more blurred and the female can be anything and anywhere, the male character in the romantic comedy must accept an equality that did not exist until recently. Maleness, as previously constructed, is now being recast. And change attracts attention. This explanation may help understand why Alberti affirms that the romcom views males themselves as a genre. Hence, it is possible to identify a “crisis of masculinity” in such films that leads to an eventual obsolescence of men (3). Alberti explains: “the problem of gender is the problem of genre. The metaphor of gender roles, of course, invokes the idea of gender performance. The question is not what a man is, but what actions and behaviors are read as masculine” (7). Alberti’s argument is that contemporary romantic comedy reflects contemporary society, where gender roles are no longer clearly defined (24). In this case, if we are able to observe the reshaping of the stereotypical images that may exist in these Brazilian romcoms, then they will most likely be in the realm of gender stereotypes, since this is the area of expertise of romantic comedies.

### **The Protagonists of Romcoms from 2003–2016**

Following is a list of the 34 romantic comedies that are among the ten most-watched (Brazilian) films each year from 2003 to 2016.<sup>17</sup> The five films marked with an asterisk are the

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<sup>17</sup> All these films are listed in the table containing all films of this dissertation’s corpus in the Appendix, followed by their respective directors, producers, year, revenue, and audience numbers.

ones with the highest audience numbers. I will look at those more closely in the second part of this chapter. All of the 34 films listed below are romantic comedies. I listed them chronologically, according to their year of release (see Appendix), and indicated the films with female directors with an (F) in front of the title. The different colors of the titles indicate who the protagonists are: purple indicates films with couples as protagonists; red, women; and blue, men. Since these are romantic comedies, not surprisingly, exactly half of these titles (17 films) include a couple as the main protagonists (sometimes more than one couple) and all of them are heterosexual couples. 14 of the films have female protagonists, and three have male protagonists. None of this data comes as surprise, given that, stereotypically and historically, females are the main audience of romantic comedies. Below is a list of the 34 films, presenting the most important characteristics of their protagonists in the form of acronyms (key following table).

	HW	SCM	SCF	MP	FP	UM	UF	HM	SH	BT
<i>Lisbela e o Prisioneiro</i> (Guel Arraes, 2003)		X					X			X
<i>Os Normais - o Filme</i> (José Alvarenga Jr., 2003)				X	X					
<i>A Dona da História</i> (Daniel Filho, 2004)	X									
<i>Sexo, Amor e Traição</i> (Jorge Fernando, 2004)				X	X	X	X		X	X
<i>(F) Mais Uma Vez Amor</i> (Rosane Svartman, 2005)				X	X					
<i>O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta</i> (Paula Barreto, 2005)		X		X	X					
<i>Se Eu Fosse Você*</i> (Daniel Filho, 2006)				X	X					
<i>Trair e Coçar é Só Começar</i> (Moacyr Góes, 2006)			X					X		X
<i>Fica Comigo esta Noite</i> (João Falcão, 2006)				X			X			
<i>A Grande Família - o Filme</i>	X			X						X

(Maurício Farias, 2007)										
<i>Sexo com Amor?</i> (Wolf Maya, 2008)	x			x	x				x	x
<i>Se Eu Fosse Você 2*</i> (Daniel Filho, 2009)				x	x					x
<i>A Mulher Invisível</i> (Cláudio Torres, 2009)	x			x						
<i>Os Normais 2</i> (José Alvarenga Jr., 2009)				x	x					
<i>Divã</i> (José Alvarenga Jr., 2009)					x					
<i>Muita Calma Nessa Hora</i> (Felipe Joffily, 2010)					x		x		x	x
<i>De Pernas pro Ar*</i> (Roberto Santucci, 2010)					x					
<i>Cilada.com</i> (José Alvarenga Jr., 2011)				x						x
<i>Qualquer Gato Vira-Lata</i> (Tomas Portela and Daniela de Carlo, 2011)					x					
<i>De Pernas pro Ar 2*</i> (Roberto Santucci, 2012)					x					x
<i>E Ai, Comeu?</i> (Felipe Joffily, 2012)				x		x			x	x
<i>(F) Meu Passado me Condena</i> (Julia Rezende, 2013)				x	x					
<i>Mato sem Cachorro</i> (Pedro Amorim, 2013)				x	x					
<i>Os Homens são de Marte... E É pra Lá que eu Vou!</i> (Marcus Baldini, 2014)					x					
<i>(F) S. O. S. Mulheres ao Mar</i> (Cris D'Amato, 2014)					x			x		x
<i>Muita Calma Nessa Hora 2</i> (Felipe Joffily, 2014)					x		x			
<i>Vestido pra Casar</i> (Gerson Sanginitto and Paulo Aragão Neto, 2014)		x		x			x			
<i>Loucas pra Casar*</i>					x					x

(Roberto Santucci, 2015)										
(F) <i>Meu Passado Me Condena 2</i> (Julia Rezende, 2015)				x	x					
(F) <i>S.O.S Mulheres ao Mar 2</i> (Cris D'Amato, 2015)					x			x		
(F) <i>Linda de Morrer</i> (Cris D'Amato, 2015)					x					
<i>Qualquer Gato Vira-lata 2</i> (Roberto Santucci and Marcelo Antunez, 2015)					x					
<i>Bem Casados</i> (Aluizio Abranches, 2015)					x		x			x
(F) <i>Um Namorado para Minha Mulher</i> (Julia Rezende, 2016)		x		x	x		x			x
	4	4	1	18	25	2	8	3	4	14

Key:

- HW: a film where the protagonist or one of the protagonists is a housewife
- SCM/SCF: a film where the protagonist or one of the protagonists is a scammer, male or female
- MP/FP: a “male professional/female professional”, it indicates a film in which the protagonist or one of the protagonists has a job in any area, for example: a journalist, a teacher, a writer, a lawyer, a doctor, etc.
- UM/UF: a film in which the protagonist or one of the protagonists is an unemployed male or female
- HM: a film in which the protagonist or one of the protagonists is a housemaid; always a female in the films below
- SH: a film that uses sexual harassment to convey humor
- BT: a film in which betrayal is important to the plot



In order to conduct an unbiased analysis of the films and their characters, for the films featuring a couple or more than one couple as protagonists, I analyzed all their main characters and placed each in an individual group (such as MP, FP, UM or UF, for example). Sometimes a film included several male or female main characters (for example *E Ai, Comeu?*, as well as *S.O.S Mulheres ao Mar*), in which case I examined each of the main characters and placed each one in their respective categories. For those films that only introduce one protagonist regardless of whether that person is a female or male, I only classified that one main character, for obvious reasons.

As shown in the table above, all but nine of these films (25 films) feature a female professional as a protagonist. 18 films include male professionals, and only two portray a male protagonist who is unemployed. However, 14 films do not have male protagonists. In the nine romantic comedies that do not have women with careers as main characters, three have no female main characters; in the other six films we found a mix: four housewives, eight unemployed females, and three maids. In one of the films, the housemaid is the sole protagonist (*Trair e Coçar é só Começar*). In a few instances it is not clear whether they have jobs or not, so they were categorized as unemployed, since they seem to have a lot of free time.

I categorized female protagonists as “housewives” when their characters were consistently shown performing household chores, such as Dona Nenê in *A Grande Família*, and unemployed when they did not have jobs but did not seem to be performing more chores than their partners such as Laura in *Fica Comigo esta Noite*. Hence, four films show a housewife as one of the protagonists and zero “house husbands.” Of course, this is a neologism, created to point out that jobless male characters do not take on house chores as compared to their female

counterparts. Even though only two films introduce unemployed males in the protagonist core, the number of unemployed females, at eight, is considerably higher.

*Trair e Coçar é só Começar* is not the only romantic comedy with a housemaid as the protagonist; however, it is the only one in which the sole protagonist is a housemaid. In *S.O.S. Mulheres ao Mar*, both the first one and its sequel, Adriana's maid Dialinda is one of the main characters but she shares the limelight with her *patroa* and Adriana's sister. Hence, even though maids are such a large part of Brazilian culture, they exist in the background rather than being represented in the forefront of comedies.

Another cultural trait that is also important to observe is how often betrayal is a common topic in contemporary Brazilian romantic comedies. In 14 films, or 41% of the 34 films, betrayal is central to the plot. Five other films show one character scamming another character in order to take advantage of them. In total, almost 56% of the plotlines show some sort of betrayal that sometimes results in punishment, characteristics that are inherited from the *chanchada* type of humor, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

Finally, four films use some form of sexual harassment in order to invoke humor. In *Sexo, Amor e Traição*, a husband who is frustrated with the lack of intimacy he had been experiencing in his relationship forces his wife to have sexual intercourse with him. The issue is never brought up again in the plot, and she does not even seem to be aware that what happened constituted rape. We later find out that she had suffered a miscarriage and had fallen into a deep depression, which caused the lack of physical intimacy in their relationship. In *Sexo com Amor?*, a teenage girl who seems to be underage seduces her uncle, and they have a "quickie" on top of the washing machine while her aunt is gone. Later in the story, after the teenager goes back to her hometown, the aunt tells her husband (the uncle) that she had noticed how well he looked

after the girl, as if she were his own daughter, making the entire situation even more uncomfortable and incestuous. The aunt never finds out.

In the beginning of *Muita Calma Nessa Hora*, the main characters are quickly described via notes on the screen as, simultaneously, the film shows how unhappy they are with their professional or private lives. One of these characters is described as being very beautiful and able to be with any man that she desires. Her unhappy scene is when her boss calls her for a meeting only to invite her for an unnecessary “working” dinner; unnecessary because the client had already approved the job. When the boss meets with her, he gropes her thigh and tells her that her spiciness is needed to complete the project. Then she gets up, and he tries to push his body against hers by pressing her against a wall. The fourth film is *E Ai, Comeu?*, in which, once again, a 17-year-old girl tries to seduce one of the main characters, a man who is getting a divorce and keeps going back and forth on the matter of whether he should or should not give in to the girl’s advances. He even imagines her actually taking more straightforward advances towards him, even though she is already very direct. They are neighbors from the same building, and when the two of them are spending time at the pool, she tells him that she has done her research, and that, because she is 17, if it is consensual it is legal and does not constitute sexual assault. It is not clear if they ever have sexual intercourse; however, they do kiss, and it is evident that he feels uncomfortable about the situation, as he constantly tries to make sure no one can see the two of them together. Two of these films show minors romantically or sexually involved with adults in situations in which the minors are females and they are the ones seducing the adults.

The only three films in the romantic comedy list that have the word “sexo” in their titles, or a direct reference to it, i.e., “comeu,” are among the four films that we categorized above as

having used sexual harassment to invoke humor. It is not uncommon for sex to be used in comedy; however, it can be problematic when matters surrounding sexual harassment and sexual assault, which are serious crimes, are portrayed in comedies in order to make people laugh without a more thorough discussion or without acknowledging boundaries, morality and laws or without problematizing those issues in order to promote awareness. A careless approach could easily give the less-informed spectator the impression that those behaviors are culturally acceptable or do not constitute crimes, which could lead to serious consequences, potentially even life-threatening ones. Unfortunately, these four films fail to promote this conversation, which is a missed opportunity; they build the bomb, but instead of defusing it, they let it explode.

Finally, we also can observe that only three female directors made this list, with one film from Rosane Svartman, three from Júlia Rezende, and three from Cristiane D'Amato.<sup>18</sup> While Svartman made *Mais uma Vez Amor* in 2005, the other films are much more recent, opening between 2013 and 2016. Svartman was born in Memphis, Tennessee, and moved to Brazil as a child, while Rezende and D'Amato are both from Rio de Janeiro. Other than the obvious greater number of male directors when compared to females, given that women only directed 20.5% of the films listed, I did not identify any other details that make the films directed by women stand apart from the ones directed by men. They are equally diverse in themes within the romcom realm, introduce a variety of types of protagonists, as well as situations and locations, and there is no evidence that these films are less problematic when it comes to traditional depictions of gender roles. For example, *S.O.S. Mulheres ao Mar* (Cris D'Amato, 2014) and *S.O.S. Mulheres ao Mar 2* (Cris D'Amato, 2015) portray a very insecure ex-wife who makes very impetuous

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<sup>18</sup> ANCINE has also identified the high number of male directors when compared to females. In 2016, men directed over 75% of national films released in Brazil.

decisions to win her man back. *Linda de Morrer* (Cris D'Amato, 2015), depicts a CEO of a beauty company who is so vain and obsessed about formulating the perfect beauty product that she accidentally poisons herself and dies. One thing that these three directors have in common is that they all started their careers working in television.

Of course, several of the descriptions above show details that are problematic, and it would take extra time with these films in order to understand why the directors made such choices, if an explanation even exists. However, when examining only the data, without the storylines and the protagonists' characteristics, it is not an easy task to determine whether these films are truly using stereotypical characters, let alone the reasoning behind it. Here is what the numbers show: most of the protagonists are females or males who have a regular profession, such as a reporter or an architect, for example. But, in a closer look, it is evident that almost one-third (ten films) make reference to betrayal in their plotline; half of the films introduce a heterosexual couple as the protagonist of the story, and only two films include a housemaid as the protagonist or as part of the protagonist core. My main question for this chapter is whether these films use stereotypes to create criticism. After this first overview of the profile of Brazilian romantic comedies' protagonists, I can draw a few conclusions, but in order to truly answer this question, I must conduct a more thorough, comprehensive analysis. To do that, I will look at the five most popular romantic comedies from 2003 to 2016. Before doing so, I will analyze another important character of Brazilian culture that is portrayed in its cinema: the housemaid.

### **The Housemaid Character in Romcoms**

As shown in the table above, three films introduce housemaids as protagonists of the story. Even though maids are a very important part of Brazilian society, mass media still tend to

place them in the background of recent cultural productions and entertainment, away from the spotlight, with only a few exceptions, such as: *Domésticas* (Fernando Meirelles and Nando Olival, 2001), *Doméstica* (Gabriel Mascaro, 2012), *Que Horas Ela Volta?* (Anna Muylaert, 2015), and, of course, the three films that I mention above: *S.O.S. Mulheres ao Mar* (Cris D'Amato, 2014 and 2015), and *Trair e Coçar é Só Começar* (Moacyr Góes, 2006). However, many other films portray the figure of the maid but as a supporting character who is present in the background. These films usually depict the maid, who is always female, as an important part of the employer family's life who is engaged in their everyday business, but the maid is more of a one-dimensional character whose own personal details are not shown or mentioned. It is as if the maid is a floating, unattached figure, existing only to serve and with no family or connections of her own. She corroborates with the jokes and the laughs, but she is mostly an expendable character, as shown in four of the five popular romantic comedies films that I will analyze more closely in the next section (*Se eu Fosse Você* 1 & 2 and *De Pernas pro Ar* 1 & 2). In these four films, the information given about the maid is her name and nothing else. The films do not introduce the audience to her origin or family or show them as people. It is as if they only live to serve the families for which they work. The character of the *empregada doméstica* (housemaid) is more often than not present in Brazilian cinema and television as a supporting character and not a main one, which aligns with the general role that the *doméstica* plays to this day in Brazilian society. Although new laws now exist to ensure that those who employ housemaids treat them as appropriately as employees, slavery proves to have left long-lasting traces.

## *Historic Background*

Some historic background is necessary in order to understand the role of the *doméstica* in Brazilian society. Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1888 (*Lei Áurea*). The many years of slavery and the way that abolition took place impacted Brazilian society and culture. Between 1870 and 1880, many slave owners presented their slaves with *cartas de alforria* (manumission papers); however, these papers entailed that slaves were responsible for paying for their freedom and, therefore, they were merely “outras formas de estabelecer o controle sobre escravas e escravos,” as observes historian Maria de Fátima N. Pires (147). These documents described conditions for freedom, such as the slaves would have to keep working for their masters as wageworkers until their death. In other circumstances, when freedom was in fact provided to the slaves, they became unemployed, homeless, and deprived of the basics to live.

Therefore, Brazilian society was built on a foundation of servile work. When the slaves became wageworkers, they still were seen as property, as underprivileged subalterns. This kind of outlook was passed on throughout the generations of former slaves, and servility became a trait ingrained in Black Brazilian subjects and mixed raced people thereafter. During this transition from slavery to capitalism, it was common for households to have a “house slave” (*escrava doméstica*) as someone who would do the house chores for the family. This kind of slave was the precursor of the *empregada doméstica*: a remunerated worker who nonetheless was stigmatized by the slavery stamp and frequently treated as property. Marcus J. M. de Carvalho explains how this transition occurred:

As serviçais negras iriam permanecer. Mas relegadas aos espaços menos frequentados pelos patrões e que as sinhazinhas deveriam evitar: a cozinha, a cocheira, o quintal. Ao

trabalharem dentro de casa, eram supervisionadas pelas patroas e pelas governantas brancas. O paradoxo é que a transição para o trabalho livre . . . apesar de todo o discurso liberal, não eliminaria algumas das principais práticas do escravismo, como a relativa ausência de salário, a reclusão, a violência e o assédio sexual. (78)

In *Casa Grande e Senzala*, a foundational book to understand the formation of Brazilian society, Gilberto Freyre discusses how Brazil was constructed regarding slavery. Freyre defends the point of view that the mixing of races was the base for the development of that country. He believes that the African heritage served as the key for the constitution of the society: “A mediação africana no Brasil aproximou os extremos, que sem ela dificilmente se teriam entendido tão bem, da cultura europeia e da cultura ameríndia, estranhas e antagônicas em muitas das suas tendências” (116). Hence, Freyre values the Black influence and presents important facts to help understand the impact for Brazilian society, such as culture, food, and behavior. He frequently describes Black slaves as superior to the Portuguese and to Indigenous Brazilian peoples. Because he places Black people in a surreal and biased position, it is easy to see the exaggeration in Freyre’s work. He chooses what and how he will describe and omits important facts for the understanding of the slaves’ lack of agency. Joel Zito Araújo points out that Freyre fails to focus on the power relations between master and slave, which compromises his analysis (29).

Araújo also considers how slavery left marks not only on Brazilian culture but also in its entertainment industry, especially how Brazil is represented in it. This critic emphasizes how it has become common to give Black actors subaltern roles, and he discusses the representation of maids in Brazilian TV. According to Araújo, during the 1970s, it was habitual to see Black characters occupy servile roles:



Um bom exemplo das imposições do sistema industrial sobre as estrelas negras, que tiveram de aceitar representar o papel de domésticas para fazer parte do elenco regular das tevês, é a história de Zezé Motta. Em depoimento para a jornalista Sandra Almada, ela relata que, apesar do sucesso como protagonista do filme *Xica da Silva*, que a deixou em evidência nacional e internacional, o primeiro papel que lhe ofereceram na tevê, em um especial da Rede Globo, foi de empregada doméstica. Decepcionada, após a leitura do roteiro, ela procurou pelo diretor Ziembinski para comunicar que não faria o trabalho e acabou recebendo muitos conselhos. Em síntese, o que ele disse, que serviu de lição para a atriz foi: “Querida, entendo sua situação, mas ‘cai na real.’ Se você ficar nessa postura, não vai mais fazer televisão.” (145)

Therefore, it was common for Afro-Brazilian actors to “accept” this prejudiced situation and play roles of servile characters, and they were even expected to do so. It is important to note that one of the reasons why this happened was because of how often Brazilian TV and cinema portray servants, housemaids, more specifically. They were generally not the focus of the plot but were in the background, as part of the ambience, making the setting look more “natural.” This reflects the reality of Brazilian society. Today, it is possible to observe some noticeable changes: Black actors now play protagonist roles; lighter-skinned actors play maids, for example, Glória Pires, Regina Casé, Leandra Leal, and Isabelle Drummond<sup>19</sup>; and more importantly, some productions

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<sup>19</sup> In the Brazilian soap opera, *Cheias de Charme*, actors Taís Araújo, Leandra Leal, and Isabelle Drummond play the roles of maids and form a band called “As Empreguetes.” They serve as inspiration for all maids in the audience; however, the plot fails both in the depiction of reality and in the choice of actors. While at first it may seem groundbreaking to cast white girls as maids in a Brazilian soap opera, as a matter of fact, only Taís Araújo, the only Black *empreguete*, is really a maid in the story. Leandra Leal and Isabelle Drummond, both considered “white” in Brazil, play a buffet employee, and the daughter of a maid who considers herself part of her employer’s family, respectively. These examples demonstrate films’ tendency to connect Blackness to subaltern roles.

are now placing the maid in the role of the protagonist, even though it still is not common. This allows for debate and awareness of the situation of maids in Brazil, although the productions that approach this topic still are rare. However, it is possible to see some changes in both the representation of the maid in films and the concern with their agency and rights.

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang explain that “settlers are diverse — there are white settlers and brown settlers, and peoples in both groups make moves to innocence that attempt to deny and deflect their own complicity in settler colonialism” (10). This declaration can be applied to Brazilian reality and more specifically to the reality of the *domésticas*. Due to the racial miscegenation, Brazilian racial concept is very fluid and somewhat distinct from the one in the United States. However, to this day, it is a well-known fact that the majority of maids in Brazil racially identify somewhere between Black and brown. Their employers may or may not be of different races, but the debt left by Brazilian colonization is evident in the employer-maid relationship.

Although Brazil has not been a colony for almost two-hundred years, at least geographically and politically speaking, it is still influenced by the way that colonial thought is represented in its culture and society, and in this sense, Brazilians are still alienated and influenced by foreign ideology. Brazil inherited a power structure that tends to use representation as a means to assert control and define “adequate” norms of behavior. One of the means used for that goal is media, and cinema plays a great role in this field.

### *Protected by Law?*

In April 2013, Brazil enacted the “PEC (Proposta de Emenda à Constituição) das domésticas,” a law that would secure benefits for the *empregada doméstica*, but one that still

lacked many needed adjustments. In June 2015, these adjustments were made and *domésticas* are now guaranteed “além do recolhimento previdenciário, . . . o recolhimento do Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço (FGTS).” The 2013 PEC had already established “jornada máxima de 44 horas semanais (e não superior a 8 horas diárias); pagamento de hora extra; adicional noturno; seguro-desemprego; e Fundo de Garantia do Tempo de Serviço (FGTS),”<sup>20</sup> and with the 2015 adjustment, the *doméstica* gained the same rights as any other employee.<sup>21</sup> This is an important observation, as theory and practice are still different things. When searching online for news and updates on the “PEC das domésticas,” it is not difficult to find that this was nothing more than a quick fix without further consequences in the real world of domestic workers. In 2019, six years after the approval of the constitutional amendment, 70% of the housemaids were still working informally with no *carteira assinada* and consequently, no lawful rights, as pointed out by journalist Mariana Ribeiro in her article for the online newspaper Poder360. According to Ribeiro:

No final de 2013, eram 5,97 milhões de empregados domésticos no país, segundo dados do IBGE. Naquele momento, 1,86 milhão (ou seja, 31% do total) tinham carteira assinada. No final de 2018, o nível de formalidade era ainda menor: eram 6,27 milhões de empregados e só 1,78 milhão (28% do total) eram registrados. Entre os demais trabalhadores do setor privado, que não se enquadram no trabalho doméstico, o patamar de formalidade é bem mais alto. Em 2018, 74% (32,99 milhões de trabalhadores) tinham registro.

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<sup>20</sup> Quotes in this section retrieved from <http://www.brasil.gov.br/governo/2015/06/lei-das-domesticas-e-sancionada-e-preve-recolhimento-do-fgts>

<sup>21</sup> See: [https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/constituicao/emendas/emc/emc72.htm](https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/emendas/emc/emc72.htm)

This is due to the legacy of slavery, which interferes in the imaginary of both employers and employees, in this case, maids, causing a sense of ownership and entitlement on the part of employers and a sense of subalternity on the part of housemaids. A simple change in the law, unfortunately, cannot fix the damage that centuries of slavery has caused. Even though it is clear that housemaids are employees and not properties and should not be treated as slaves, this fundamental change in ideology is happening gradually and at a slower pace than it should.

*“Trair e Coçar é Só Começar” (Moacyr Góes, 2006)*

For the textual analysis, I will focus on the only comedy that depicts a housemaid as the sole protagonist of the story, *Trair e Coçar, é Só Começar*. This film is based on a play of the same title by Marcos Caruso, which premiered in 1986. In 2014, Globo adapted it into a sitcom which aired on the cable channel Multishow, owned by Globosat, Grupo Globo's cable and satellite television channel operator. Its title is based on a popular Brazilian saying, whose literal translation means “cheating is just like scratching an itch: once you start, you cannot stop,” implying that the act of cheating is second nature. As a theme commonly found in *chanchadas*, it continues to be a prevalent trait of Brazilian comedies. The reference to cheating in the title suggests something negative about the maid's virtue, which will become even more evident in the (mis)representation of the character Olímpia.

Adriana Esteves plays Olímpia, a maid who loves her bosses Eduardo and Inês (Cássio Gabus Mendes and Bianca Byington). However, she triggers numerous mix-ups and confusions on the day of her bosses' anniversary dinner, because she believes that Eduardo is cheating on Inês. In the process, all of the other characters get involved, people and things get lost or swapped, couples almost split up, and new couples get together. She also borrows money, fails to

pay debts, ruins pieces of clothes, gossips and complicates people's lives, and in the end, all the other characters are angry at her and demand solutions to the problems she caused.<sup>22</sup>

Stereotypically, we do not know anything about Olímpia's own life and family other than her romantic interest in the building's doorman, and all the mishaps happen because she is trying to organize her employers' anniversary dinner and trying to please them.

Near the end of the story, all of the characters are upset at Olímpia, and they decide to confront her together. They insist that she provide solutions for everyone. It is a rather odd group of about fifteen people, all dressed completely different and coming from different social classes. They include movers, a belly dancer, her bosses, a salesperson, the administrator of the building, and a jewelry salesman, among others. While Olímpia feels cornered, she promises that she will pay everyone back. Then, with tears in her eyes, she leaves the angry crowd to go to her room (she is a live-in maid) to do the math and figure out exactly how much she owes everyone. But before she does, she gives her boss a golden dental crown taken directly from her mouth, as down payment. She leaves, but the entire group goes after her, and one by one, they say they forgive her and that they do not want anything from her. Her bosses even offer her a raise and return the crown to her. But Olímpia is miserable and unable to forgive herself, even though her bosses offer to double her salary. She packs and leaves them all, with the doorman with whom she had been flirting following right behind her. In a turn of events, she locks everyone but the

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<sup>22</sup> Differently than what happens in the telenovela *Cheias de Charme*, the maid in this film, Adriana Esteves, is white. In the group of *domésticas* who appear in the beginning of the story with Olímpia, two are white and two are Black. While the change of pace in the representation of the empregada has to be appreciated, and the disconnect between the blackness and subaltern positions is evident, it is important for the audience to keep in mind that, in real life, the slavery legacy still persists. Data that the IPEA (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada) recently collected in November 2019 supports this information. According to that study, 63% of all Brazilian maids today are Black.

doorman in her little room and reveals to the audience that it has all been a big scheme that she learned from a book she had been reading, which a maid authored, and explains how to be a con artist. Even the golden crown was a prop that came in the back of the book. The stuttering doorman she had been pursuing finally proposes, and Olímpia gets everything that she wanted. The film ends right then, and the credits appear on a black screen.

In the beginning of the scene described above, the film shows an inversion of elite and popular culture that is typical element of the *chanchada* tradition and typically carnivalesque, wherein the maid has outsmarted everyone else. Then it happens again, when she locks the whole group in her bedroom. The message that is implicit in those two situations is that the figure of the *doméstica* can be comparable to that of a charlatan, which is a stereotype. That is corroborated by the trouble that Olímpia goes through when she gives her golden crown to her boss, an act that she puts on, as the tooth was a prop all along. This is also another trait of the *chanchada*, an object that ends up in someone else's possession. The stereotypical image of the maid as a con artist comes full circle at the end when she locks everyone up in her little room and reveals only to the audience that she had planned it all along. Meanwhile, a group of over ten people is feeling sorry for her, which symbolizes the spirit of camaraderie that frequently was present in society in the films of the *chanchada* tradition (Vieira, "O Corpo Popular" 53).

The stereotypical image of the maid as a con artist started to be constructed in the beginning of the story when Olímpia is in the laundry room of the building with other maids, reading the scams described in the book for her peers. They all listen carefully. Olímpia is the most invested of all of them, and she is so distracted by the book that she does not realize when an accident happens in the washing machine to the tablecloth that she was going to use for her employers' anniversary.

Thus, the film portrays the *doméstica* in a negative and stereotypical light that unfortunately may represent how many members of society feel about their own maids in real life. As explained above, due to the consequences of slavery, a great deal of stigma still is attached to this occupation. However, the maid in this film also is the typical trickster, as inherited from the *chanchada* tradition (Macunaíma style), who will do whatever it takes to reach her goals. As a representative of the lower class, she demonstrates an inversion of values with her victory over the middle class, and the slow construction of her character throughout the story encourages the audience to create a rapport with her and root for Olímpia, making her a heroine in the end. The fact that she has great visibility through Globo corroborates this. Media have a major role in people's lives and a power to affect their ideologies and opinions. Representations of archetypes such as the *doméstica* in film and TV may influence how society sees those individuals in real life. While viewers might identify with Olímpia and be happy with the result of the story, at the same time, this film could easily be perceived as sending the message that maids are not trustworthy, increasing and fortifying the stigma inherited by slavery.

### **The Highest Audience Romcoms**

To develop a more careful analysis, I selected the five romantic comedies in the corpus of this dissertation that have the highest audience numbers: *Se eu Fosse Você* (Daniel Filho, 2006; 3,644,956 spectators), *Se eu Fosse Você 2* (Daniel Filho, 2009; 6,112,851), *De Pernas pro Ar* (Roberto Santucci, 2011; 3,506,552), *De Pernas pro Ar 2* (Roberto Santucci, 2012; 4,846,273), and *Loucas pra Casar* (Roberto Santucci, 2015; 3,726,547).<sup>23</sup> These comedies are good

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<sup>23</sup> The number after the year of release indicates the audience number in its year of release, according to data released from ANCINE.

representatives because of their popularity and because they follow many of the patterns that I have just identified: two of them include a heterosexual couple as protagonist and three introduce a female as a protagonist, all the protagonists are working professionals, and betrayal is present in the plot of three of these films.

The first patterns to be recognized are very evident: even though I list five films, two of them are sequels, and *Loucas pra Casar* has a sequel in the making, as well (directed by Pedro Antônio).<sup>24</sup> The second pattern is the increase in audience numbers that is evident in the sequel (which will have to be confirmed after the release of *Loucas pra Casar 2*). Another pattern is that only two (male) directors direct all five films: Daniel Filho and Roberto Santucci, both experienced professionals who are very well known for directing comedies.

### *The Directors*

Daniel Filho<sup>25</sup> is a director, film producer, screenwriter, and actor. João Carlos Daniel was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1937 and has been active in the entertainment business since the 1950s. André Checchia Antoniette reports that Filho's parents were Spanish immigrants who have always been connected to the arts: his father was a singer and his mother, a dancer (24). In 1952, Filho started his career already in contact with humor as an actor in *teatro de revista*, but it was not until 1957 that he had his first experience as a TV actor, at TV Tupi, and in 1959 adopted his artistic name, Daniel Filho (Antoniette 25). His career as a director started in 1956 when he got a job as an assistant director for Jacy Campos in the TV show *Câmera 1*, in which

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<sup>24</sup> It is worth mentioning that *De Pernas pro Ar 3* was actually released in 2019 and was directed by Júlia Rezende.

<sup>25</sup> <https://memoriaglobo.globo.com/perfil/daniel-filho/>



they had only had one camera, which forced them to improvise and be more creative (Antoinette 26). After his contract with TV Tupi, Filho signed a contract with TV Excelsior and directed different programs, including comedy shows. When TV Excelsior put Filho in charge of directing humorist Chico Anysio's program, Filho moved to São Paulo, started to become more intimate with the telenovela world, and ultimately joined TV Globo in 1967 (Antoinette 26-27). His first work at Globo was directing the telenovela *A Rainha Louca*, by Glória Magadan. After that, he was invited to participate in several projects as actor, director, and producer with Globo. He partnered with a number of professionals along his career there, one of whom was Janete Clair. He worked as a producer as well as director in numerous telenovelas by Clair, such as: *Véu de Noiva* (1969), *Irmãos Coragem* (1970), *Selva de Pedra* (1972), *Pecado Capital* (1975) and *O Astro* (1977). Between 1970 and 1975, he was the general producer of screenwriting at Globo, but he left the position to become a director of prime-time TV shows. His first project was in the telenovela *Roque Santeiro*, which did not air then because it was censored. In its place, Globo released *Pecado Capital*, with the same casting as *Roque Santeiro*. Filho won a directing award for that project from the Associação Paulista de Críticos de Arte (APCA). He continued to be actively involved in several projects with Globo, and, in 1984, became the director of the Central Globo de Produção, where he stayed until 1991, when he left Globo. For four years he worked in other networks such as TV Cultura, Multishow, and TV Bandeirantes, and in 1995 he returned to Globo. Filho was one of the founding members of Globo Filmes in 1997. In 2000 he became an active part of that company, and in 2005 he stepped away from his work in television to become the Artistic Director at Globo Filmes, while he continued to work as a film producer in his production company, Lereby Produções. Nonetheless, his career as a film director had started long before, in the 1960s. At Globo Filmes, he directed a number of films, most of them

comedies, such as *A Partilha* (2001), *A Dona da História* (2004) *Muito Gelo e Dois Dedos d'Água* (2006), *Se Eu Fosse Você* (2006), *Se Eu Fosse Você 2* (2008), *Confissões de Adolescente - O Filme* (2014). Earlier, in 1983, he directed another comedy, *O Cangaceiro Trapalhão*,<sup>26</sup> which Renato Aragão Produções Artísticas produced. In 2014, after 47 years of working as a director at Globo, Filho decided to leave the network due to disagreements concerning the length of the contract; however, both the director and Globo declared that future partnerships between the two parties were possible.<sup>27</sup>

Roberto Santucci, a filmmaker from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, completed a certificate program in Film, Video and TV at UCLA Extension in 1991, and in 1994, he graduated with a B.A. in Cinema from the Columbia College of Hollywood. According to an article that journalist Raquel Carneiro wrote for *Veja* magazine, Santucci admits, however, that going into comedies was not a natural choice; it was the market demand that forced him to do so.<sup>28</sup> The same article details how Santucci worked as part of film crews in the United States while he was studying abroad. He was an apprentice film editor in *School Ties* (Robert Mandel, 1992), and in *Legends of the Fall* (Edward Zwick, 1994). Following that, he made a few short films before making his first feature film, the comedy *Olé – Um Movie Cabra da Peste* in 1996, which was released commercially in Los Angeles. In Brazil, he made the thriller *Bellini e a Esfinge* (2002), which was an independent film, with only twenty copies made. It still was successful for an indie film,

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<sup>26</sup> Even though Daniel Filho made this film before he helped create Globo Filmes, it was still a box office hit, attracting 3,831,443 viewers, according to data collected from ANCINE. ([https://www.ancine.gov.br/media/SAM/2009/filmes/por\\_publico\\_1.pdf](https://www.ancine.gov.br/media/SAM/2009/filmes/por_publico_1.pdf))

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.correio24horas.com.br/noticia/nid/depois-de-47-anos-daniel-filho-deixa-a-globo/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://veja.abril.com.br/entretenimento/roberto-santucci-o-homem-de-ouro-das-comedias-no-brasil/>

attracting about 80,000 viewers and winning the award for Best Film at Rio de Janeiro's "Festival Internacional de Cinema" in 2001. Santucci tried to stay away from comedies until 2008, when he faced a challenging bump in his career. In that year, he made the thriller *Alucinados*. Even though it was awarded Best Film in the "I Festival de Paulínia" and was well-received in other film festivals where it was screened, as well as at UCLA, with Santucci present, the film was never released because Santucci could not find a distributor interested in it. That was the moment when he realized that comedies were the type of film that achieve popularity and endorsement in Brazil, and Santucci then came up with the idea for *De Pernas pro Ar* (2011). The film was a great success, attracting over 3.5 million people to the theaters, and it also helped propel Ingrid Guimarães' career. Until then, she mostly played smaller, supporting roles. Between 2010 and 2015, 22 million people saw his films in the theater, while Filho, another very successful comedy filmmaker, reached a smaller number (18 million) in fourteen years, from 1991 to 2015, as Carneiro points out. Since *De Pernas pro Ar*, Santucci has made twelve more comedies and another one is currently in post-production.

### *Ingrid Guimarães*

Ingrid Guimarães is the female actor to most often appear in Brazilian romantic comedies of the post-Retomada period. She is the protagonist of four out of the 34 films, and she plays a central role in two other films: *Totalmente Inocentes* and *Minha Mãe é Uma Peça*. Fernanda Torres and Glória Pires both appear in three films, and Marieta Severo, Luana Piovani, Débora Falabella, and Malu Mader each appear in two.

Ingrid Guimarães is a Brazilian comedian, actor, and writer originally from the city of Goiânia. Journalist Marcelo Rubens Paiva interviewed Guimarães for the *Folha de S. Paulo*

newspaper online<sup>29</sup> and offered more insight into her career. Before her big break, she had smaller roles, for example, she played a maid (Tereza) in the telenovela *Por Amor*, written by Manoel Carlos, and appeared in the play *Confissões de Adolescente*, written by Maria Mariana (1992), where she played the character of Simone, the first time it opened. In 2001, she became a well-known actress and comedian with the play *Cócegas* (2001), which she wrote alongside friend and comedian Heloísa Perissé. The play presented nine short comical and unrelated sketches, and Guimarães and Perissé played several characters. Its immediate success granted them new opportunities. Less than a year after the play opened, it won awards, they made a children's version of it (*Cosquinhas*), and Globo started selling toys inspired by Guimarães' and Perissé's characters. Between 2004 and 2007, Guimarães and Perissé were the protagonists of *Sob Nova Direção*, a sitcom that they created and Globo aired. During an interview for the Globo Filmes News website,<sup>30</sup> Guimarães affirmed that *De Pernas pro Ar* was the job that gave her visibility in the cinema, and allowed her to enjoy a steady career as a film actor. Since then, Guimarães appeared not only in more films but also in many Globo productions such as sitcoms, in guest appearances in comedy shows, or as a guest on talk shows. As of 2020, she has made 11 films since *De Pernas pro Ar*, and nine of them are comedies.

Guimarães plays the main character in *De Pernas pro Ar* (1 and 2), *Loucas pra Casar*, and *Um Namorado para Minha Mulher*. Other than the fact that she plays comical characters, these characters do not share many similarities. In *De Pernas pro Ar* (1 and 2) she plays a workaholic businesswoman who prioritizes her work over her own family. In the sequel, she tries

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<sup>29</sup> Retrieved from <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/ilustrad/fq2405200225.htm>

<sup>30</sup> Retrieved from <https://globofilmes.globo.com/en/noticia/ingrid-guimaraes-4/>

to balance work and private life, but being a businesswoman is still her true passion. In *Loucas pra Casar*, she also has a career, but her focus is actually on her personal life: she really wants to get married, as the title of the films suggests. However, the title uses a common phrase in Portuguese (“louca para...”), and the word “louca” also means “insane.” In this film, she has multiple personality disorder and is not aware of it until the end of the film. Physically, she is presented similarly in the three films: she behaves feminine-like, has light brown hair with blonde highlights, and wears business outfits. The photos below show her character in *De Pernas pro Ar 2*, on the left, and *Loucas pra Casar*, on the right.



Figure 1: Ingrid Guimarães' characters in *De Pernas pro Ar 2* (left) and *Loucas pra Casar* (right).

However, in *Um Namorado para Minha Mulher* (Julia Rezende, 2016), she does not have a career. Even more surprisingly, she is not very focused on her relationship, either. She seems to be uninterested in life itself. Even physically, she is different from the other characters. (See

picture below.) This entire film may have a different feeling from the others because it is a remake of the Argentinian *Un Novio para mi Mujer* (Juan Taratuto, 2008). Her character is a very bitter person whose husband hires a man to seduce her because he cannot live with her any longer; but he cannot break up with her either, out of fear. In an attempt to get rid of her, the husband also pays a male friend to hire her to work for him. The husband's wicked plan backfires when the hired Don Juan falls in love with her and she starts an affair with the husband's friend who employed her. Only after all of that does the original protagonist couple finally decide to give their relationship another chance, because it is a romcom after all. See below how Ingrid Guimarães' character is physically presented in *Um Namorado para Minha Mulher*, wearing less makeup and with messier and darker hair and more casual clothes (see fig. 2). She does not appear radically different, but her look is not as similar as the two previous characters.



Figure 2: Ingrid Guimarães' character in *Um Namorado para Minha Mulher*.

Guimarães is a good example of how most female actors' characters operate in contemporary popular romantic comedies in Brazil. Observations of other actors and their characters reveal that they tend to play different characters, each with their own predictable characteristics. Since we are in the realm of romantic comedies, predictability is expected, but nonetheless, these characters are more diverse in nature. For instance, Marieta Severo's characters in *A Dona da História* and in *A Grande Família* are very different, rebellious in the former and submissive in the latter. As a secondary example to illustrate my point, Luana Piovani's characters in *A Mulher Invisível* and *O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta* also differ widely; in the former she plays a sensual girlfriend and, in the latter, a tomboyish soccer-fanatic.

Therefore, it is fair to say that, in contemporary popular romantic comedies in Brazil, the issue of typecasting does not seem to affect female actors to the extent of creating images and expectations that might generate further consequences to their careers and fossilized stereotypical images. This non-typecasting is what I observed in the specific sample of a combination of genre and time period at which that this research is investigating. I realize this is a very specific analysis in a very small area of research. However, the idea of stereotyping and typecasting is such an important and delicate topic, it would be reckless to generalize this interpretation to a broader group of films without careful consideration of the corpus of research chosen to be investigated.

In order to more closely analyze other issues surrounding the portrayal of the protagonists of these five selected films, I will now observe each of the romantic comedies. A plot summary will be provided, as well as careful description and analysis of the main protagonist(s). Once again, my goal is to observe whether these characters are stereotyped, and if they are, if there seems to be a purpose behind it or if it is just a way to respond to market needs and deliver a

cinematic production that will most likely entertain and satisfy its main consumers, the middle class.

### ***Se Eu Fosse Você* (Daniel Filho, 2006)**

This film follows a well-known formula in comedies: two people, unsatisfied with their lives, unintentionally trade bodies and find their minds trapped inside the other person's anatomy. Other titles that follow this same recipe are, for example: *All of Me* (Carl Reiner, 1984), *18 Again!* (Paul Flaherty, 1988), *Dream a Little Dream* (Marc Rocco, 1989), *The Hot Chick* (Tom Brady, 2002) *Freaky Friday* (Gary Nelson, 1976) and its 2003 remake, *Freaky Friday* (Mark Waters). The characters are forced to live someone else's life, facing the challenges as well as benefitting from the perks of being someone else, and sometimes even becoming another gender temporarily, without bringing too much attention to themselves and until they can figure out how to go back to their original bodies. As shown in the introduction to this dissertation, *Se Eu Fosse Você* is a *globochanchada*. The typical characteristics of this new genre, that Márcio Rodrigo Ribeiro identified in this film, include: a comedy that is targeted for the middle-class, that has at least one sequel, and that was produced or co-produced by Globo Filmes (311). *Se Eu Fosse Você* also has a Globo director and stars, as do many other *globochanchadas*, and a third sequel will soon be added to the series, as a new *Se Eu Fosse Você* is in the making, according to IMDB. The two main characters also present typical characteristics of couples in a romcom, such as displaying conflicting traits that in the end turn out to be exactly what the other one lacks and needs, as pointed out by Mortimer (6).

In the first film, the audience is introduced to the two main characters for the first time, the cis-gendered, very gender role-conforming couple, Helena and Cláudio, played by Glória



Pires and Tony Ramos, respectively. According to the MemóriaGlobo website, Glória Pires was raised on television, as both her parents were involved in the business; her mother was a producer and businessperson, and her father, a comedian).<sup>31</sup> Pires has been working in TV for over 50 years, since she was five years old. She started working at Globo when she was eight, playing Fátima in the telenovela *Selva de Pedra*, written by Janete Clair in 1972. Her big break happened in 1978 when she was only 14 years old and played the role of Marisa in the Globo telenovela *Dancin' Days*, written by Gilberto Braga. After that, she continued to build a steady telenovela career, and some of the shows in which Pires starred were: *Cabocla* (Benedito Ruy Barbosa, 1979), *As Três Marias* (Wilson Rocha, 1980), *Direito de Amar* (Walther Negrão, 1987), *Mulheres de Areia* (Ivani Ribeiro, 1993), *Suave Veneno* (Aguinaldo Silva, 1999), *Desejos de Mulher* (Euclides Marinho, 2002), *Paraíso Tropical* (Gilberto Braga and Ricardo Linhares, 2007), and *Babilônia* (Gilberto Braga, Ricardo Linhares and João Ximenes Braga, 2015). Pires started to work in the cinema in 1981, in the film *Índia, a Filha do Sol*, by Fábio Barreto, in which she played an indigenous girl. After that, she was in *Memórias do Cárcere* (Néson Pereira dos Santos, 1984), *O Quatrilho* (Fábio Barreto, 1995), *Lula, o Filho do Brasil* (Fábio Barreto, 2009), *É Proibido Fumar* (Anna Muylaert, 2009), *Flores Raras* (Bruno Barreto, 2013), and *Nise: o Coração da Loucura* (Roberto Berliner, 2015), among others.

The MemóriaGlobo website also includes a page on Tony Ramos, who started working for Globo in 1977 when he was 29 years old.<sup>32</sup> Before that, he studied law and philosophy, and worked in TV Tupi and in the theater. Ramos' first professional job as an actor was in 1969 in

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<sup>31</sup> Retrieved from <https://memoriaglobo.globo.com/perfil/gloria-pires/perfil-completo/>

<sup>32</sup> Retrieved from <https://memoriaglobo.globo.com/perfil/tony-ramos/perfil-completo/>

the play *Quando as Máquinas Param*, by Plínio Marcos, around the same time that he made his cinema debut, with *O Pequeno Mundo de Marcos* (Geraldo Vietri, 1968). His first work at Globo was in the telenovela *Espelho Mágico* (1977), by Lauro César Muniz, in the role of the actor Paulo Amaral. His big break came in 1981, with the telenovela *Baila Comigo*, by Manoel Carlos, in which he played two challenging roles: the twins João Victor and Quinzinho. After that, Ramos appeared in numerous telenovelas such as *Elas por Elas* (Cassiano Gabus Mendes, 1982), *Rainha da Sucata* (Sílvio de Abreu, 1990), *A Próxima Vítima* (Sílvio de Abreu, 1995), *Torre de Babel* (Denise Saracemi, 1998), *Mulheres Apaixonadas* (Manoel Carlos, 2003), *Paraíso Tropical* (Gilberto Braga and Ricardo Linhares, 2007), *Avenida Brasil* (João Emanuel Carneiro, 2012), and *A Regra do Jogo* (João Emanuel Carneiro, 2015). In 1984, he appeared in the film *Noites do Sertão* (Carlos Alberto Prates Correia), as the veterinarian Miguel. This film is an adaptation of the short story *Buriti*, by Guimarães Rosa. In the cinema, Ramos appears in: *O Noviço Rebelde* (Tizuka Yamasaki, 1997), *Tempos de Paz* (Daniel Filho, 2009), *Getúlio* (João Jardim, 2014), and others. In addition to the *Se eu Fosse Você* films, Tony Ramos and Glória Pires also share the screen in two other films, *Pequeno Dicionário Amoroso* (Sandra Werneck, 1997) and *A Partilha* (Daniel Filho, 2001), both romcoms.

Before the characters switch bodies, *Se Eu Fosse Você* portrays them very stereotypically. Helena is as feminine as it gets, borderline submissive, a Stepford-level wife. She takes care of the house and of Cláudio and their 14-year-old daughter Bia, while also working as a choir conductor in a Catholic middle school. She always has makeup and a smile on her face. When she wakes up in the morning, it looks like she is performing a dance routine. Cláudio, similarly, plays a typical role as the “man of the house”; he speaks loudly, takes up a lot of space in bed, and he does not need an alarm clock because his wife wakes him up in the

morning. His maid serves him breakfast exactly the way he likes it every day, then he recklessly drives his big SUV to work, where he hits on girls in the advertising office where he is partner. This protagonist couple is initially portrayed in an exaggerated stereotypical way.

The first hint we get that we may soon expect a change is when we learn that Helena, who seems to be very content, is actually in therapy, and she reveals that she is quite unhappy. She feels like she is trapped inside her own life. Her therapist suggests that she needs to work on her male side and Cláudio, on his female side. At the end of that day, which turns out to be a bad one for both of them, the couple has a fight and each of them claims that they would know just what to do if they were in each other's shoes. Suddenly, they oddly repeat together, "se eu fosse você..." (if I were you) but they stop themselves before either finishes the sentence. They go to bed wondering what happens when two people say the same thing at the same time. When they wake up, they are in each other's bodies. And that is when the adventure begins.

The body swap inverts and problematizes all the traits that make this very conventional, gender role-conforming couple traditional. Helena (or at least the person who looks like Helena) starts to behave more male-like and much less feminine. She waddles when she walks, speaks loudly, bosses everyone around, tells sexist jokes, threatens to cut their daughter's boyfriend's penis off, and rebels against many of society's expectations of how a woman should behave. She does not want to wear makeup, heels, or moisturizing creams. Similarly, Cláudio starts to behave much more feminine-like. He starts speaking less loudly, is less strict with his daughter, becomes more concerned about his appearance, and he even makes peace with his mother-in-law, who does not know about the switch.

These changes affect the characters significantly, and they learn a lot in the process. Initially they are not sure about what they should do, but, as both of them have important

projects to finalize at their respective jobs, they decide to take over each other's lives completely for the time being until they are able to switch back.

Even though in the beginning of this film the audience might be thrown off by the excessively gendered way that the main characters are portrayed, this portrayal is an intentional one that is reshaped when the couple switches bodies. Helena and Cláudio must be excessively and stereotypically feminine and masculine, respectively, to create an obvious contrast and allow the switch to deliver as much humor as possible. As a secondary consequence, it also delivers a good dose of societal criticism. When Helena and Cláudio are forced to step into a body of the opposite sex and live each other's lives, they also are forced to reveal all the conservative assumptions of how a male and a female are supposed to behave, and even though they literally try to fit in the body they are occupying, they feel the urge to break free and be who they are comfortable being. In the process, they also learn details about the opposite sex that foster respect and esteem for each other, and it shows the viewers that biological sex should not be seen as a barrier.

A few iconic scenes may help integrate the spectator in this learning process. For example, when Cláudio, stuck in Helena's body, has his first period, he is bedbound. Helena, in Cláudio's body, comes home to find her husband lying in bed, moaning in pain. Even Cida, the maid (Maria Gladys), makes a comment about she menstruates every month and still is not used to it. In the following scene, they go see a UFO specialist who says he can help them switch back, and Cláudio asks him, "Dá pra destocar ou eu vou ficar menstruando todo mês?". While traditionally, males are seen as stronger than females, the film indicates that they might not endure something as habitual as menstrual cramps as well as females.

Another iconic scene happens when the couple arrives home and finds their daughter home alone with her new boyfriend. Before the switch, Helena used to be the more understanding, tolerant parent, whereas Cláudio played the “bad cop” who did not want his daughter to date and planned to send her to Europe to study against her will. Now that they are in each other’s bodies, Bia cannot understand why her mom is the one losing control and her father is being patient and tolerant. When Helena angrily screams at the two teenagers, Cláudio tries to intervene and explain that the teens were just watching some TV. The boy is very confused, as Bia had told him that her mom was very laidback. This is just one of the various scenes where Bia appreciates her dad being more easygoing but is also confused about why, all of a sudden, her even-tempered mom is not so stable anymore; is she never lucky enough to have two tolerant parents at the same time? This is not directly approached or discussed in the film, but it is rather impactful for the audience to see this role inversion. Viewers are used to seeing representations of the strict father and the lenient mother in cinematic productions; however, seeing an authoritarian mother and a very understanding father who tries to act as a moderator in the interaction between mother and daughter makes you reflect on the possibilities of what and who we can be, regardless of our gender. This relationship between the parents and Bia will be an important aspect of the sequel.

Finally, the greatest change in this film is evident when Cláudio takes over the middle school choir and Helena takes charge of the advertising agency. Both worry about the kind of impact that their significant other will bring to their workplace. The first result is in the advertising agency setting, where Helena is able to deliver a new lingerie campaign to a female client who previously had been very unsatisfied with the campaign created by Cláudio. The first campaign created was quite misogynist, objectified the female body, and was described by

Helena (in Cláudio's body) as "vulgar." While the previous campaign's main tagline is "lingerie for women who like to be used," the new one is much more respectful to females and to the owner's brand. The client even states that it speaks not only to all women but to "the male within all women and the female within all men," unconsciously making reference to what is going on between Cláudio and Helena. While still in switched bodies, Cláudio presents the campaign and Helena watches the presentation, even though Cláudio's partner tried to stop her.

They leave the meeting and head to the choir's performance, with Helena very invested in making sure she is there on time (whereas, before the switch, Cláudio never took his wife's job seriously). To everyone's surprise, Helena, who used to play it safe, this time decides to present her own version of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5: very non-conventional, upbeat, and with modern choreography, instead of the traditional movements that the real Helena had been rehearsing. The audience is thrilled, including Cláudio, who initially is shocked but ultimately happily surprised. Each of them brings what was missing to their spouse's job, and they finally realize that their partners have qualities that they never noticed before when they were in their gender-assigned bodies. Now that they are in each other's shoes, they are able to appreciate their partners much more. The couple is so enamored with each other, that, when they get home, they make love, and they wake up back in their original bodies, four days after the switch.

While in each other's bodies, the couple learns a lot about each other. Helena learns that Cláudio's womanizing behavior is more of an act to fit into a sexist and patriarchal society and work environment, and he is not really unfaithful to her; Cláudio learns that Helena has to juggle a lot of different responsibilities: a house, school choir, a teenager, an overwhelming mother, monthly menstruation, and do all of that in heels. As they are forced to walk in each other's

shoes, they learn to respect each other and appreciate each other's role in their relationship. Until the sequel.

At the end of this film, the main stereotypical images identified in the beginning are reshaped, and the characters are able to rewrite themselves. As they feel the need to listen to societal expectations, they also feel a greater need to be who they are. They end up realizing that some of what they thought they were was actually a response to what society expected them to be. In a process of negotiation, they are able to shed what they did not want to be, keep what they really are, and absorb some new qualities that make them better versions of themselves, regardless of their gender. This process brought them closer as a couple, gave them work victories, and allowed them to realize that the world still functioned well when they had to perform each other's responsibilities. Of course, since this is a romantic comedy, it has a positive view of the world; however, this is an example of how Brazilian comedies are using humor and the representation of gender stereotypes to break the stereotype itself.

### ***Se Eu Fosse Você 2 (Daniel Filho, 2009)***

In *Se Eu Fosse Você 2*, Cláudio and Helena are in crisis, because he is too focused on work and Helena is feeling neglected. They separate, and Cláudio moves to a friend's house. While he leaves the house, he is screaming at her that she is in menopause. Helena packs for him (only socks and ties) and breaks his favorite record on his way out. When Helena sees him consoling a drunk woman outside of a restaurant, she thinks he is cheating on her and files for divorce. During their first mediation session, they cannot agree on anything and decide to leave. As they enter the elevator arguing, once again they affirm that they would behave better if they were on each other's shoes. They repeat the exact same words in unison, "se eu fosse você...", as

they did in the previous film. The elevator lights flicker, and when they finally arrive on the first floor, they have swapped bodies once again. To make matters worse, their daughter Bia is pregnant, which the film reveals to the audience in the very first scene, but Bia only discloses to her parents after the switch.

It is not clear how old Bia is in this film. If it followed the first story chronologically, it is set three years later when she would be 17. The only reference to her age is when she mentions that she is old enough to vote, so she would have to be between 16 and 18, since Brazil allows people to vote at 16, but it is not mandatory until the age of 18.

When Helena and Cláudio switch bodies in the elevator, they decide to go live the other person's life, as they did in the first film. This time, though, the challenge is greater, as they are separated and living in different places. They trust that, after four days, they will again switch back, but four days come and go, and nothing happens. They decide to trace their steps back to what they did the previous time they switched bodies, and they believe that what helped them then was sex. Even though they are in the middle of a divorce, they give that a try, but nothing happens.

In the first film, when they wake up on the fourth day after having had sex the night before and are back in their own bodies, their issues are already resolved: each one of them had helped the other one at their jobs, they had learned how to appreciate each other as spouses, and they recognized their partner's worth. The sexual intercourse was more of a concluding ritual than a resolving procedure in itself. This time, they still have a lot of unfinished business to take care of. By working together to help Bia, Helena and Cláudio relearn, in each other's shoes and bodies, how it feels to be the opposite sex. Cláudio and Helena do not take the news of Bia being pregnant similarly. Helena, in Cláudio's body, comforts her, while Cláudio, in Helena's body,



becomes enraged and once again threatens to kill Bia's boyfriend Olavinho. Helena is able to calm Cláudio down, and they agree to meet Olavinho's family.

When Bia's family meets with Olavinho's to decide the young couple's future, we see Cláudio and Helena once again diverge in opinions while inhabiting each other's bodies. Although almost everyone is on the same page and wants to start planning the wedding as soon as possible, Cláudio states that they are all out of their minds and implies that the best route would be to terminate the pregnancy since it is so early on, which cannot be considered something that a very traditional parent would suggest, especially considering that abortion is illegal in Brazil. Hence, the audience is caught in a puzzle. Has something changed in Cláudio's mind after the last switch, or is he just being overprotective of his daughter? Is this film's plot flawed because of its contradictions? While the need to make a sequel was undeniable, taking into consideration the great success of the first film, would a sequel be desirable if Cláudio's character suddenly evolved and it was not necessary for him to see through a woman's eyes and become less of a *machista*? On the other hand, how would a sequel be possible if all of the personal achievements made by Cláudio's character in the first film were ignored and not taken into consideration in the second? The compromise delivers a rather cumbersome product, where Cláudio supposedly knows better, but keeps going back to his old ways, only having brief moments of enlightenment every now and then.

No one in the room agrees with Cláudio. Olavinho's parents and Helena all favor the marriage and are against the abortion. As expected, Cláudio (in Helena's body) is ignored, as this is a Brazilian comedy written for the middle class, and as such, abortion would never be a main theme in this context. It is surprising the topic is even mentioned, and for that, this film deserves respect, as terminating a pregnancy is a choice that every woman should have the right to have.

The film does not elaborate the discussion, however. As the story goes on, Cláudio and Helena are sucked into planning Bia's wedding alongside the bride and Bia's future mother-in-law. Helena is not as involved as she would have liked to be, as she is in her husband's body and still staying at his friend's house. At the same time, they continue to try to figure out how to switch back to their own bodies, and that is when they find out that Helena's body got pregnant on the day they had sex in an attempt to switch back. This is probably the greatest letdown of the film, as the pregnancy is not as explored as well as it could have been. It is the one great change that could have caused a major shift in awareness in Cláudio's mind and taken him from a traditionally patriarchal mindset to a more open-minded and even feminist mentality.

Cláudio's pregnancy is not completely pushed to the side. We see him having morning sickness, being insecure about his body changing, and not fitting into the dress chosen for Bia's wedding. All things that would normally be felt by a woman are experienced by a man. He even has a conversation with Bia one night during which he seems quite disturbed by the idea of having a human being growing inside of him. However, in contrast to his menstruation experience in the first film, he handles all these changes quite well and complains very little about any of the pregnancy symptoms, which is inconsistent and therefore, does not make much sense.

During Bia's wedding, when he makes his final plea for Helena to take him back, he tells her that he would do anything, even have that baby in her place, but the one thing that he could not do was to live without her, which was the film's way to show Cláudio's change of personality while in his wife's body. And he is "saved by the bell," or by the bouquet, when Bia throws it in the air, her parents catch it together and are finally switched back to their original bodies.

Once again, the key to reversing the body switch is to respect and love each other for who they are. This time, however, it seems like much of the work falls on Cláudio's shoulders. He is the one who needs to go through a pregnancy, see his teenage daughter get married against his will, and accept that if he continues to neglect his wife, he will lose her. And that might be because he is the one that changes the least from the first to the second film. In this sequel, we are able to see how challenging it was to reintroduce the main characters as a couple that was changed by the supernatural switch that they experienced in the first story, but, at the same time, still had more work to do, so much so that they end up separated. It looks like the first time around was not enough and the Universe or whatever power responsible for the switch wants Cláudio to learn all these lessons by living inside a female body once again, without forcing the same challenges on Helena. She is slightly different in this story since the start: more independent, more self-assured, and she is not afraid to ask for the divorce and live on her own. She is not playing games, hoping that her husband will apologize and come back to her. It seems that the first experience switching bodies transformed her. The changes in Cláudio are less visible, though. He still is a workaholic, which is the reason Helena kicked him out at first, and he still is self-centered. Nonetheless, he is less of a womanizer. While his friend keeps insisting that he should go out with the woman that is interested in him at the club, Cláudio is very clear about his lack of interest in other women; he is not even interested in flirting. His behavior towards his daughter also changes slightly, as he changes from being strict to overprotective. It is hard to draw the line between those two behaviors, but after careful observation of this plotline, it is safe to assume that he tends more towards being overprotective than strict.

As the story develops, the audience can see that Cláudio goes through other mindful changes that are necessary for him to get to the point of the switching back to his own body. And

in this process, a few stereotypes are broken, such as: the film shows that pregnancy affects a person's body, even if it is a man inhabiting that body; even though Cláudio starts off as a very conservative person, he is the only one who suggests Bia terminate her pregnancy; and when Bia decides to keep her baby and to follow through with the wedding, she chooses to do it out of love for her boyfriend, and not because she feels pressured to do so. The strict father stereotype is also broken when Cláudio overcomes his pride and becomes supportive of Bia's desire; he is by her side during the wedding preparation and helps her get over her cold feed right before the ceremony. The last stereotype broken almost goes unnoticed. Bia seems to have everything decided for her: whether she will have the baby, that she will get married, and how her wedding will be, which is a very traditional one, mostly planned by her future mother-in-law. But in the end, she gets everything the way that she wants it. She says clearly in the beginning of the film that she loves Olavinho and wants to have the baby. She has one moment of doubt about the wedding before the ceremony; however, we find out that her doubts are because her parents are separated, and she is afraid the same might happen to her. Hence, she is actually in charge of her own life. In conclusion, we can say that this film, similarly to the first installment, uses stereotypical images as a way to break them down, provoke criticism, and show spectators another route when it comes to gender-role representation in cinematic productions.

### ***De Pernas pro Ar (Roberto Santucci, 2011)***

Alice (Ingrid Guimarães) is a workaholic businessperson who is so focused on a job promotion that she ends up losing everything she has, her husband, opportunities to connect with her son, and what she loves the most, her job. Instead of getting promoted, she is fired after accidentally bringing sex toys, instead of children's toys, to a business meeting at the toy

company where she worked. When she finds out that the sex toys belong to her neighbor Marcela (Maria Paula Fidalgo), Alice is furious and wonders what Marcela does for a living. The two women had crossed paths in the hall a few times before, and Alice had always judged her neighbor's skimpy outfits. However, after that initial interaction and once they are able to let go of first impressions, they bond and start a friendship, as well as a business partnership. Alice finds out that Marcela is a sex shop owner, and as Marcela gets to know Alice, she learns that even though Alice is very knowledgeable about business, she knows very little about her own body. Alice had never had an orgasm, and her newly found friend assists her in choosing the ideal sex toy to help her reach that milestone. After that, Alice becomes a more confident person all around, both professionally and in her private life. In return, Alice helps Marcela expand her business, and together they start to make more profit with the sex shop than either had made in any business before.

Everything seems to finally start working out for Alice and she is moving on with her life, when her husband João (Bruno Garcia) decides to give their relationship a second chance. The first sign we get that João might believe he is the one in control of the relationship and that his marriage is not a two-way street is when he decides that it was okay to leave a message on the answering machine letting Alice know that they needed a break. The second red flag comes when, after leaving her, he reemerges not to ask Alice to take him back but to let her know he would give her a new chance. What immediately follows is Alice looking forward to telling him about her new business endeavor, and Marcela warning her that men are generally not happy knowing that "their" women work in the business of selling sexual pleasure, especially conservative men, which at this point is a descriptor that seems to fit João. Marcela turns out to be right, and as Alice takes João into the sex shop without telling him where they were going, he

is completely disgusted by it, so Alice decides to hide her new business endeavor from her husband.

This story already shows an obvious gender role reversal, not typical of many romantic comedies, in which the female is the workaholic, not the male. She is obsessed with work and not with her husband, and, in that sense, she escapes the stereotype. She cannot remember any important dates for her marriage or their son's soccer games, and she needs to have her cell phone with her at all times. João, on the other hand, is an architect, but the audience does not see a single day of his work. He is shown resting and relaxing while his wife is constantly running around. Paulinho (João Fernandes), their son, is always trying to get his mother's attention, and it is obvious that the father is the more present figure. Alice is seen as egocentric and self-absorbed because she is so focused on her career, so much so that her husband decides to leave her. None of these characters is stereotypical for Brazilian standards, which does not mean that they are portrayed truthfully to reality. What it means is that these characters are not a representation of an overgeneralized belief about a certain group of people, except for João's character, more specifically how he is portrayed as Alice's husband. He demonstrates this need to control his wife and to decide what she should and should not do.

Of course, the fact that Alice is a workaholic is problematic, and the film introduces that as a way to develop most of its humor, as well as social criticism. She has a hard time balancing work and family life, tending to prioritize the former, and the film does not condone that. On the contrary, it shows how even though she does achieve success, in order to do so, she must compromise many aspects of her private life. However, one question remains implicit in this story is: why is it that, when a male works a lot, he is considered hardworking, but a female is seen as a workaholic who is not prioritizing her family? So, even though Alice's character is

meant to foster some reflection, the real stereotypical character is João (and that will become even clearer in the sequel to this film), who feels emasculated by Alice.

In her attempt to balance work life and private life, Alice has to constantly lie to her husband, as he does not accept her new career. When he finally finds out what she has been hiding from him, he is disappointed and is not able to tolerate having a wife who is in the sex toy business. João's character is described as a traditionally conservative male: he leaves his wife because she is working too much, and after they are back together, he wants to leave her again because she owns a sex shop. Alice is making more money than ever before in her life (she mentions that she had never seen so many zeros before when she sees their store profit), but all that João sees is the taboo. She most likely is the primary income earner in the household for all that we know, even though that is never mentioned. It is as if money does not matter in that parallel universe in which they live. However, another possible interpretation, even though never mentioned in the film, is that money is another source of irritation for João. It could be that he feels emasculated by the fact that his wife earns more than him; therefore, he keeps trying to exert his power any way that he can, in an effort to change her career choices and even have her quit work altogether when he sees that she chose a very profitable business path, as a way to sabotage Alice and make sure he is the breadwinner, not her. In the scene in which he finds out what she is doing for work, she is not doing anything promiscuous, immoral, or illegal: she is wearing a business outfit that is also sensual and provocative because she works in the sex toy industry (see fig. 3) and is on stage at a sex toy conference with all her staff, putting on a show. She is an entrepreneur. It is quite obvious that she is successful at what she does. Her husband is blinded by the fact that his wife is working in the sex industry, even if all that this means is that

she is the owner of a shop. Instead of being supportive and happy for her, João is disappointed, embarrassed, and he leaves, enraged.

Alice excuses João's stereotypical and conservative behavior and goes after him to explain herself and try to make amends. Now it is Alice's turn to behave stereotypically: she arrives in the hotel where João is and confronts the woman she thought was his lover, but it turns out the woman is having an affair with João's friend, also called João. At that moment, Alice is not just a workaholic, egocentric, liar, and negligent with her family, but she also is a crazy jealous wife. João leaves her again, and that is when Marcela calls to let Alice know that they were getting more business than ever before after their show. Is the Universe trying to tell her that she cannot have it all?



*Figure 3: Alice (Ingrid Guimarães) presenting on stage during a sex toy conference, in De Pernas pro Ar.*



As already observed, in this story João's character is the most stereotypical of all. He represents the controlling husband who wants to decide how his wife should live her life, and how much and where she should work. The gender role reversal in this film is not accidental. In *De Pernas Pro Ar*, João has the stereotypical role as the "controller" of the relationship, and he also tries to control the rest of his wife's life. Additionally, even though he continuously gives up on the relationship, she always finds a way to reconcile, leading the audience to wonder who really has the control; and that is also where the film delivers the reshaping of the stereotype. The gender role reversal here contributes to the humor but also helps open our eyes to the criticism that permeates the narrative. This criticism lies in designing a character that acts in a way that is so outrageous that it is impossible to ignore, forcing the spectator to reflect upon that behavior and upon the stereotype itself. For example: how can a husband announce he is leaving his wife by leaving a message on an answering machine? Then he leaves her once again, because he cannot accept the kind of job she performs, even though it is an honest, legal job that does not go against his religion? How can he leave her simply because he does not like what she is doing and he wishes to make the decisions for her? Moreover, João might be bothered by the fact that Alice could be making more than him; and lastly, after they reconciled the first time, Alice learned what an orgasm was and became more adventurous in bed. At some point, João brings that up as a criticism, proving once again that he is a conservative man who prefers to remain in control. There must be a change in one direction or another so that the audience can understand the film's position. Is the film siding with the conservative João, or the adventurous, hardworking, sex shop owner Alice? That answer comes by the end of the film.

Six months after João leaves Alice once again, at the sex toy conference stage, she is a very successful and award-winning businessperson who seems to be putting more effort into

becoming a more involved parent; however, they are separated. Alice is attending an award ceremony where she wins the most respected award, when she realizes she wanted her family to be there with her. So, she leaves to be reunited with João, who was going on a boat trip with Paulinho. He takes her back easily, which makes for an unexciting and quite expected ending at that point, and surprisingly, he does not ask her to give up her job, even though she does say her family is her priority and, as proof, she ignores a work call by throwing her cell phone in the sea. Nonetheless, after trying to exert so much control over his wife's life, João seems to have suddenly given up on being the sole holder of power. Then, behind her husband's and her son's back, when Alice is all alone, we see that she has a backup phone and she takes that business call. The call is about an opportunity to expand her sex shop, Sexdelícia, to the United States. Finally, the film confirms that she is the one in control, not her husband. Thus, with this final nudge, *De Pernas pro Ar* criticizes the stereotype of the controlling husband. However, it leaves the audience wondering how, out of thin air, did João lose his will to control Alice? Did he suddenly realize his behavior was unacceptable? Was Alice's promise to give her family more attention enough for him? Unfortunately, the film does not provide an answer, but it does show support for Alice.

Even though the message of *De Pernas pro Ar* might seem to be that the only way a woman can have it all – career, family, love – is if she hides her passion for work from her family and pretends to be a good wife who only works the amount of time that her husband determines to be suitable, the message also can be interpreted as a way of saying that times have changed, even though a few men still live in the past. João is a conservative man, but Alice is willing to make it work with him because she loves him. Nevertheless, she knows that she is the one calling the shots. She is the one tricking her husband and keeping all the things she loves.

Even though this is not a full win for her, the sequel will help her slowly reshape these stereotypes.

***De Pernas pro Ar 2 (Roberto Santucci, 2012)***

*De Pernas pro Ar 2* starts with footage of Alice making a wish on her sixth birthday. She says that, when she grows up, she wants to marry a prince and be a businessperson who works a lot and makes a lot of money by owning a toy factory. This is a reminder that this is who Alice is and has always wanted to be: a hardworking person who has highly prioritized work, even as a child. But she also has dreamed of love and of having someone who would be by her side. Fast-forward to present-day Alice: she has it all but is so overworked that she has a nervous breakdown and passes out on top of a cake while opening her 100<sup>th</sup> Sexdelícia store, and her collapse goes viral on YouTube. She is also about to open her first store in New York City, as hinted at by the phone call in the end of the first film, and does not want to slow down. Her husband João seems to be more accepting and supportive of her career but appears to worry about her health, as does her son.

Even though João seems to be more understanding this time around, he is still a stereotypical character due to his need to exert his masculinity and control his wife's life. Another stereotypical character that this film introduces is Vitória (Christine Fernandes). We meet her the night after Alice's breakdown. Alice and João go to a dinner at the house of their friend Marcão, who also is João's business partner, and that is when we are introduced to the "wonder woman" Vitória, who is Marcão's girlfriend. She is a cardiac surgeon who just operated on the governor, mother of four super-well-behaved kids who are sitting down reading quietly, and a baby who is sleeping soundly while she cooks in the kitchen without any help. The four

kids get up to go to bed when she comes in and claps twice. She also claims to not have maids because she does not like strangers in the house, so she does all the housework herself. In addition to all that, she looks amazingly beautiful and very relaxed. Vitória's character is an obvious caricature, and her insertion in the story represents a criticism of social expectations about how women should be able to do it all: have kids, be amazing housewives, stay gorgeous, calm and happy, and even perform open-heart surgery. She even has two ex-husbands, and, as one of her children is a baby, she recently has given birth.

When she first enters the scene, she supposedly is walking in from the kitchen, but she comes in wearing the biggest smile on her face and does not look tired at all; she is glowing (see fig. 4). The very sexist song, "She's a Lady," by Tom Jones, is playing as she walks in. The scene is shown in slow motion, and a fan is blowing against her hair, even though they are inside a house, and no wind is blowing. The audience can see this technique of imitating the real thing for comical purposes used as parody, a very common tool used in comedies, especially in *chanchadas*, as shown in Chapter 1. Similarly to João, Vitória's character traits are also introduced as a mechanism of self-destruction. Her charms will not take her anywhere. At the same time that she is, without question, a stereotypical representation of a working mother, unquestionably the film is performing an intentional critique, due to the exaggerated depiction and use of techniques such as the slow-motion camera and the fan blowing on Vitória's hair. Even her name is a joke: victory.



*Figure 4: Vitória (Christine Fernandes) walking in the living room to meet her guests, from the kitchen.*

As the story continues, the criticism of the main stereotypical character, João, becomes once again, more explicit. After Alice's second breakdown, this time in front of American investors, her husband forces her to take a 30-day vacation at a rehabilitation center for obsessive behaviors, where she is isolated and not allowed to keep any technological devices. There she will find plenty of (secondary) stereotyped characters, such as the sex-addicted soccer player, the kleptomaniac actress, the young hacker, and the strict and sex-deprived supervisor. Even though, according to her doctor's and husband's orders, she is supposed to be resting, Alice continues to work from the center and comes up with the idea for a new sex toy, inspired by a handheld massage device. Soon she discovers that the rehab supervisor has never orgasmed, and she asks Marcela to send the supervisor a gift in the form of a sex toy, which Alice sees as her ticket out. With new American investors on board but still with recommendations to stay away from work, Alice tells João they should go on a vacation to New York. However, her actual intentions are to meet with the businesspeople who are willing to finance her first store abroad. Hence, João,

Paulinho, Alice and their maid Rosa embark on a “vacation” to New York City, and that is when the adventure begins.

While in New York, Alice will have to live a double life, divided between family and work. One of the most famous scenes of this film recalls *Mrs. Doubtfire*'s (Chris Columbus, 1993) restaurant scene in which Robin Williams must switch back and forth between being Mrs. Doubtfire and Daniel Hillard, changing tables incessantly to keep up with a business meeting at one and a dinner party at the other, until eventually he makes a mistake and his identity is revealed. Likewise, Alice needs to have one final meeting with one of the investors during lunch on the second floor of a restaurant, and she decides to take her family for lunch on the first floor of the same restaurant. And that is where her mask falls off. However, when they go back to the hotel and João is giving her a lecture about how she betrayed his trust, he receives a text from Vitória, and Alice finds out that they had shared a kiss while she was in rehab. That is when their marriage explodes yet again. João leaves unapologetically, and Alice stays behind to finish overseeing the opening of her New York store.

This is the fourth time that João leaves his wife since the first film. And once again, Alice goes on with her life and continues to do what she does best: work. However, the audience again expects the couple to end up together, given that this is a romantic comedy, though this time a third party shows interest in Alice. The attraction comes from one of the investors, who was dating Alice's partner Marcela, which further complicates matters. During the grand opening of her New York store, João shows up to support her, after Alice's mom reminds him of the six-year-old Alice who dreamed of having her own toy factory and a prince by her side. For the second time, it does not seem to take much for João to suddenly loosen his grip and realize that

he does not have control over Alice. All Alice had to do was to be there with open arms. And this change of heart for João is how the film reshapes the stereotype.

At the end of the film, Alice learns that her nervous breakdowns were actually early pregnancy symptoms, and that aligns with my argument of the reshaping of the stereotypes. As it turned out, Alice was not overworked or “not able to keep up,” as the other characters kept repeating; she was fatigued from making a human being. Yet again, Alice is able to have it all: the job of her dreams and the man she loves. And, as a good *globochanchada* does, the end hints that a follow-up film will be launched, when a French businessman approaches Alice with a business proposal during the grand opening party. Because Alice is Alice, she simply invites her husband to Paris, pretending that all she wants is to go on a romantic vacation.

In this film, we are reminded again of the gender role reversal, with Alice being the one obsessed with work and João being the one complaining about how she always prioritizes work over family. Even though João is more accepting of Alice’s business choice this time around, he is still represented as very traditional and conservative in his decision to send Alice to rehab against her will, as if she is a minor under his legal guardianship, and in the way in which he keeps leaving her without having an adult conversation about it with her, as if he is the only one to have a say in their relationship. Also, while she is away in rehab, he does the one thing that makes him feel more powerful and less emasculated: He kisses another woman. And it is not just any woman, it is the one woman who is her exact opposite, the perfect Vitória. Even though it is just one kiss, it is significant because if João is a conservative, then Vitória is a perfect match for him, as she is the “wonder woman.” She would most likely cook, sew, put the kids to bed, and perform open-heart surgery before 6:00 p.m., and do so in heels, wearing makeup, and with a smile on her face. That set of attributes likely describes João’s ideal woman. But it also brings up

the question: why did Vitória's boyfriend leave her if she is so perfect? When Vitória and João kiss, she shares with him how hard it is to find a good man, which is hard to believe given that she is so perfect. And how is it that Alice, the more real woman but the one who is far from perfect, has two candidates to choose from? Is the film trying to tell us something? And why didn't João choose to stay with Vitória, since she was showing interest? Maybe because perfection does not exist and it is just a stereotype, and that is what the film is trying to reshape and resignify.

This story breaks the stereotypes it presents by either making them too caricaturesque, as in Vitória's case, or by turning them into a societal critique and showing us that another path is possible, as in João's case with his need to control Alice in order to maintain his masculinity. João, the demanding husband who thinks he can command his wife, and Vitória, the "wonder woman" who can do it all but who says she cannot find a good man, are characters who bring laughs, but they do more than that. They help the audience see that societal expectations of what a woman and a man should be are not real most times, but when portrayed as extremes, they can be very comical.

Last but not least, another commentary that this film makes in the very beginning is regarding Marcela, a happy, successful businesswoman who is separated, and has a child with her ex. In the end of the first film, she was very excited to finally be with the man she had been infatuated with during the whole film, and she was thrilled to be pregnant with his baby. Now, with zero explanation, she has a baby in her arms and her significant other has disappeared. It would be easy for the filmmakers to simply not physically include the character of the partner or father, they could just mention him. However, they intentionally decided to make Marcela a "single mother." Later on, she is complaining that she misses having the company of a male. I



believe that Marcela's presence in this sequel is aimed at making a commentary on the hardships of being a strong, determined businesswoman and wanting to have a love life at the same time. Her character leads a parallel life when compared to Alice's, which also provokes reflection, and that single trait of Marcela's character being unable to have it all forms quite a stereotypical image.

### ***Loucas pra Casar* (Roberto Santucci, 2015)**

For this last film, I will need to provide a summary of the plot before we move on to the analysis of the stereotypical protagonist. Starring Ingrid Guimarães, just like the previous two films, this story starts at its end, with a bride running from the church on her wedding day and stopping on a bridge to jump to her death. Unexpectedly, once she arrives at her chosen jumping spot, she meets two other brides who also are about to jump (see fig. 5). The three of them have distinctively different tastes in clothing and also very different ways of talking. The trio is played by Suzana Pires, Ingrid Guimarães, and Tatá Werneck. The groom, Samuel (Márcio Garcia), arrives at the bridge, and it is revealed that the three women all share the same groom. Then we are taken back to the beginning of the story and the start of the relationship between Malu (Guimarães) and Samuel. They both work for a real estate agency and are into sexual role play. She is his assistant, but early on it appears that she does not let him use his position to take advantage of her. Since they have access to a lot of houses for sale, they use those to fulfill their fantasies. Her greatest dream is to marry Samuel, and she hopes it will be soon, as she is in her late thirties. Malu narrates the film at the beginning.



*Figure 5: The three brides of the film Loucas pra Casar, ready to jump from a bridge.*

Malu is so obsessive about every detail in her life that she even counts her boyfriend's condoms, and that is how she finds out that three are missing, which leads her to suspect that he has a lover. So, she hires a private investigator, who finds out about a mysterious "masked woman." Her name is Lucia (Suzana Pires), and she is an exotic dancer. As soon as we are introduced to her, Lucia starts to narrate the film. The detective unveils that Samuel is having an affair with the masked woman, and he takes pictures of them together, but we are unable to see the woman's face in the photos. After an amazing night with Samuel, Lucia also starts to suspect that he has another woman, because Samuel calls her by Malu's name by accident.

Malu and Lucia finally meet, and it does not go well. They find out that they both love Samuel, have each been with him for exactly three years, and decide to go to Samuel's house and force him to choose who he wants to be with. But to their surprise, a third woman is there, Maria (Tatá Werneck). Malu and Lucia are already distinct enough, with Malu being obsessed by organization and order and Lucia being the "naughty" one who is fixated on sex. Maria is the textbook definition of a "santa," a good girl. She is 21 years old, religious, a virgin, loves to do

household chores, and according to her, will always obey her man's wishes, even if that means putting her own wishes last. That is all explained in her own voice, as the third narrator. She also has been with Samuel for three years, and he also has promised to marry her, as he did to all of them. During this entire time, Samuel has been in a meeting in São Paulo, so the women cannot confront him.

After this grand meeting, we discover that Malu's mother is senile, and a nurse takes care of her. Samuel also helps financially, and Malu is confused about why the man who is cheating on her is so good to her. Later on, we learn that Malu's mother Suely (Camila Amado) needs to be admitted to the hospital. We then understand that Suely has had mental health issues for a while, not merely in her elder years. Samuel wants to get Malu's mind off of things and invites her on a trip to a place where one of his friends had proposed to his wife. Malu goes along, expecting to be proposed to, and once she arrives, she discovers that Lucia and Maria are also there, invited by Samuel. The three women fight but decide to wait and see who Samuel will choose. The film never shows the three girlfriends with Samuel at the same time. They try to monopolize Samuel's time during the day while he is planning his big wedding proposal. When he finally pops the question to Malu, she does not think twice.

However, before the wedding, Malu finds out that Samuel also proposed to the other two women, so the three of them plan to face him on the big day. The day arrives and Malu is waiting for Maria and Lucia, who have not shown up yet. Suely is lucid, and as Malu tells her that she is waiting for the other brides, Suely explains that the only other brides are the ones inside of her, and that we are all multiple people. She says that Malu is lucky that Samuel accepts her the way that she is, as her father could not do the same. That is when Malu looks at herself in the mirror and sees Maria and Lucia as her other personalities by her side. The film finally reveals that

Malu is a nickname for “Maria Lucia,” the two other women who live inside of her. “Malu” also is from the first two syllables for the word, “maluca,” which means “crazy” in Portuguese. The three of them try to walk down the aisle to marry Samuel, but one by one they run away and end up on that bridge. Samuel catches Malu, but she decides to call off the wedding and get herself some help.

One year later, Suely has passed and Malu is driving away from the funeral with her friends. Maria and Lucia seem to be gone. As a romantic comedy, we can expect that, by now, a reencounter is probably on the horizon for her and Samuel. She says she is finally realizing that she turned herself into several people in order to try to please Samuel, just so she could fulfill her obsessive desire to get married. She says that she has been in therapy for one year and now is able to see that it was all a fantasy. And right then, Malu sees a wedding at a church and Samuel attending it. He looks completely different, older, bald, much less attractive than he used to be or than she used to see him (see fig. 6). Her friends say that is what he always looked like; she just fantasized that he looked more handsome than what he really was. As expected, Malu and Samuel quickly reconcile and get married. The film does not show much of this process, only the result. As they are driving to their honeymoon after their wedding, Malu says how great it is to see him for what he really is and not just a fantasy. She seems to be a much more sane, balanced person, and that is when Samuel says, “a gente vai ser muito feliz,” to which she responds, “pode acreditar,” and looks back smiling at Maria and Lucia, who are giggling in the backseat.



*Figure 6: Samuel as Malu saw him before she started therapy (left) and what he actually looked like (right).*

This summary is necessary in order to understand the stereotyped character that this film introduces. It is obvious that the three women together are the stereotypical representation of the perfect woman, according to what society prescribes: one is hardworking, organized and focused, another is a sexy exotic dancer obsessed with sex, and the third is the “saint,” a good housewife, religious, who likes to obey her partner’s every wishes even if it costs her own. When Malu finds out that she suffers from a mental disorder, which likely is multiple personality disorder, and decides to call off the wedding and get treatment, that is the film reshaping the stereotype and resignifying it. When we are reintroduced to the character of Malu, she seems to be in a much better place: she says she has been in therapy and realizes she was obsessed with the idea of marriage, which made her want to be multiple people to please Samuel. Thus, the film avoids using labels such as “multiple personality disorder” and decides to go with the old stereotype of “desperate single woman trying to hook a man to get him to propose to her.” In this case, her stereotypification is so intense that it even made her mind come up with new

personalities that she did not consciously acknowledge, only to satisfy her boyfriend. Since it is a romantic comedy, her reconciliation with Samuel is inevitable. However, since they were apart for one year and the film shows Malu explaining how she got help and is in a much better place, we expect that to be the signal that the reshaping happened and that her character is resignified, no longer stereotyped. Unfortunately, in the very last scene, the film reintroduces the three characters together once again, Maria and Lucia, riding along with Malu. The stereotype is alive and well.

Even though the film did not label Malu's mental disorder directly and only says that she made herself into multiple people in order to please Samuel, other hints in the film confirm that Malu, indeed, had a mental disorder. First, her mother had a mental disorder, so it could have been inherited; second, on her first wedding day, her mother says that she (Malu) has multiple people living inside of her and that she is lucky that Samuel has accepted her as she is; third, even though she was in therapy for a year and was doing much better (she was even able to see Samuel the way he truly looked), the other two personalities were still with her; and the last hint is in the title of the film itself, *Loucas pra Casar*. The title uses a pejorative word to send the message that the protagonist is "crazy." Hence, the film not only maintains the stereotypical image of the woman who needs to make herself into several different ones in order to be perfect, but it also decides to deal with mental disorder, a very delicate issue, in a tactless way. Considering it is a comedy, by avoiding the labels, it makes it seem like mental disorder is a joke. Thus, *Loucas pra Casar* does not reshape the stereotypical image that it introduces, and in the process, it also misses its chance to shed light on a very important, current, serious topic.

## Conclusion

After analyzing these five romantic comedies, I am able to answer the question asked at the beginning of the chapter. Most of these films in fact use stereotypical images as a mechanism of reconfiguration, protesting against conservative ideas and delivering more than humor but also a good dose of societal criticism. This is a very important task that falls on media's shoulders, as previous research has suggested. According to Cynthia Carter, "the mass media reflect dominant values and attitudes in society" (367), and more than that, they have the power to influence people, encouraging or discouraging them to follow paths or take certain roles (Carter 367).

These romantic comedies are choosing a risky yet bold path, because while they still need to entertain a middle class audience that is not yet fully ready to completely break free from traditional conservative norms, they also are willing to step into a new era where they are starting to take risks and use humor, caricature, and exaggerated ingrained stereotypes to provoke criticism. In order to do so, they introduce stereotypical characters such as the *machista* husband, the submissive wife, the controlling husband and the perfect working mom, and slowly reshape their images with the help of situations, other characters, and interactions with society itself. They learn how to adapt to the "real world" and how to become more genuine, less stereotyped, or, in the case of *Vitória*, they end up in a dead-end street, since, as a true caricature, they are too surreal to exist.

Only one of the five films analyzed here, *Loucas pra Casar*, fails to break down the stereotypes as its counterparts do, and, unfortunately, reinforces the stereotype it introduces. It presents a very well-known type of character in film: a woman in her late thirties who is obsessed with getting married. She is so obsessed that she makes herself into two other women in order to please her boyfriend. Or does she suffer from a mental disorder? Unfortunately, the

film does not treat the issue in a tactful enough way, so the answer is never revealed. Thus, in this case, the romantic comedy keeps the stereotypical image from beginning to end, aiming only at the laughs, in order to draw viewers and profit.

One important theme permeates all these films. All five show stories of married women, or women who are getting married. The only woman who is not married, Vitória, ends up lonely, and Bia, the one who was not lonely and is pregnant, gets married in the end. In that way, the films reinforce traditional patriarchal values. Tatiana Signorelli Heise makes a similar observation in her analysis of *Women of Brazil* and other films of the same period. According to Heise, a “recurrent notion in contemporary films – comedies or not – is that women who reject traditional marriage end up lonely and unhappy, as if other forms of relationship were not possible” (8). Heise also suggests that, according to her findings, until 2006, fictional Brazilian cinema still portrayed women by reinforcing traditional *machista* stereotypical representations (10). This study showed some new developments, as well as some stereotype reshaping, but not enough to suggest that this reality has completely changed. Hence, even though most of these films try to break stereotypical images and invert or neutralize gender roles, work still needs to be done, but it is a work in progress towards a better, more egalitarian future.

In this sample, four out of five films indicate that recent Brazilian romantic comedies are aiming at more than simply laughs. Hopefully, this statistic continues to grow and filmmakers provide more romantic comedies working towards breaking stereotypical images and delivering social criticism through good doses of humor in the years to come.



## CHAPTER THREE

### LGBTQ Representation in Comedies of the Post-Retomada

#### Introduction

In Chapter 2, I observed that in the 15 years investigated for this dissertation, not a single romantic comedy has a gay protagonist. I identified a few gay characters, but none served as a central character. In the 73 films that incorporate the corpus of this dissertation, only two present gay characters as protagonists: *Crô* and *O Concurso*. David William Foster observes that, “virtually all films based on the traditional love-story formula transmit, even if never in so many words, a confirmation of established heterosexist roles, with a tightly circumscribed definition of masculine and feminine” (15). Even though the presence of LGBTQ characters has increased noticeably in Brazilian cinema in recent years, when it comes to casting them as central roles in comedies, this is still uncharted territory. In this chapter, I argue that comedies of the post-Retomada period that introduce LGBTQ characters in more central roles tend to use less stereotypical images than popular films traditionally did until recently. These films also attempt to portray LGBTQ characters in a more well-rounded manner than before. Even though these are not ideal depictions, as they still can be flawed, using generalizations and clichéd representations, especially to contribute to the work’s humor, recent films have attempted to construct images of LGBTQ people that are not solely based on stereotypes. In order to support this argument and provide concrete examples, in this chapter I look at post-Retomada comedy films from 2003-2016 with LGBTQ characters in a central or “standout role,” which means a protagonist role or a secondary role with significant importance.

Antônio do Nascimento Moreno has conducted an extensive study of the presence of gay and lesbian characters in Brazilian feature films. Up until the 1960s, the subject was taboo, and very few films dared to touch the topic. Most of the films that did address the subject are comedies or dramatic comedies, such as *Ai Vem os Cadetes!* directed by Luiz de Barros, in 1959 (Moreno 5). After the 1960s and mainly in the 1970s, the presence of gay and lesbian characters in films increased, not only in comedies but in other genres as well (Moreno 6). However, it is really in the *pornochanchada* of the 1970s and the 1980s where it is possible to identify a more constant presence of gay characters, and these films tended to portray them in a caricatural, exaggerated way:

O cinema brasileiro chegou ao ponto de apresentar o gay da tela, carnavalizado, afetado, por vezes malicioso, vivo, porém sempre ridicularizado e até diminuído como pessoa humana. E isso, como se estivesse mostrando o homossexual da vida real, aquele que convive com a plateia, com a sociedade. (Moreno 6)

Moreno concludes that, even though the presence of gay and lesbian characters has increased throughout the decades in Brazil (from 19 films before 1960 to 104 between 1960 and 1980), his study reveals that this portrayal is rooted in stereotypical characteristics that generally portray the gay or lesbian character as politically alienated, as generally someone from the lower-middle class, underemployed, aggressive, flamboyant, and lonely because of their promiscuity (Moreno 136). Hence, these films perpetuate a misrepresentation that may send an inaccurate message of how gay or a lesbian people actually behave. Hugo Aurélio Rocha Ribeiro delivers a reminder that cinema may affect social constructs and how an entire group image is perceived by society (93). Hence, certain patterns that are constantly found attached to the gay character in the cinema, such as perversion and marginalization, begin to

be thought of as a commonly found identity of a gay person in the real world, i.e., a stereotype (Ribeiro 95).

Even though Moreno's focus of only looking at gay characters is, in one sense, more specific than mine and in another sense, it is more general because he analyzes all film genres, not just comedies, his investigation is a good starting point for this study, as I pick up almost where he leaves off. Of the 73 comedies in the corpus examined in this dissertation, only 14, or 20.5% of the total, have LGBTQ characters in a central or standout role. Considering the increase in the number of gay and lesbian characters that occurred during the *chanchada* and *pornochanchada* years, as Moreno observed, it is important to observe and question why the post-Retomada, whose humor is heavily influenced by the *chanchada*, did not see an increase in the number of LGBTQ characters in a more central role.

In this dissertation I choose to look at LGBTQ characters, not just gay and lesbian ones. By using a more encompassing term, I can provide more data, as well as offer a study that is more current and inclusive. According to GLAAD Media Reference Guide – Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Glossary of Terms, LGBTQ is an “Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. Sometimes, when the Q is seen at the end of LGBT, it can also mean questioning.” Hence, in this research, I offer an understanding of how LGBTQ characters in central roles are represented in popular Brazilian comedies produced between 2003 and 2016.

## **Methodology and Corpus**

As Brazil is mainly a heteronormative, patriarchal society, it is not surprising that only 20.5% of films in my corpus present LGBTQ characters in a central role. As I already

indicated, even though the presence of gay characters in Brazilian cinema has increased over the years, they are still misrepresented and stereotyped (Moreno 136). Next, I will discuss how these films portray LGBTQ characters who are not just bystanders in the background of the story but are active participants in the plot and who have central roles in these films. In order to do so, I will use a methodology inspired by Moreno's study, as he already developed such a careful and thorough analysis of the presence and representation of gay characters in Brazilian cinema from its beginning to the early 1990s.

In his research, Moreno found three main stereotypes that films tend to associate with gay characters: the *marginal*, the *transvestite*, and what he calls the *gay clown*. What Moreno found in his research was that the *marginal* stereotype was generally represented as a gay character associated with poverty and crime, while the *transvestite* character was generally associated with prostitution and promiscuity, and the *gay clown* was an extremely caricatured effeminate gay character who is intended to make the audience laugh. I would like to clarify that I do not concur with the inaccurate portrayals that these films offer of gay or queer people, and as far as I understand, neither does Moreno. This is simply the result of his investigation. It proves that, unfortunately, at least until 1992, films represented gay and queer people in a very negative and misguided light. However, since Moreno has already provided a first step for investigation, in order to verify whether the trend continues, I will use similar categories to analyze and classify the characters in this study: the *criminal*, the *sex-obsessed*, and the *effeminately-comical*. To those three categories, I will add two more: *not out*, for those who are hiding their sex orientation, sometimes even from themselves, and seem to be ashamed to admit that they have something queer about them, and the *non-stereotyped* for those characters that are presented in a non-biased, straightforward manner.

The 15 films with LGBTQ characters in a standout role are: *Sexo com Amor?* (Wolf Maya, 2008), *Divã* (José Alvarenga Jr., 2009), *Os Normais 2* (José Alvarenga Jr, 2009), *As Melhores Coisas do Mundo* (Laís Bodanzky, 2010), *Cilada.com* (José Alvarenga Jr., 2011), *Totalmente Inocentes* (Rodrigo Bittencourt, 2012), *Crô – o Filme* (Bruno Barreto, 2013), *O Concurso* (Pedro Vasconcelos, 2013), *Vai que Cola* (César Eduardo Rodrigues, 2015), *Minha Mãe é uma Peça* (André Pellenz, 2013), *Os Homens São de Marte... e É pra Lá Que Eu Vou!* (Marcus Baldini, 2014), *Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2* (César Rodrigues, 2016), *Tô Ryca* (Pedro Antônio, 2016), *Um Suburbano Sortudo* (Roberto Santucci, 2016), and *O Shaolin do Sertão* (Helder Gomes, 2016). As mentioned previously, only *Crô* and *O Concurso* have a queer or gay character as the protagonist or one of the protagonists. Interestingly, none of these 15 films are from 2003 to 2007, which are the first years in my corpus.

What follows is a closer look at the characters in each of these films. However, instead of following a chronological order, I have decided to follow a more organic order, discussing together the films that have similarities. I grouped the films according to the type of character that they introduce: gays and lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders, drag queens, and cross-dressers. I start by providing a definition for each term, followed by a general overview of how the films that feature those types of characters represent them. Finally, I offer one or more examples to illustrate my argument. After listing all types of LGBTQ characters in these films, how the films generally represent them, and classifying them according to their respective categories depending on their representative traits in the films, I will list all the combined details of character name, type of LGBTQ character, classification within LGBTQ, and film name in a table at the end of this chapter before I draw conclusions.

## Gay or Lesbian Characters

According to GLAAD, the word *gay* is defined as:

The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., *gay man*, *gay people*).

Sometimes *lesbian* (n. or adj.) is the preferred term for women. (6)

Unsurprisingly, most of the titles in the corpus of this study are in this category, nine in total. Films generally represent these characters either as effeminately-comical or non-stereotypically. I identified 14 gay or lesbian characters in the films analyzed, and, while five introduce characters whose sexual orientation is simply another fact of their representation, another five introduce characters that belong to the effeminately-comical category. Films tend to portray characters in the latter category as extremely flamboyant, loud, difficult to appease, vain, and very picky in general. All of these five effeminately-comical characters are male. Some overlapping will occur, as a few of these characters will also be in other categories; for example, Ferdinando, from the film *Vai que Cola* (César Rodrigues, 2015), is classified as a gay character and as a drag queen, as he is both in the film. When I analyze him for the category “gay characters,” I observe his portrayal while he was not a drag queen. In order to examine some of these characteristics, I will take a closer look at two characters: Crô, from *Crô – o Filme* (Bruno Barreto, 2013), and Aníbal, from *Os Homens São de Marte...* (Marcus Baldini, 2014).

Crô (Marcelo Serrado) is a character from a Brazilian telenovela (*Fina Estampa*,<sup>33</sup> written by Aguinaldo Silva, 2001), whose success rendered a cinematic spinoff. In the

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<sup>33</sup> Globo is currently re-airing this telenovela in prime time (during the first semester of 2020).

telenovela, Crodoaldo Valério (Crô) is a very dedicated butler to the villain Tereza Cristina (Christiane Torloni), even though she constantly torments and mistreats him. Her chauffeur, the *machista* Baltazar (Alexandre Nero), is also a loyal servant. After she disappears in the ocean and is pronounced legally dead, Crô finds out that Tereza Cristina left her house and half of her fortune to him. Consequently, he becomes the new boss of the house, and that is where the film picks up. Although his queerness is a given — expressed by his tone of voice, phrases, mannerisms, and clothing (see fig. 7) — the film's thematic focus is on Crô's unanticipated wealth and how he will use it. However, the story culminates (rather unexpectedly) with him finding love where it was least likely, with the tough and homophobic chauffeur Baltazar. Nonetheless, if the audience observes carefully, it might figure out that this love affair was not so unexpected.

According to an article published online by the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*, telenovela screenwriter Aguinaldo Silva revealed that he found himself in a rather difficult situation while writing *Fina Estampa*. Crô had a secret lover who was never revealed. Silva finally disclosed who that lover was and why his identity was never revealed. It turns out he was one of the villains (Ferdinand, played by Carlos Machado), and that, combined with the fact that the audience started to root for an affair between Crô and Baltazar (who was married to a woman in the telenovela), forced Silva to keep the lover a mystery. Silva also said that his decision not to reveal the lover's identity was such an unfortunate one that he had to stay locked up in his apartment for days, because every time he walked outside someone would come right up to him to ask questions about it, which also shows how intense telenovela culture is in Brazil. Consequently, the film was an opportunity to repair the romantic damage caused by the telenovela as well as an attempt to appease the audience hoping to see an affair

between Crô and Baltazar. That relationship on its own is an interesting detail for analysis, as Crô and Baltazar are opposites in everything. However, during the time the telenovela was airing, one of the main topics of discussion among the audience in online forums and in the streets was whether Baltazar was a “closeted gay.” The answer was reserved for the film.

In the film, Crô is dating Ferdinand’s twin brother, Jean Jacques (also played by Carlos Machado), a character who does not exist in the soap opera. Crô also is struggling to find the perfect boss or diva, because he believes his lifelong mission is to please a woman and he will only find happiness by serving a “goddess.” Along with his chauffeur Baltazar and his maid Marilda (Katia Moraes), he starts interviewing possible *patroas*.

Crô flirts with Baltazar during the whole film, while the butler reacts aggressively, insisting that he is not gay and repeatedly calling Crô derogatory names such as *viado* and *boiola*. In the very last scene, when Crô and Jean Jacques are getting married, which seems to have been planned all along but is never mentioned at any previous moment in the story, Baltazar steals Crô from the altar, also quite unexpectedly. They share no kissing, no hugging, just a very aggressive interaction in which the two characters exchange very few words. Crô does not explain anything to his original groom, and they just flee together as Baltazar grabs Crô by the wrists and almost throws him into the front seat of the car.

This film introduces three gay characters: Crô, Baltazar, and Jean Jacques. According to the methodology I am using to classify the types of characters in this section, and as mentioned before, Crô can be categorized as *effeminately-comical*; Baltazar is a *not out* character, because he always speaks vehemently about how he is not gay, even cursing his boss and offending him only to steal Crô from the altar in the end; and Jean Jacques would be *non-stereotyped*, as his identity does not revolve around the fact that he is gay, as he is not



flamboyant or loud, has a regular job as a professional oil platform scuba diver, and he is characterized as a “nice guy.”



*Figure 7: Crô casually laying down on his bed.*

Jean Jacques' characterization is almost the exact opposite of Crô's. While the former's does not revolve around his sexual orientation, Crô's whole characterization revolves around the fact that he is gay. Almost every dialogue reminds us of his sexual orientation, as if each single detail about how he is physically portrayed was not enough. According to Ribeiro, this type of behavior is commonly seen in the cinema, depicting a character's homosexuality not as just one of his characteristics but as his totality: “ser gay já era, em si, a personagem e o motivo de sua existência na trama. Em geral, apenas para se fazer rir do homossexual e seus trejeitos diferentes” (95). Crô wears mostly extravagant and fancy clothes, colorful eyeglasses that match his clothes, always a bowtie, and extremely well-combed hair. He also behaves very dramatically: he once climbs a tree at a cemetery and shouts from it that he needs a woman to serve; he often speaks to his dead mother through her gigantic statue in the middle of his entry hall, as if she was there; and

occasionally he tells his servants to “freeze” and they do. Moreover, he believes that his life mission is to serve a goddess, a diva, and be submissive to her. He uses several sweet pet-names for Baltazar even before they start dating that show his affection for him while also infuriating him and make up most of the humor of the film.

This is the only comedy in the corpus of this research that has a gay protagonist who finds love (twice!).<sup>34</sup> Even though his quest for love is not the central point of this story, it is still a noteworthy detail. And, since this romantic theme was inherited from the telenovela as this study noted, the audience who watched *Fina Estampa* certainly would be expecting this union to finally happen in the spinoff film.

The other character I would like to analyze closer is Aníbal, from *Os Homens são de Marte*, (Marcus Baldini, 2014). Paulo Gustavo plays Aníbal, best gay friend and business partner of the protagonist Fernanda (Mônica Martelli). In this film, he sports a fluffy dark blond wig, glasses, as well as fancy outfits (see fig. 8). He is a very funny but negative person, constantly giving bad relationship advice to Fernanda, and is extremely focused on himself. Most of the reasons for his arguments seem to be related to his sexual preferences. For example, when Fernanda is applying a small amount of face cream that she says is an expensive formula used to rejuvenate, he puts his entire hand inside the small container and applies it to his face, even though she had not offered him any. When she complains, he says that he had to do it because they are going to a meeting with a client and he is nervous about it, not because the client, who is the mother of the groom, is picky but because the groom himself “é uma delícia!” in Aníbal’s own words. The audience finds out later that the groom

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<sup>34</sup> In *O Concurso* a narrator mentions quickly, after the story is finished, that our queer character found love, but it is a side note, and he is not the sole protagonist in that film.

is gay as well, and a *not out* character. Then they feel like the cream is burning their skin, and he says he is allergic to it because of his homosexuality: “fecho a glote por motivo de homossexualidade!” (which is funny and wrong at the same time; but he is allowed to say that because he is gay, so he makes it okay for the audience to laugh). So they run to the restroom, and he almost walks into the female restroom when Fernanda stops him and he says that it does not matter, that the other restroom will be filthy anyway.



Figure 8: Anibal (Paulo Gustavo's character) in *Os Homens são de Marte*.

Anibal is loud, flamboyant, effeminate, and extravagant. His voice is very high-pitched and he sashays his hips when he walks. He is stereotyped in many ways, and a lot of the humor in this film is indebted to this character and his stereotypical and clownish ways. Undoubtedly, he is a great example of the *effeminately-comical* character. The way that this film portrays Anibal is in dialogue with an argument that Richard Dyer makes in his very well-known article, “Gays in Film.” Dyer explains that the one-dimensional, stereotypical

characterization of gay characters in the cinema is the most frequently debated topic in gay cinema criticism. However, according to Dyer, the solution to that would not be to build a well-rounded character but to counter balance it with building characters that resemble real (gay) people, people who have their own individuality and characteristics that show that they belong within a social group. Aníbal's character is not allowed this individuality, and his characterization is rather shallow and stereotyped.

Other films from the initial list presented in the beginning of this chapter that include gay characters are: *Totalmente Inocentes* (Rodrigo Bittencourt, 2012), *Vai que Cola* (César Rodrigues, 2015), *Divã* (José Alvarenga Jr., 2009), *Sexo com Amor* (Wolf Maya, 2008), *As Melhores Coisas do Mundo* (Laís Bodanzky, 2010), *O Shaolin do Sertão* (Helder Gomes, 2016), and *O Concurso* (Pedro Vasconcelos, 2013).

### **Bisexual Characters**

The GLAAD Glossary defines *bisexual* as:

A person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to those of the same gender or to those of another gender. People may experience this attraction in differing ways and degrees over their lifetime. Bisexual people need not have had specific sexual experiences to be bisexual; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual. (6)

The films in this corpus that introduce bisexual characters do so non-stereotypically. These characters are professionals, their sexuality does not define them, and they are all rather different among themselves. They vary in age and profession, half of them are males and half are females, and they all seem to be very comfortable with their identities. It should

also be mentioned that they all have important roles in these films, as most of them are secondary main characters.

Maria San Fillippo believes that bisexuality is, at the same time, visible and invisible on the screen, because even though films and shows widely represent bisexual characters due to their queerness factor (I would say in the background mostly, not as protagonists), they do not elaborate deep discussions about them, and all we see in the end is their surface (4). Sometimes this happens because the film is not LGBTQ, it just depicts an LGBTQ character; hence, it lacks intimacy with the sexual identity of the bisexual individual represented. Sometimes this is for fear of misrepresentation and sometimes, for a lack of trust in the possibility of someone being attracted to more than just one sex. So, it is easier to not deepen the discussion. According to San Fillippo: “Bisexuality’s (in)visibility belies its ubiquity within our culture, and indeed constitutes a disavowal of the twinned fascination and anxiety bisexuality provokes.” (4). Hence, films feel a need to use bisexual characters due to their exoticism only, and consequently, as representatives of real people, they remain partially unseen. This happens especially with the character of Juliano in *Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2*. Film characters have a life, even if a fictitious one, before and after what is revealed through the plot, and when the only trait of said characters that is shown is their sexuality, the audience is not introduced to the possibilities of that life. Thus, their bisexuality becomes their only defining characteristic due to their queerness. Moreover, even though it is a common assertion to say that an aspect of comedies is to avoid developing deep discussions about serious topics, during this dissertation I have shown this is not exactly true.

Three films with a total of four characters belong here: *Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2* (César Rodrigues, 2016), *Tô Ryca* (Pedro Antônio, 2016), *Os Normais 2* (José Alvarenga Jr., 2009). I will first take a closer look at the character of Débora, from *Os Normais 2*. Before becoming a film, *Os Normais* was a Brazilian sitcom that aired on Rede Globo from 2001 to 2003. It depicted a couple, Rui and Vani, engaging in several unique and unexpected situations in an apartment in Rio de Janeiro. Its humor was not always politically correct; however, it was very funny and a great hit. The first film came out in 2003, starring the same actors from the TV show, Fernanda Torres and Luiz Fernando Guimarães, and its sequel was released in 2009.

Both films and the sitcom are directed by José Alvarenga Jr. In *Os Normais 2*, the two protagonists feel like they have fallen into a routine and are looking for a bisexual woman to have a “ménage à trois” with, to spice up their relationship. However, the couple does not otherwise identify as bisexual. Vani and Rui exoticize the idea of what being bisexual means, so much so that they even try to have sex with an athlete who is celebrating “becoming bi” (her bi-championship). They think it is a coming out party to celebrate her sexual orientation, and they end up getting into serious trouble. They do finally find someone at that party, a woman named Débora (played by Cláudia Raia; see fig. 9), who is willing to have a threesome with them.

At first, she rejects them, as Rui is too aggressive in his flirting, asking directly if Débora is bisexual without any warm-up or introduction, and she is initially turned off by him. It becomes evident then that she was not there looking for a sexual partner, because it took some convincing before she agreed to take them up on their offer. According to Débora, every woman is bisexual but some take advantage of it and some do not. Débora is an honest,

beautiful, and extroverted woman. She takes them to her place, and she seems to be very comfortable with her sexuality. Her apartment is organized and fine-looking, and she is eloquent and funny, which makes us believe that she is a successful woman.



*Figure 9: Débora (in the middle), in the bathtub of her house, hugging Rui and Vani.*

Débora is the only bisexual character in the film who has a standout role, and as shown in the previous description, she is not stereotyped. It is important to note the fetish surrounding the hunting for a female bisexual (most films show bisexuals as females, not males). The fetish lies in the idea that, as bisexuals are attracted to both sexes, then that would mean that they are always looking for threesomes, as Chris Hemmings points out in his article for the BBC News website.<sup>35</sup> Of course, this is an erroneous and pejorative inference that leads to the fetish. Even though Débora's portrayal is non-stereotyped, the general idea of a bisexual female that permeates this entire film is still stereotyped. Marjorie

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<sup>35</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-45580578>

Garber points out that bisexuality is frequently equated with love triangles and threesomes (494). This is the reason why people very often tend to have the misleading idea that, because a person likes both men and women, they will necessarily be promiscuous (Garber 494). This is in line with the findings of this study, even though the characters in this corpus are not stereotyped. Only three films include bisexual characters, but two of them show how other characters erroneously associate bisexuality with promiscuity, or at least with sex. One of the films (above) shows a couple that fetishizes bisexuality to such extent that they spend the entire story looking for a bisexual woman to have sex with. The film described next, even though it does not portray a love triangle or threesome, shows the stigma of bisexuality with a mother accepting her son's homosexuality but not bisexuality, because she equates her son's attempt to find his identity with lust.

While female bisexuals are fetishized, male bisexuals are infrequently addressed as a topic in films. Bisexuality also is rarely the focus of discussion inside academia and queer theory academics. According to April S. Callis, "the lack of discussion around bisexuality within works of queer theory has ultimately weakened the arguments queer theorists are trying to make" (214). The combined mismatch and fluidity between gender and sexual preference that comes with bisexuality makes it more challenging for researchers to create theories about bisexuality, resulting in gender trouble and causing bisexuality to be "constantly questioned" (Callis 228). Callis defends the idea that bisexuality studies should be included in queer theory and that there has not yet been enough literature on the topic.

According to Callis:

Bisexual identity, by its very existence, plays with categories of sexuality and gender. Further, the history of bisexual politics holds an important place in the discussion of



sexual identity and should not be glossed over. An inclusion of bisexuality into works of queer theory would allow a more historically and culturally accurate view of sexuality, while providing another argument for the deconstruction of the gay/straight binary. (229)

A male bisexual is portrayed as a central character in a very successful film, *Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2* (César Rodrigues, 2016). In it, Dona Hermínia's (Paulo Gustavo) son Juliano (Rodrigo Pandolfo), surprises his mother when he comes out as bisexual. Juliano's characterization does not change much from the first film (before he comes out) to its sequel except for a slight focus on his personal and romantic relationships in the second film. In the first film, the audience learns that Juliano is gay. This research does not classify him as a gay character, however, because one cannot be gay and bisexual at the same time. In the second film, Juliano wants to explore his sexuality, and Dona Hermínia, who struggled to accept his sexual orientation in the first film, cannot accept it when she finds out that he is in fact bisexual, in the second film. She shows concern about Juliano "not being sure of what he wants," which is a common misconception surrounding bisexuality. As Garber explains, "One of the commonest pieces of common wisdom about bisexuality is the idea that it is 'just a phase,' an exploratory mode, a by-product of adolescent horniness, opportunism, and experimentation rather than a mature, adult, and sustainable way of living one's sexual life." (369). She also points out that bisexuals suffer with the labels of lacking identity, "going through a phase," more often than gays or lesbians. When faced with disapproval, Juliano will move out and show Dona Hermínia that he can build his own path. He moves out of state, to São Paulo with his sister. The audience may infer that he will have the opportunity to find out more about himself far from disapproving gazes. Viewers also should be

reminded of the definition of bisexuality provided by GLAAD, which says that people do not need to have sexual encounters to identify as bisexual; they only have to feel attracted to the same and other genders. Juliano is the same person as always, and the audience will not see much more about his sexuality in this film, as this is just part of his identity; it is not good or bad, just a characteristic that must be respected. As mentioned previously, the character's life continues, even though the audience does not see it.

Regardless of Dona Hermínia's unexpected behavior, Juliano is still portrayed very similarly in the first and second films, and his sexual orientation is just one of his many characteristics, as is his asthma, for instance. Therefore, I will classify him as a non-stereotyped character. Hence, by using one of the office box hits in the country to introduce a bisexual character, *Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2* is breaking stereotypes and challenging the norm. By doing so, it also is planting seeds in the spectators' minds, trying to promote change and inspire a more tolerant society.

### **Transgender Characters**

The word *transgender*, according to GLAAD, is:

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms ... A transgender identity is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures. (10)

Even though the corpus of this research only has three films with transgender characters, they tend to be misrepresented. The films that we analyzed portray these

characters as either criminals or sex-obsessed. Sometimes they are highly caricatured and might also be classified as effeminately-comical at some points in the story. One of the reasons for this could be because transgender phenomena as a movement is recently new in society. It first emerged in the United States after World War II, but since the colonial period, it is possible to find records of municipal ordinances prohibiting men or women to appear in public dressing with garments of the opposite sex,<sup>36</sup> at the risk of having to pay a fine (Stryker, *Transgender History* 31). It was only recently that transgender started to be accepted, studied, and normalized rather than being seen as a monstrosity. Stryker explains:

Academic attention to transgender issues has shifted over the span of those ten years [1990-2000] from the field of abnormal psychology, which imagined transgender phenomena as expressions of mental illness, and from the field of literary criticism, which was fascinated with representations of cross-dressing that it fancied to be merely symbolic, into fields that concern themselves with the day-to-day workings of the material world. “Transgender” moved from the clinics to the streets over the course of that decade, and from representation to reality. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the whole transgender thing back in the 1990s was the startling rapidity with which the term itself took root, and was applied to (if not always welcomed by) the sociocultural and critical-intellectual formations that were caught up in, or suddenly crystallized by, its wake. (“[De]Subjugated Knowledges” 2)

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<sup>36</sup> Even though cross-dressers and transgenders belong to two separate groups and they are separated in this study, when tracing back transgender history, it is important to look at cross-dressing, as several centuries ago it was not possible to have surgery in order to change one’s gender. So cross-dressing was the only option to express a person’s gender identity. Also, we must remain aware that many transgender individuals choose not to undergo gender confirmation surgery.

Hence, in a short period of time, transgender went from something seen as an abnormality to a reality, an identity. The insertion of this knowledge in various areas of study and in people's minds is not only happening slowly, but also, social norms and gender definitions need to be redefined in order to accommodate new possibilities. According to Stryker, "Since at least the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, transgender phenomena have taunted the social order in ways that have spurred the development of sexology, psychiatry, endocrinology, and other medical-scientific fields involved on social regulatory practices." ("[De]Subjugated Knowledges" 13). This can help explain why, more often than not, films such as the three in the corpus of this dissertation portray their transgender characters stereotypically.

Physically, these three films depict these individuals very differently: while one is less stereotyped, the other is more or less clownish or effeminately-comical, and the third is definitely effeminately-comical. As these three characters are represented with specificities that make them considerably distinct from one another even though the three are definitely stereotyped in their behavior, next I will describe how each film portrays the three of them individually.

At the beginning of *Totalmente Inocentes* (Rodrigo Bittencourt, 2012), one of the villains, nicknamed "Diaba Loira," is arrested. Even though Diaba Loira (played by Kiko Mascarenhas) is obviously a female noun and the reporter telling the story is using female adjectives as well, it is not clear at first sight if the person is biologically male or female. The first time Diaba appears, it is a dark scene and the character is exchanging gunfire with the police. However, a few seconds after we meet Diaba, it is possible to understand that she is biologically a male who identifies as a female, a transgender. Although Diaba Loira

identifies as a female, this film does not represent her stereotypically: in one of the scenes, she wears a pair of black pants, a white blouse, leather jacket, and a necklace, for example (see fig. 10). Her voice seems natural and not too high pitched, and she is not effeminate.



*Figure 10: Diaba Loira wearing a casual outfit to get her revenge from Do Morro.*

We should note that Diaba Loira’s nickname is an obvious allusion to the *cangaceiro* Corisco, the “Diabo Loiro,” Lampião’s righthand man. He received his nickname for his evilness and his looks: he was tall and blond and stood apart from the other bandits in Lampião’s group. Corisco survived Lampião, leading the band after his death (Claudino 26). Diaba Loira has (half) blond hair and is feared for her evilness, like Corisco. We are not aware if another leader came before her, who Diaba took over for in the “morro.” However, that is a very reasonable possibility, as it is a well-known fact that this happens frequently in organized crime communities. Very often, crime leaders do not live long lives, and new leaders regularly emerge.

Being transgender is just one of Diaba's characteristics; it does not define her. Not even the comedy of the film is directed at her. It would be easy to classify Diaba Loira as a non-stereotyped character if she were not one of the villains of the film. However, she is a delinquent, and for this reason she must be categorized as a *criminal*.

Even though some discriminatory language is used against Diaba Loira when her arrest is reported on TV, such as *biba*, which would be equivalent to "faggot," this is how other characters behave towards her so it describes them, not her. It is not part of how Diaba's character is portrayed. Therefore, even though the prejudiced behavior of other characters is stereotyped (but probably also accurate in Brazilian society), it does not affect the interpretation of the character in question here for the purposes of this analysis. Also, this is the only character in this group who is filmed in a shot-reverse-shot mode during a scene with her archenemy Do Morro (Fábio Porchat). This allows the audience to feel closer to the characters, as if they are there in the action with them. It also makes Diaba Loira more real.

*Um Suburbano Sortudo* (Roberto Santucci, 2016) features the character of Pamela, who is not so much in the foreground but is worth mentioning. Played by the transgender actor Luana Muniz, she is a transgender character with few lines, but she is also one of the many close friends of Denilson, the protagonist, played by Rodrigo Sant'Anna. When he gathers a rather odd group of people in an attempt to try to come up with a good sales line to print on a t-shirt in an effort to save his father's company, Pamela says, "if you buy it, I'll bring it to your house," and inserts a whole peeled banana inside her mouth (see fig. 11). That serves as inspiration for Denilson, who comes up with "Queima de estoque – até o talo." (See Pamela's picture below.) A beach scene reveals the origin of Pamela's name, earlier in the film, in which she is an unusual lifeguard who "saves" a man in the sea, but the

water is only about one foot deep. At that moment, we learn that Pamela's name is actually Pamela Andressa (after Pamela Anderson), and the beach scene is clearly inspired by *Baywatch* (see fig. 11). It is worth observing the parody and the Hollywood influence, characteristics of the *chanchada*'s sense of humor.



Figure 11: Pamela, inserting a banana in her mouth during a business meeting (left), and running to save a man from drowning (right).

Pamela's character is stereotyped, as she tries to not only mimic Pamela Anderson but also is always wearing small, tight clothes. In addition, every time that the camera gives her any attention, it is possible to notice some sexual insinuation, even if it is out of context and unnecessary; for example, who would decide to insert a full banana in their mouth during a business meeting? Hence, Pamela is portrayed as a sex-obsessed character, which is a misrepresentation that may lead to a generalization and insinuate that transgenders have an inclination for promiscuity, which is also a result encountered by Moreno in his study. That is a rather stereotyped and inaccurate message to send, as promiscuity and depravity have no correlation to a person's sexual orientation or gender expression. Judith Halberstam (a.k.a.

Jack Halberstam) comments that recently it is possible to see the presence of transgender character in films more frequently each day (once again, I would add, mostly as secondary characters). In her opinion, the depiction of the transgender body on the screen creates a spectacle that may send different meanings for different audiences:

For some audiences, the transgender body confirms a fantasy of fluidity so common to notions of transformation within the postmodern. To others, the transgender body confirms the enduring power of the binary gender system. But to still other viewers, the transgender body represents a utopian vision of a world of subcultural possibilities. (96)

Pamela is the most caricatured of all transgender characters in this corpus. For this reason, she is the most obvious target for judgement or discerning impressions. While some viewers may see her as fluid, others may see her as trying to fit in with the expected gender binary, while a third group might see Pamela as the representation of a subculture.

The last transgender character is in *Cilada.com* (José Alvarenga Jr., 2011). This is the story of Bruno (played by Bruno Mazzeo), who is obsessed to prove, on camera, that he is good in bed after his ex-girlfriend leaks an embarrassing video on the internet of him having premature ejaculation, her revenge for being cheated on. Bruno spends most of the story trying save his reputation until he meets a mysterious nameless woman (played by Rita Elmôr) on the elevator. She says she is as quick to “get there” as he is.

She agrees to have sex with him, but she does not know that Bruno hired Marconha (played by Sérgio Loroza) to record it on camera. She sets conditions: she is in an open relationship and promised her partner that she would not kiss or have vaginal sex with anyone else, so they can only have anal sex. Bruno is completely fine with her conditions,



and everything happens quickly but successfully. The woman leaves ecstatic, congratulating Bruno for being amazing in bed. The two men sit to watch what had just been recorded, and only then Bruno realizes that he sees an extra penis in the recording. He is furious, even appears to be disgusted, and cannot believe that he just had intercourse with a *travesti*. GLAAD explains that “transvestite” is an outdated and derogatory term that should not be used any longer. The term substituted for it is “cross-dresser,” which our character is not either: she is transgender. The fact that Bruno uses inappropriate language to refer to this character and that the film offers no correction to that mistake is quite problematic, as it seems like as though the film is endorsing the gaffe.



*Figure 12: The character of Rita Elmôr in the elevator with Bruno, before he takes her to his apartment.*

Elmôr’s character is nameless, and her quick appearance in this film exclusively involves a sex scene. She is only there to have sex with Bruno and not only that, but everything we know about this character revolves around sex: she is in an open relationship, reaches orgasm quickly, enjoys anal sex (which is stigmatized), hits on a stranger in the elevator and goes to his house immediately, disregarding her own safety, only because she

wanted to have sex with him. In the end she breaks her own rule: she kisses him on the lips as she leaves his apartment, because according to her, Bruno was that good in bed. Hence, she will be classified as *sex-obsessed*.

It is worth highlighting that this transgender character is played by a woman, not a man. Johannes Sjöberg explains how, even though transgenders, transvestites, and drag queens are a large part of Brazilian culture, they are extremely stigmatized, media still portray them in a very superficial manner, and how, for that reason, “it has traditionally been difficult to find Brazilian actors willing to play transgendered characters since they thought doing so could damage their careers” (351). Hence, it is not uncommon to see female actors portraying transgender characters in Brazilian TV and cinema. Sjöberg’s point is ratified by the (mis)representation of the transgender character in *Cilada.com*, which is not just superficial but also prejudiced, as it openly uses a mislabel that is not rectified at any point during the plot.

### **Drag Queens**

According to the definition that GLAAD provides, “drag queens are men, typically gay men, who dress like women for the purpose of entertainment” (11). It should not be confused with the term “cross-dresser,” which will be introduced in the next section.

While this examination only identified two films that introduce drag queen characters, both do it in a very stereotypical way. These characters have regular jobs (one is a lawyer, the other, a doorman), and while one is openly gay, the other one will find out he is as well by the end of the story. They are not dressed as queens during the entire film, but when they are, their representation is quite humorous and caricatural, not just artistic and performative.

While dressed as drag queens, they wear shiny clothes and dance provocatively, as if trying to seduce the audience; one of them actually is trying to do exactly that. Hence, they belong in the *effeminately-comical* category. Since they are just two, I will take a closer look at them both.

In *O Concurso* (Pedro Vasconcelos, 2013), four men who are very different among themselves and who do not previously know each other learn they are finalists in a *concurso* (a public exam) and are about to take the last test to see which of them will become a federal judge. As they prepare for the exam, or decide that the best technique is not to prepare, they find out a lot about each other in a night full of adventures. One of them is Rogério Carlos (Fábio Porchat). He comes from the south of Brazil and from a line of judges; both his father and his grandfather had been judges. He is taking the exam process very seriously, especially with his father pressuring him every step of the way, until he is kidnapped by a group of drag queens and is forced by them to cross-dress, as they are convinced that is who he truly is. They tie him up to a tree and say that it is time to find out if he is a “coke” or a “fanta,” while they (stereotypically) play Gloria Gaynor’s “I Will Survive” on a little handheld stereo. At first he resists and says nothing will happen, but as soon as the song starts, he is already speaking more softly, moving his head more gently, and starts dancing with one leg. While trying to fight his feelings, Rogério Carlos has visions of his dad asking him to not give in because he is *gaúcho*,<sup>37</sup> to which he responds: “Eu tô sendo gaúcho, acima de tudo, gaúcho!” immediately before he breaks free from the tree and starts dancing. I should note an important reference to a common stereotypical, and prejudiced, joke commonly repeated in

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<sup>37</sup> As in common knowledge, a *gaúcho* can be defined as a cowboy from the South American pampas. In Brazil, it is also what a person from the state of Rio Grande do Sul is called.

Brazil that all *gaúcho* men in Brazil present themselves as tough, but they are actually sexually attracted to other men. So, when he says that he is a *gaúcho* above all, Brazilians watching it understand the double meaning behind it, that he means that being a cross-dresser is what being a *gaúcho* truly is. Metaphorically speaking, breaking free from the tree might also be seen as a symbol to finally breaking from what was not allowing him to move and be who he really is. In this case, maybe his father is his “tree,” as a tree is also a common reference to family, the thing pulling him down, making him stay put, stopping him from moving and achieving his full personal growth.

This scene is a clear parody of the film *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1994). Not only is the song “I Will Survive” on the soundtrack of both films, but the group of queens that kidnap Rogério Carlos own a small van, which they supposedly use to travel around to perform, exactly as the character of Anthony (Hugo Weaving) did with her bus in *The Adventures of Priscilla*.

*The Adventures of Priscilla* can be placed in the group of films that were made after the emergence of a new cinema that B. Ruby Rich baptized as the “new queer cinema” during a symposium at London’s Institute of Contemporary Art in 1992, in reference to a number of LGBTQ films that had been released in film festivals in the previous two years (Rich xix). It was first used in regard to independent filmmaking, but it quickly became more all-encompassing, referring to all queer filmmaking and academic criticism from the 1990s to this day. Margarete Almeida Nepomuceno explains that a similarity among the films with cross-dressing characters that started to appear during the ’80s (preceding the *new queer cinema* period) was that, once it was revealed that these characters were actually biologically

a different sex, that revelation generated conflict, aggression, and even punishment, as it was seen as something unnatural:

No cinema queer dos anos 80 e 90, o tema travestismo deixa o caráter da comicidade e passa a ser tratado dentro dos dramas pessoais, agora com mulheres também participando da encenação dos gêneros. Destaco as produções clássicas que envolvem como *Meninos não Choram* (1999, Kimberly Peirce); *Gaiola das Loucas* (1995, Mike Nichols); *Madame Doubtfire* (1993, Chris Columbus); *Yentl* (1983, Barbra Streisand); *Victor ou Vitória* (1982, Blake Edwards); *Tootsie* (1982, Sidney Pollack); *Traídos pelo Desejo* (1992, Neil Jordan). O que torna estes filmes similares são as abordagens sobre os personagens travestidos, encenados a partir de uma identidade oculta, não permitida, que não se delata. A ambiguidade da escolha do gênero e da sexualidade acaba sempre em proporções trágicas quando o corpo “desfeito” é des/coberto. A partir daí, o resultado do conflito gera a violência, a intolerância e punição, provocada pela tensão discursiva, sobre uma única “verdade” sobre os corpos. (Nepomuceno 6-7)

However, a few years later, when filmmakers started to make films in the beginning of the *new queer cinema* era during the early '90s, all these rules changed: “Aqui não há espaço para o homossexual que se normatiza, sem trejeitos, sem desmunhecação, higiênico em sua postura padronizada” (Nepomuceno 9). According to Nepomuceno, this is due to the influence of the *camp*<sup>38</sup> aesthetic, which is one of the characteristics of the *new queer*

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<sup>38</sup> An example of a film that uses the *camp* aesthetics is *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1994). It is possible to see the influence of *Priscilla* in the scene in which Rogério Carlos finally acknowledges his true self and dances to “I Will Survive.”

*cinema*. The films of NQC decided to reclaim the word *camp*, which was mostly used pejoratively as an adjective for extremely effeminate gay men, and use it as a tool of transgression to shock and put down walls (Nepomuceno 9-10). However, it is important to note that conceptualizing *camp* is not such an easy task, as Caryl Flinn points out (434). Many critics have tried to take on that challenge, and define *camp*, however these definitions are not all exactly analogous, possibly due to the many political intentions that the term lends itself to, and the several minority communities hoping to use that for their own political purposes. According to Flinn:

Camp criticism from the 1970s and mid-1980s (the ‘first wave’ sustained by gay scholarship) was sustained by a twofold desire to reappropriate camp specifically for gay cultures: first, to reclaim an aspect of gay culture that was often a source of opprobrium within gay communities (not to mention heterosexual ones); second, as camp became increasingly diffuse and ‘popular’, hitting mainstream, mass (straight) cultures, its place in gay culture and history needed to be re-secured and re-asserted. For commentators of this early period – and for others since then – camp often became an ontological construction, claimed as proceeding automatically from a uniquely ‘gay sensibility’. Such claims were largely made for polemical/political purposes – hardly a bad motivation, to be sure, but troubling in terms of some of its effects and methods (psychologizing queer ‘essence’; disregarding camp’s non-gay impact; suggesting a purity or homogeneity of queer identity, and so forth). (434-435)

I do not intend to suggest a new definition for *camp* in this study or prove which one is more appropriate; for the purposes of the present discussion, I will simply use a broader and more commonly used definition of *camp*, as Susan Sontag offers:

The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious. More precisely, Camp involves a new, more complex relation to ‘the serious’. One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious. One is drawn to Camp when one realizes that ‘sincerity’ is not enough. Sincerity can be simple philistinism, intellectual narrowness. The traditional means for going beyond straight seriousness – irony, satire – seem feeble today, inadequate to the culturally oversaturated medium in which contemporary sensibility is schooled. Camp introduces a new standard: artifice as an ideal, theatricality. (62)

In other words, according to Sontag, camp offers a way to create an aesthetic statement through art, in which style, parody, passion, exaggeration, and creativity are placed above seriousness and tragedy in order to deliver a performance that speaks true about a person’s unique experience in the world. According to Sontag, while camp taste is not necessarily gay taste, both share an “affinity and overlap,” because gay people are known for being “outstanding creative minorities in contemporary urban culture” (Sontag 64).

Despite the fact that we cannot say that *O Concurso* belongs to the NQC movement (as even though it has a queer subtheme, it is not a film that carries a main queer theme through the whole story and its director, Pedro Vasconcelos, does not identify as LGBTQ), it still is evident that Rogério Carlos’ character is built with camp aesthetics in mind. After he agrees to become a queen, his entire personality changes, he lights up and seems to be a happier, more fulfilled person. During his transformation dance, he imagines himself dancing in court in front of the judges that will proctor his exam. He performs a rather sexual and provocative dance for them, dancing on top of their desk, laying down on it, and opening and closing his legs with his buttocks facing the bewildered judges who are just watching

everything, speechless (see fig. 13). It also is a very clownish dance that renders a lot of humor. He wakes up the next morning on a pile of sleeping drag queens, which is actually the first scene of the film shown then in flashback. It is the day of his final exam, and he is almost late to the test. He shows up to court *camp* style, dressed as a drag queen (minus the wig, and when it comes the time to answer his exam question, he gives a speech about how important it is to be who you really are. This is even though he resists finding his true self and in a way is punished in the end because he does not get the judge position. A narrator tells the audience how each of the four protagonists turned out, and he reveals that Rogério Carlos finds love with one of the other drag queens in the group, confirming that he also discovered or decided to disclose his sexual orientation. According to my methodology, I can classify this character as the *effeminately-comical*. See Rogério Carlos below before and after his transformation, while he imagined himself dancing for the judges, in figure 13:



*Figure 13: Rogério Carlos before and after his transformation.*



*Vai que Cola* (César Rodrigues, 2015) introduces the character of Ferdinando, played by actor Marcus Majella, one of the members in Valdomiro's "gang." Paulo Gustavo plays Valdomiro, who takes his "gang" to live in an apartment in Leblon. Ferdinando is a doorman who is also a singer and a drag queen, and his character is openly gay, as are Majella and Gustavo in real life. He has a crush on Brito, played by actor Oscar Magrini, a man who seems to be heterosexual, is portrayed as a typical tough straight male, and even says that his type of woman is the Barbra Streisand type. In one scene, in their new apartment, they drug Brito during a dinner party, and take him to rest in the bedroom. While Brito is passed out on the bed, Ferdinando cannot help himself and touches the man's penis. He is immediately censored by Valdo, to which Ferdinando responds "Belisca também!" and Valdo replies "Não posso, meu personagem é hétero!"

Throughout this film, Paulo Gustavo's character constantly reminds the spectators that they (the viewers) are watching a film, and that they are actors in a cinematic production. He even looks straight at the camera to explain what is going on, which helps add humor to the plot. That type of behavior is in dialogue with the fakeness generally associated with the camp aesthetics, which we can see in the party scene in which Ferdinando finally dresses up as a drag queen and wins Brito's heart. Brito is as surprised as the audience is, who do not see this coming (see fig. 14).

Ferdinando is on a stage and is standing taller than everyone else. He performs a number to the song "Amor Amor" by Wanessa Camargo. He is wearing a blonde wig, a lot of glitter, and a long blue dress with tassels. He takes off his skirt in the beginning of the performance and reveals a very short skirt underneath, naked legs, and high heels. His performance is very passionate and exaggerated, and in the end, he throws a red thong to his

crush, Brito, who at that point is showing quite a bit of interest. Brito catches the thong, puts it against his face and inhales deeply. Most of the other characters watching the performance are smiling or laughing. The entire scene is in *pornoanchada* style, a mix of light porn and humor. The audience watching it is probably laughing as well.



Figure 14: Ferdinando before and after he dresses up as a drag queen.

I will categorize Ferdinando as an *effeminately-comical*, since this is one of the scenes intended to make this comedy work, but I also will categorize him as *sex-obsessed*, because his character is constantly working towards sexually luring Brito towards him, sometimes rather aggressively. Some of Ferdinando's seduction methods, such as the penis-caressing scene described above, can be considered sexual harassment and could have put him in jail in real life. At least in the end, he takes a more effective and less harmful route to seduce Brito. However, the way that this film portrays Ferdinando is stereotyped and problematic, and it sends a misguided and unfortunate message, as Ferdinando is a representation of drag queens in this context. This film describes this drag queen as someone who will go to great lengths

to seduce another person and even touch them without their consent while they are not awake. It is true that it helps contribute to the humor of the film, but it does not help with the representation of a minority group that already struggles on a daily basis with prejudice just for being different.

### **Cross-Dressers**

According to GLAAD:

While anyone may wear clothes associated with a different sex, the term cross-dresser is typically used to refer to men who occasionally wear clothes, makeup, and accessories culturally associated with women. Those men typically identify as heterosexual. This activity is a form of gender expression and not done for entertainment purposes. Cross-dressers do not wish to permanently change their sex or live fulltime as women. (11)

The films in this category are not representing characters who are cross-dressers, as in the other sections, but male actors are playing female roles, hence, cross-dressing for their parts. Three films and five characters are in this category. The audience is aware that the female characters are played by male actors, and the cross-dressing is not part of the story. The characters are biologically cis-gender females. Our analysis showed that these films portray these characters sometimes stereotypically, as *effeminately-comical*, but sometimes, *non-stereotypically*. Three out of five times, these characters are caricatures, and their representations are laughable. For example, their makeup is exaggerated, their clothes are very colorful, they speak loudly, and they move their hands a lot when speaking. The other two times, the characters seem to easily blend in, almost as if trying to not reveal that they

are, in fact, cross-dressing. They are still funny characters, but their images do not cause humor, as compared to the former characters.

In the *chanchada* period, it was not unusual to see male actors playing female characters as a tool for comedy, as shown in Chapter 1. For the audience, “a presença do transformismo passava como uma cena carnavalesca: um homem fantasiado de mulher” (Moreno 18). Moreno also explains that the studio Atlântida used cross-dressing as a technique in a number of its productions; for example, in: *Carnaval no Fogo* (Watson Macedo, 1949), *Carnaval Atlântida* (José Carlos Burle, Carlos Manga, 1952) and *As Sete Evas* (Carlos Manga, 1962). Thus, it should not come as a surprise that a film from the post-Retomada, a period that uses a lot of the humor from the *chanchada* era, decides to borrow the same tools in order to prompt laughs. I will observe two of the characters that belong to the cross-dresser category below.

In *Minha Mãe é uma Peça* (André Pellenz, 2013), Paulo Gustavo plays the role of Dona Hermínia, an average (for lack of a better word) female: cis-gendered, heterosexual, mother, housewife, and ex-wife. Most of this film’s humor revolves around Dona Hermínia’s character. Does this character work because of Paulo Gustavo’s undeniable talent for comedy, because he is a male dressing as an extremely bossy and ill-tempered female, or is it a little bit of both?

For this film to succeed, Gustavo had to “become” a woman, even in the camp aesthetics sense. The goal was to make Dona Hermínia’s image laughable on its own (see fig. 15). Beatriz Fernandes Coelho Gomes reveals the story about how Dona Hermínia came to exist, inspired by Gustavo’s own mother (16). Gustavo has always imitated his mother among his group of friends, and when the actor was going through some financial hardships,

it was one of his close friends who suggested that he use that material to create a new character (Gomes 17). According to Gomes:

Em nossas conversas, Paulo conta que ao perceber que fazia bem papéis femininos, que já tinha colhido críticas favoráveis neste quesito, que não tinha o “perfil” viril e nos “padrões de beleza” que a indústria da televisão demanda e que o mercado consome e, somando a isso, que já tinha uma personagem própria nas mãos, da qual também já tinha tido um bom retorno do público, que pensou: “Eu não vou ficar em casa, duro, de jeito nenhum. Porque eu sei que sou um cara talentoso”. É neste contexto que ator se fechou em casa durante três meses e escreveu o monólogo “Minha Mãe é Uma Peça.” (17)



*Figure 15: The characterization of D. Hermínia's character.*

Gustavo also says that the women in his family are strong feminists, and those were examples that he used to build that character (Gomes 20). In addition, the actor reveals that it

was essential that he owned his personal characteristics, such as having a very evident feminine side and not displaying traditional beauty, in order to reinvent his career and build a path to success (Gomes 19). So Dona Hermínia was born, inspired by a real-life person, Dona Déa Lúcia, the creator's own mother. The character's debut was portrayed first in the theater, as this film is based on a play by same name, written by Paulo Gustavo himself.

The character of Dona Hermínia is extremely caricatured: she is a divorced mother of three, two of whom still live with her; she always wears rollers in her hair and an excessive amount of makeup; and she is constantly complaining about everything in her life and threatening her two (teenage/young adult) kids with physical violence when they do not behave in the way she expects them to. Her voice is very high-pitched, and one of her main characteristics is that she always comes up with funny phrases that are generally insulting towards someone (or everyone) else. In the 2016 sequel, her characterization follows a similar path. The only change in Dona Hermínia's private life is that she gets a job outside the house. Hence, I will classify her as *effeminately-comical*.

Another reason why I must place her in this category is because Dona Hermínia is a character based on a real-life person, so her exaggerated characterization becomes a caricature. Gustavo's intention to use Dona Hermínia's image to create humor is, in theory, good for business. However, it results in making the idea of "Dona Hermínia" laughable, which means that, intrinsically, it allows the audience to laugh at a male dressed as a female, or at least, it blurs the lines. She does not need to open her mouth to be funny, as is obvious in the film poster (see fig. 16 below).



Figure 16: Poster of *Minha Mãe é uma Peça* (André Pellenz, 2013).

Another male dressed as a female appears in *Um Suburbano Sortudo* (Roberto Santucci, 2016), but this time, the technique used is different than the one in *Minha Mãe é uma Peça*. *Um Suburbano Sortudo* introduces a male actor playing three female characters. The actor, Rodrigo Sant'anna, who plays the protagonist Denilson, also plays five other characters in *The Nutty Professor* style. Three of these characters are women of different ages, all members of the main character's own family — his mother, a cousin, and his grandmother (see fig. 17).

Hence, similar to what is shown in *Minha Mãe é uma Peça*, a male actor plays a cisgender heterosexual female (three of them) and the spectator knows that the actor is a male dressing as a female. But in the film's imaginary universe, he will not become a male

again when he goes to bed; he is a full-time biologically born female. This time, however, the goal is not to make the female image laughable on its own, at least not so evidently as it is with Dona Hermínia. For some people, who may be unaware that this is a male actor, it might take some time to realize that (or they might be fooled altogether!), as the characterization does not intend to reveal the trick (see pictures above); except for the grandmother, who the film portrays as exaggeratedly as Dona Hermínia, in camp style. To contrast, I will examine Denilson's cousin Jennifer.



*Figure 17: Denilson's mother, cousin and grandmother respectively, in Um Suburbano Sortudo.*

She looks like any other female; she has long blond hair, wears some makeup and ordinary clothes, and, stereotypically for a female, even picks a fight with her cousin's love interest out of jealousy. She wants to compare their looks and their bottoms, and (unfortunately) their fight looks like a (stereo)typical female fight, a "catfight." Like any politically incorrect scene, this is one of the funniest scenes in the film. Jennifer is not humorous just because of her looks, but she behaves humorously. Therefore, she is a *non-stereotyped* character, as the goal is not to laugh at her representation but at the way she acts.



These two characters, Jennifer and D. Hermínia, side by side, are good examples of what Elias Saliba calls “bom riso” as opposed to “mau riso.” Saliba explains that, since the mid-seventeenth century, western culture started to differentiate the two types of laugh: the good or positive laugh versus the bad or negative laugh. While the former is a genuine laugh that is the consequence of happiness, the latter is defined by the kind of laugh that is only possible after the audience distances itself from the humorous object in order to make fun of it, and consequently, sees it as inferior (19-21), which would be the kind of laugh that Dona Hermínia instigates.

### Primary Findings

Before I can draw a summary of my findings, I want to recapitulate what I was looking for and revise my initial findings. In the larger corpus of comedies of the post-Retomada period (73 films, from 2003 to 2016), I was looking for films with LGBTQ characters in standout roles, and I identified 15 comedies. Out of these films, only two have LGBTQ characters in a protagonist role (*Crô* and *O Concurso*), and in total I counted 26 LGBTQ characters, as some films introduced more than one. I have classified each one of these characters as the *effeminately-comical*, the *sex-obsessed*, the *criminal*, the *not out*, or *non-stereotyped*, according to their main characteristics. Hence, following this methodology, below is a table that lists a summary of all the LGBTQ characters from the 15 films discussed above and how I classified them:

Character	Type	Classification	Film
Crô	Gay	Effeminately-com.	<i>Crô – O Filme</i>
Baltazar	Gay	Not out	<i>Crô – O Filme</i>
Jean Jacques	Gay	Non-stereotyped	<i>Crô – O Filme</i>
Rogério Carlos	Drag Queen/ Gay	Effeminately-com.	<i>O Concurso</i>

Raquel	Lesbian	Sex-obsessed	<i>Totalmente Inocentes</i>
Diaba Loira	Transgender	Criminal	<i>Totalmente Inocentes</i>
Juliano	Bisexual	Non-stereotyped	<i>Minha Mãe é uma Peça 1</i>
D. Hermínia 1	Cross-dresser	Effeminately-com.	<i>Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2</i>
D. Hermínia 2	Cross-dresser	Effeminately-com.	<i>Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2</i>
Débora	Bisexual	Non-stereotyped	<i>Os Normais 2</i>
Denilson's mom	Cross-dresser	Non-stereotyped	<i>Um Suburbano Sortudo</i>
Denilson's grandma	Cross-dresser	Effeminately-com.	<i>Um Suburbano Sortudo</i>
Denilson's cousin	Cross-dresser	Non-stereotyped	<i>Um Suburbano Sortudo</i>
Pamela	Transgender	Sex-obsessed	<i>Um Suburbano Sortudo</i>
Mysterious woman	Transgender	Sex-obsessed	<i>Cilada.com</i>
Ferdinando	Drag Queen/Gay	Effeminately-com./Sex-obsessed	<i>Vai que Cola</i>
Brito	Gay	Not out	<i>Vai que Cola</i>
Renê	Gay	Non-stereotyped	<i>Divã</i>
Marilene	Bisexual	Non-stereotyped	<i>Tô Ryca</i>
Ulysses	Bisexual	Non-stereotyped	<i>Tô Ryca</i>
Aníbal	Gay	Effeminately-com.	<i>Os Homens são de Marte</i>
Lorenzinho	Gay	Not out	<i>Os Homens são de Marte</i>
Cacá	Gay	Non-stereotyped	<i>Sexo com Amor?</i>
Horácio	Gay	Non-stereotyped	<i>As Melhores Coisas...</i>
Gustavo	Gay	Non-stereotyped	<i>As Melhores Coisas...</i>
Euclides	Gay	Effeminately-com.	<i>O Shaolin do Sertão</i>

As shown, 11 characters are *non-stereotyped*, eight are *effeminately-comical*, four are *sex-obsessed*, three are *not out*, and one is a *criminal* character. This means that 42.3% of the LGBTQ characters with standout roles in popular contemporary Brazilian comedies are presented in a non-stereotypical way, and their queerness is just another trait of their characterization. On the other hand, the films that I analyzed in this research still represent 30.7% of these characters stereotypically as *effeminately-comical* and use these characters' sexual orientation or gender expression as a way to provoke laughs. While I was able to observe some improvement when comparing these preliminary results to past research, which

showed that Brazilian cinema tended to represent gay characters under a negative and stereotypical light, it is important to use caution and conclude that the work here is not done. Comedies carry a great responsibility of making people laugh; however, as a medium of mass media (and a powerful one at that) it should also be the job of filmmakers to better our society, making sure that stereotypes are not being perpetuated and hidden through mindless jokes and provoked laughs.

## **Conclusion**

After this overview, I was able to identify some change in the way Brazilian comedies present LGBTQ characters, and it is a change for the better. Even though it is still not common to find popular comedy films that use these characters in protagonist roles, it is possible to find characters on the sidelines, and even walking side by side with the protagonists and sharing their limelight, who are being noticed and who are being less stereotyped more frequently every time. And the focus here is on the word “popular,” because if we look for independent or non-mainstream films that are not consumed by the masses, those findings might be very different. The films that include LGBTQ characters are presenting important topics such as bisexuality and gay marriage in a lighthearted and sometimes even careful manner, which gives LGBTQ communities a chance to be represented in the cinema in a more tolerant and less stereotypical light. And maybe that will help pave the way towards a more accepting and less bigoted society.

I am not saying that the situation is ideal yet. Certainly, filmmakers, screenwriters and producers still have work to do, especially as most of these characterizations are still quite shallow. Some of these representations also are fairly problematic (see, for example,

Euclides, Crô, Pamela, and Ferdinando) and place characters in a position in which the “mau riso” prevails. It is also significant to note that representation is especially challenging when comedy films portray transgender characters and drag queens. Those individuals, unfortunately, continue to suffer misrepresentations, and media tends to connect their images and imaginaries to negative connotations or sexual ones. This results in an unfavorable and false portrayal of the transgender person and drag queens and may affect the lives of real people in the real world, even leading to bigotry and perpetuating senseless violence against them. I also noticed that many films continue to represent gay men as very effeminate, and supporting actors use derogatory words towards LGBTQ characters rather frequently, such as *barbie*, *biba*, *bicha*, *bichinha*, *boiola*, *mulher de tromba*, and *viado/a*, among others.

Even though I consider this evidence of change in the way Brazilian cinema, or more specifically, the way comedies represent LGBTQ characters a small victory, my corpus was only composed of 15 films. Only 20.5% of 73 films met my requirements and presented LGBTQ characters in standout roles. That small number is alarming on its own. Only one film introduces a couple as a gay protagonist (*Crô*), as I observed previously, and only one half of the couple is the protagonist. The other half is a character in a supportive role who ends up forming a couple with the protagonist in the last scene. I also found that it became common for a male character to play a female in the post-Retomada period, which seems to be an inheritance from the *chanchada*. Last, but not least, it is important to give Paulo Gustavo a mention as the most recurring face in the LGBTQ comedies of the post-Retomada. He appears in five of the 15 films discussed in this chapter: *Divã* (José Alvarenga Jr., 2009), *Vai que Cola* (César Eduardo Rodrigues, 2015), *Minha Mãe é uma Peça* (André Pellenz,

2013), *Os Homens São de Marte... e É pra Lá Que Eu Vou!* (Marcus Baldini, 2014), and *Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2* (César Rodrigues, 2016).

When Foster published *Gender and Society in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema* in 1999, none of the films in the corpus of this research had yet been released. Foster affirmed then “there have been extremely few Brazilian films to explore sexual dissidence, whether in terms of gender role, sexual identity, or the conduct and acts of a resistant sexual preference” (16). A few years later, it seems this is no longer true. Although this brief overview only took into consideration the presence of LGBTQ characters in a very specific type of film, it is possible to see that these characters exist out there. Something else to keep in mind is that, as these are comedies, the stereotypes might be intentionally used in order to cause discomfort, which may aim at laughs but may also provoke reflection.

Finally, I can conclude that LGBTQ presence and representation in cinema has been changing throughout the years, even if slowly. If, in 100 years of cinema, LGBTQ characters have become more visible, then perhaps more changes will soon come. It is not an easy task to make a non-stereotyped comedy film. To represent the LGBTQ community appropriately, be politically engaged and politically correct, and make humor all at the same time is very challenging. However, filmmakers are living in a world where being aware of everyone’s rights and of matters of representation and equality are now basic requirements.

Unfortunately, I do not have a solution to this problem; as an academic, I am committed to doing my best to continue to work to identify this type of problem and carry on with research, trusting that soon enough, with further exploration, dialogue, and brainstorming, a solution or suitable solutions will emerge. Hopefully, in the near future, filmmakers,

screenwriters and producers will start to deliver even more conscious, inclusive, and less-stereotypical comedies that make us all laugh together.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has investigated how Brazilian comedy films of the post-*Retomada* phase, 2003–2016, represent women and gender. In order to understand how these representations have changed through time and how they work today, I took a step back to examine the most-Brazilian film genre, the *chanchada*. From that point, I was able to show how *chanchada* traits and themes have influenced comedies throughout the subsequent history of Brazilian cinema and continue to do so to the present day. However, I observed that the representation of the female subject and of gender during the post-*Retomada* period has distanced itself from the conservative *chanchada* portrayal, and more recently, films often appear to be working towards reducing gender stereotyping.

My study has revealed that, even during cinema periods in Brazil that were markedly humorless (for example, the Cinema Novo) the few productions categorized as comedies borrow from the *chanchada* in order to shape their humor. One of the examples that I analyzed is *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1969), from the Tropicalist phase of the Cinema Novo. It not only uses archetypes from the *chanchada* tradition but also uses techniques from that genre such as the satire, carnivalization, and cross-dressing. It recycles actors from the *chanchada* traditions, and ultimately, it uses humor to promote social critique.

By proving that the traits of the *chanchada* were present throughout comedies of all cinema periods in Brazil, I built a solid foundation to allow for the investigation of specific details of current comedies. With that, I also established a point of contrast to understand the similarities and differences in representations of gender in current comedy films and previous ones. Therefore, I was able to develop an analysis of films of the post-*Retomada*. From 2003 to

2016, I identified 73 Brazilian comedy films that reached the top ten most-watched films among national productions in the country, which reveals the popularity of the genre.

I witnessed some change in the depiction of comic characters today in comparison to the ones in the *chanchada* tradition. Even though the characterization of characters in comedy films of the post-Retomada tend to follow similar archetypes and models that have existed since the *chanchada*, it was possible to observe a tendency of filmmakers to modify these typical conservative depictions and favor portrayals that either suggest a gender role-reversal or equality of genders. Hence, even though I still observed a steady use of stereotypes, as they are a reliable source of humor, they also have often been used as a form of self-criticism in post-Retomada comedies. Thus, these stereotypical characters are not simply shallow, rather, they are frequently loaded with social commentary and offer a possibility for reflection. I conducted this investigation in romantic comedies due to the popularity of this subgenre. For example, in the film *Se Eu Fosse Você* (Daniel Filho, 2006) the two main characters play a married couple trapped in very traditional gender roles. Only after they supernaturally switch bodies do they realize how they used to conform to stereotypical patriarchal expectations, and then they start to change how they behave and how they see their partner and each other's role in their marriage and in society.

Similarly, this research found an analogous trend in post-Retomada films that portray LGBTQ characters in central roles. The films considered for this analysis were comedies introducing LGBTQ characters in a standout role; interestingly, most of them are not romantic comedies. In my corpus of 73 films, I encountered 15 films and 26 characters that fit this category. I analyzed the most representative films introducing lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, drag queens, and cross-dressers. I classified each of the 26 characters according to



how their films represent them (and stemming from previous research on the topic): the *criminal*, the *sex-obsessed*, the *effeminately-comical*, the *not out*, or the *non-stereotyped*. I noticed a tendency to depict most of these characters in a less-prejudiced way than it had been done in the past, after comparing with previous research. A large number of these characters are represented in a non-stereotypical way, and it is even possible to see some allusions to important discussions concerning sex orientation and gender identity. Even though it is still a small step and work needs to continue to be done in order for it to be considered a substantial change, it is noteworthy and it needs to be recorded as the possible beginning of a new era. An example is the character of Juliano (Rodrigo Pandolfo), who is initially introduced as gay in the film *Minha Mãe é uma Peça* (André Pellenz, 2013) but then develops into a bisexual character in *Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2* (César Rodrigues, 2016).<sup>39</sup> Both films represent him non-stereotypically, and his sexuality is just one of several traits that contribute to the construction of his character.

In summary, my dissertation has concluded that Brazilian cinema has been changing the way it represents women and gender. Comedies of the post-*Retomada* still favor *chanchada* techniques and clichéd representations, which result in stereotypical portrayals; however, they now tend to insert social commentaries into those stereotypes, as well as self-criticism. Hence, they deliver a compromise, a combination of humor and social awareness. By conducting this investigation in comedies, I was able to witness not only this slow and steady transformation, but I also showed that humor can be used as a tool for criticism.

Even though the Brazilian stigma surrounding comedies has started to become more of a background opinion lately, it is not uncommon to run into people who never thought that humor

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<sup>39</sup> In the third installment, *Minha Mãe é uma Peça 3* (Susana Garcia, 2019), Juliano marries his boyfriend, and both families unite to celebrate. His bisexuality is not brought into question again, remaining a theme of the second film only.

could be used for anything other than provoking laughter. In my own experience, during the process of writing this dissertation, when I explained what I was studying or writing about, I was used to receiving three standard responses: the surprised face, as in “I never thought about that, tell me more”; the not-so-sure face, when people are half expecting that I am playing a prank on them; and the “oh, really?” condescending face with a smirk, which I believe means “that is funny, but not very smart, why would you study that?”. I find it delightful to see all these reactions and run my own little personal experiment to see how people will respond.

Unfortunately, I do not have data to share, but I can say anecdotally and without a doubt that every single person with whom I shared my research topic has reacted with a variation of one of those responses. Studying comedy is still surprising or even shocking. Whenever someone asks me to explain my research further, which they sometimes do, and I start talking about how my focus is on the analysis of representations of gender and women, that is when I see their eyes change, they generally say “oh!” and my audience begins to give me some credit. This proves that, while gender and female representation are topics that are taken seriously, unfortunately, people tend to see humor simply as a matter of laughter. A great number of people still fail to acknowledge the worth of comedy as a material for scholarly research. I hope that this dissertation will contribute to eliminating this misbelief and that others will come after this to help build the path and show that comedy is no laughing matter (pun intended).

In the future I intend to expand this research with further investigation of the role of the reception, so I can understand how the audience is receiving these images that are being reshaped and the messages the films are transmitting. I also intend to look at representations of masculinity to juxtapose with the representations of the female subject that this dissertation discusses, as well as those of the LGBTQ. An interesting subtopic would be to examine how the

female and male bodies are represented in comedies, as the range of possibilities is so great. (See, for example, *A Mulher Invisível* vs *Os Normais 2* vs *O Concurso*.) I should not ignore the fact that this dissertation focused on the current period of Brazilian cinema, the post-Retomada; hence, an obvious follow-up to this research would be to observe a comparison of the results that this investigation encountered to possible results that the analysis of films from 2016 to the present might reveal. Finally, a proposed examination that unfortunately ended up organically falling out of this research was the study of women behind the camera. I noted how women have gained so much space during the Retomada, and some scholarly research has been written about that. Similar, complementary research needs to be done on the contribution and presence of females behind the screens during the post-Retomada period, as directors, producers, screenwriters, and more. Despite it being a very pertinent topic, for a lack of space, time, and opportunity, and in order to make sure it would receive the attention it deserves, this had to be saved for future research, hopefully to be undertaken soon.

## APPENDIX

Brazilian comedies that have reached the top ten in terms of audience numbers from 2003 to 2016.<sup>40</sup>

Year	Film	Producer	Distributor	Genre	Revenue (R\$)	Audience
2003	<i>Casseta e Planeta: A Taça do Mundo é Nossa</i> (The World Cup is Ours) - Lula Buarque de Hollanda, dir.	Conspiração Filmes	Warner	Comedy	4.346.394,00	690,709
2003	<i>Deus é Brasileiro</i> (God is Brazilian) - Cacá Diegues, dir.	Rio Vermelho Filmes	Columbia	Comedy	10.655.438,00	1.635,212
2003	<i>Lisbela e o Prisioneiro</i> (Lisbela and the Prisoner) - Guel Arraes, dir.	Uns Produções e Filmes	Fox	Romcom	19.915.933,00	3.174,643
2003	<i>Os Normais - O Filme</i> (So Normal) - José Alvarenga Jr, dir.	Globo Filmes/ M I 5 Filmes	Lumière	Romcom	19.874.866,00	2.996,467
2004	<i>A Dona da História</i> (Owner of the Story) - Daniel Filho, dir.	Lereby	Buena Vista	Romcom	9.025.423,00	1.271,415
2004	<i>Meu tio Matou um Cara</i> (My Uncle Killed a Guy) - Jorge Furtado, dir.	Casa de Cinema de Porto Alegre	Fox	Comedy	4.095.008,00	591,12
2004	<i>Sexo, Amor e Traição</i> (Sex, Love and Betrayal) - Jorge Fernando, dir.	Total Entertainment	Fox	Romcom	15.775.132,00	2.219,423
2005	<i>Mais Uma Vez Amor</i> (Once Again Love) - Rosane Svartman, dir.	Raccord Produções/ Total Entertainment	Warner	Romcom	1.662.516,00	228,567
2005	<i>O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta</i> (A Romeo-and-Juliet Kind of Love Affair) - Bruno Barreto, dir.	Filmes do Equador	Buena Vista	Romcom	7.303.657,00	969,278
2005	<i>O Coronel e o Lobisomen</i> (The Colonel and the Werewolf) - Maurício Farias, dir.	Globo Filmes/ Natasha Filmes/ Fox Film do Brasil	Fox	Historic Com.	4.678.543,00	654,983

<sup>40</sup> All data has been extracted from the Ancine website: <http://oca.ancine.gov.br>

2006	<i>Se eu Fosse Você</i> (If I Were You) - Daniel Filho, dir.	Total Entertainment	Fox	Romcom	28,916,137.00	3,644,956
2006	<i>Casseta e Planeta: Seus Problemas Acabaram</i> (Your Problems are Over) - José Lavigne, dir.	Globo Filmes	Europa/ MAM	Comedy	4,262,366.00	596,624
2006	<i>Muito Gelo e Dois Dedos D'Água</i> (Lots of Ice and a Little Bit of Water) - Daniel Filho, dir.	Lereby Produções	Buena Vista	Comedy	3,960,788.00	509,098
2006	<i>Trair e Coçar é Só Começar</i> (Cheating in Chains) - Moacyr Góes, dir.	Diler & Associados	Fox	Romcom	3,486,329.00	481,006
2006	<i>Fica Comigo esta Noite</i> (Stay With Me Tonight) - João Falcão, dir.	Diler & Associados	Buena Vista	Romcom	1,925,083.00	249,248
2007	<i>A Grande Família - o Filme</i> (The Big Family) - Maurício Farias, dir.	Globo Filmes	Europa/ MAM	Romcom	15,482,240.00	2,035,576
2007	<i>O Homem que Desafiou o Diabo</i> (The Man who Defied the Devil) - Moacyr Góes, dir.	Filmes do Equador	Warner	Comedy	2,992,203.00	422,855
2007	<i>Ó Pai Ó</i> (Look At This) - Monique Gardenberg, dir.	Dueto Filmes e Participações	Europa/ MAM	Musical Com.	3,172,654.00	397,075
2007	<i>Caixa Dois</i> (Money on the Side) - Bruno Barreto, dir.	Filmes do Equador	Buena Vista	Comedy	2,105,386.00	247,292
2007	<i>Saneamento Básico, o Filme</i> (Basic Sanitation, The Movie) - Jorge Furtado, dir.	Casa de Cinema de Porto Alegre	Sony	Comedy	1,472,475.00	190,656
2008	<i>A Casa da Mãe Joana</i> (Golden Oldies) - Hugo Carvana, dir.	MAC Comunicação e Produção	Imagem	Comedy	3,852,415.78	525,035
2008	<i>Sexo com Amor?</i> (Sex With Love?) - Wolf Maya, dir.	Total Entertainment	Fox	Romcom	3,547,305.00	432,195
2008	<i>A Guerra dos Rocha</i> (The Rocha's War) - Jorge Fernando, dir.	Total Entertainment	Fox	Comedy	2,382,939.00	345,964

2009	<i>Se Eu Fosse Você 2</i> (If I Were You 2) - Daniel Filho, dir.	Total Entertainment	Fox	Romcom	50,543,885.00	6,112,851
2009	<i>A Mulher Invisível</i> (The Invisible Woman) - Cláudio Torres, dir.	Conspiração Filmes	Warner	Romcom	20,500,361.00	2,353,646
2009	<i>Os Normais 2</i> (So Normal 2) - José Alvarenga Jr, dir.	Globo Filmes	Imagem	Romcom	18,978,259.88	2,202,640
2009	<i>Divã</i> (In Therapy) - José Alvarenga Jr, dir.	Total Entertainment	Downtown/ Riofilme	Romcom	16,497,260.61	1,866,403
2010	<i>Muita Calma Nessa Hora</i> (Let's All Calm Down) - Felipe Joffily, dir.	Idéias Ideais Design & Produções Ltda/ Casé Filmes Ltda.	Europa/ Riofilme	Romcom	12,832,975.18	1,485,498
2010	<i>O Bem Amado</i> (The Well Beloved One) - Guel Arraes, dir.	Natasha Enterprises	Sony	Dramatic Com.	8,393,618.86	955,393
2010	<i>As Melhores Coisas do Mundo</i> (The Best Things in the World) - Laís Bodanzky, dir.	Gullane Filmes	Warner/Riofilme	Dramatic Com.	2,257,084.00	300,165
2010	<i>Quincas Berro D'Água</i> (Quincas Wateryell) - Sérgio Machado, dir.	Videofilmes Produções Artísticas	Sony	Dramatic Com.	2,125,919.72	273,031
2011	<i>De Pernas pro Ar</i> (Head Over Heels) - Roberto Santucci, dir.	Morena Filmes Ltda.	Downtown/Paris	Romcom	31,033,778.76	3,506,552
2011	<i>Cilada.com</i> (Trap.com) - José Alvarenga Jr., dir.	Casé Filmes	Downtown/ Paris/ Riofilme	Romcom	28,030,183.67	2,959,460
2011	<i>O Palhaço</i> (The Clown) - Selton Mello, dir.	Bananeira Filmes	Imagem	Dramatic Com.	11,901,966.45	1,242,880
2011	<i>O Homem do Futuro</i> (The Man From the Future) - Cláudio Torres, dir.	Conspiração Filmes	Paramount	Comedy/ Sci-Fi	11,498,810.00	1,211,083
2011	<i>Qualquer Gato Vira-Lata</i> (Any Stray Cat) - Tomas Portella, dir.	Tietê Produções Cinematográficas	Disney	Romcom	10,742,238.99	1,194,628

2012	<i>De pernas pro ar 2</i> (Head Over Heels 2) - Roberto Santucci, dir.	Morena Filmes Ltda.	Downtown/ Paris/ Riofilme	Romcom	50,312,134.36	4,846,273
2012	<i>Até que a Sorte nos Separe</i> (Til Luck Do Us Part) - Roberto Santucci, dir.	Gullane Filmes	Downtown/ Paris/ Riofilme	Comedy	34,712,891.76	3,417,510
2012	<i>E Aí, Comeu?</i> (Did you... Score?) - Felipe Joffily, dir.	Casé Filmes	Downtown/ Paris/ Riofilme	Romcom	26,078,324.43	2,578,599
2012	<i>Os Penetras</i> (Party Crashers) - Andrucha Waddington, dir.	Conspiração Filmes	Warner	Comedy	25,613,581.00	2,548,441
2012	<i>As Aventuras de Agamenon, o Repórter</i> (Agamenon: The Film) - Victor Lopes, dir.	Tambellini Filmes e Produções Audiovisuais	Downtown/ Paris/ Riofilme	Historic Com,	9,335,915.91	937,980
2012	<i>Totalmente Inocentes</i> (Totally Innocents) - Rodrigo Bittencourt Ramos, dir.	Atitude Produções e Empreendimentos Ltda.	Downtown/ Paris/ Riofilme	Comedy	5,372,762.07	523,577
2013	<i>Minha Mãe é uma Peça</i> (My Mom is a Character) - André Pellenz, dir.	Migdal Produções cinematográficas Ltda	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	49,533,218.31	4,600,145
2013	<i>Até que a Sorte nos Separe 2</i> (Till Death do Us Part 2) - Roberto Santucci, dir.	Gullane Filmes	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	45,274,441.66	3,978,191
2013	<i>Meu Passado me Condena</i> (My Past Condemns Me) - Julia Rezende, dir.	Atitude Produções e Empreendimentos Ltda	Downtown/ Paris	Romcom	34,826,391.63	3,140,771
2013	<i>Vai Que Dá Certo</i> (It Will Work) - Maurício Farias, dir.	Fraiha Produções de Eventos e Editora Ltda	Imagem	Comedy	28,990,665.92	2,729,340
2013	<i>Crô - O Filme</i> (Crô: The Movie) - Bruno Barreto	Filmes do Equador	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	18,673,695.63	1,716,774
2013	<i>O Concurso</i> (The Test) - Pedro Vasconcelos, dir.	Latinamerica Entretenimento Eireli	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	14,125,213.83	1,320,102
2013	<i>Mato sem Cachorro</i> (The Dognapper) - Pedro Amorim, dir.	Titânio Produções Artísticas	Imagem	Romcom	11,586,523.40	1,134,563

2014	<i>O Candidato Honesto</i> (The Honest Candidate) - Roberto Santucci, dir.	Camisa Listrada / Panorama Filmes	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	24,827,669.51	2,237,776
2014	<i>Os Caras de Pau em o Misterioso Roubo do Anel</i> (The Barefaceds and The Mysterious Ring Theft) - Felipe Joffily, dir.	Casé Filmes Ltda	Imagem	Comedy	22,614,310.17	1,892,337
2014	<i>Os Homens São de Marte...</i> (Men Are From Mars...) - Marcus Baldini, dir.	Biônica Cinema e TV Ltda	Downtown/ Paris	Romcom	21,750,981.39	1,793,239
2014	<i>S. O. S. Mulheres ao Mar</i> (S.O.S. Women to The Sea) - Cris D'Amato, dir.	Ananã Produções, Eventos e Assessoria de Marketing Ltda.	Disney	Romcom	20,732,500.00	1,776,579
2014	<i>Muita Calma Nessa Hora 2</i> (Let's All Calm Down 2) - Felipe Joffily, dir.	Casé Filmes Ltda / Globo Comunicações e Participações S.A.	Downtown/ Paris	Romcom	15,888,595.19	1,429,862
2014	<i>Vestido Pra Casar</i> (Dressed to Marry) - Gerson Sanginitto, dir.	Raconto Produções Artísticas	Imagem	Romcom	14,756,458.84	1,258,720
2014	<i>Confissões de Adolescente - o Filme</i> (Teen's Confessions) - Daniel Filho & Cris D'Amato, dir.	Lereby Produções Ltda	Sony	Dramatic Com.	8,605,015.98	816,971
2014	<i>Copa de Elite</i> (Elite Cup) - Vitor Brandt, dir.	Glaz Entretenimento	Fox	Comedy	7,793,226.00	646,224
2015	<i>Loucas pra Casar</i> (Wedding Craze) - Roberto Santucci, dir.	Glaz Entretenimento	Downtown/ Paris	Romcom	45,688,069.53	3,726,547
2015	<i>Vai que Cola - O Filme</i> (It Will Work Out) - Cesar Eduardo Rodrigues, dir.	Conspiração Filmes Entretenimento 3º Milênio	H2O Films	Comedy	41,803,908.21	3,307,837
2015	<i>Meu Passado Me Condena 2</i> (My Past Comdems Me 2) - Julia Rezende, dir.	Atitude Produções e Empreendimentos	Downtown/ Paris	Romcom	32,941,689.75	2,639,935
2015	<i>Até Que a Sorte Nos Separe 3</i> (Till Luck Do Us Part 3) - Roberto Santucci & Marcelo Braz, dir.	Gullane Entretenimento	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	22,115,553.30	1,755,452
2015	<i>S.O.S Mulheres ao Mar 2</i> (S.O.S. Women to The Sea) - Cristiane D'Amato, dir.	Ananã Produções, Eventos e Assessoria de marketing Ltda.	Universal/ Europa / Elo	Romcom	21,108,060.56	1,637,032



2015	<i>Linda de Morrer</i> (Drop Dead Gorgeous) - Cristiane D'Amato, dir.	Migdal Produções Cinematográficas	Fox	Romcom	12,186,625.00	948,542
2015	<i>Qualquer Gato Vira-lata 2</i> (Any Stray Cat 2) - Roberto Santucci Filho & Marcelo Antunes Braz, dir.	Tietê Produções Cinematográficas	Downtown/ Paris	Romcom	10,017,232.88	807,827
2015	<i>Bem Casados</i> (Happily Married) - Aluizio Abranches, dir.	Lama Filmes Ltda.	Imagem	Romcom	6,927,672.06	544,298
2015	<i>Que Horas Ela Volta?</i> (The Second Mother) - Ana Luiza Machado da Silva Muylaert, dir.	África Filmes / Gullane Entretenimento	Pandora	Dramatic Com.	6,876,314.80	493,022
2016	<i>Minha Mãe é uma Peça 2</i> (My Mom is a Character) - César Rodrigues	DiamondBack	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	124.681.177,82	9.234.363
2016	<i>É Fada!</i> (It's a Fairy!) - Cris D'Amato, dir.	Lereby/ Globo Filmes/ Imagem	Imagem	Comedy	21.240.910,24	1.722.069
2016	<i>Tô Ryca!</i> (I'm Rich!) - Pedro Antônio, dir.	Glaz Entretenimento	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	14.835.057,90	1.121.570
2016	<i>Um Suburbano Sortudo</i> (A Lucky Suburban Guy) - Roberto Santucci, dir.	Camisa Listrada	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	14.245.429,85	1.070.434
2016	<i>Vai que Dá Certo 2</i> (It Will Work Out 2) - Maurício Farias, dir.	Frahia Produções	Imagem	Comedy	12.022.063,96	923,426
2016	<i>Um Namorado pra Minha Mulher</i> (A Boyfriend for My Wife) - Júlia Rezende, dir.	Paris Entretenimento	Downtown/ Paris	Romcom	9.028.755,59	665,999
2016	<i>O Shaolin do Sertão</i> (The Shaolin of the Backlands) - Halder Gomes, dir.	ATC Entretenimento	Downtown/ Paris	Comedy	7.973.943,72	610,741

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