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1. Introduction

In recent years, Brazil has experienced remarkable growth in film productions directed by women. In fact, women have been active in Brazilian cinema since the silent era, whether as directors or in other cinematographic activities. However, the 21st century has seen a significant increase in the number of female filmmakers. For example, four films directed by women were released per year in the 1990s, compared to more than 30 in 2010 alone. Unfortunately, despite this increase in the number of productions directed by women, these films tend to receive considerably less attention from critics and the general public than films directed by men, and are rarely mentioned in academic literature. The desire to be part of the effort to change this panorama was the primary motivation for my current work.

Apart from that, I realized that contemporary Brazilian women's cinema often deals with political issues. Not only that, but in many films these issues are not placed within an institutional framework but tell stories that put the focus on everyday situations. These narratives seem to be created in accordance with the old feminist claim that the personal is political¹, and that the most banal everyday interactions might express social inequalities and power differences. They are also films that connect with theories that have become popular in the country in recent years, such as intersectional feminism and Brazilian black feminism. They portray Brazilian reality in terms of inequalities related to markers such as class, gender, race, sexual orientation - and their intersections.

These stories caught my attention, and I decided to analyse four films directed by women in contemporary Brazil, all of which focus on the political dimensions of *living together*. The research question I would like to work with is: *How do these movies depict political dimensions of living together?* How do they address conflicts and partnerships present in everyday relationships between individuals from different social groups? What oppressions, vulnerabilities and resistances are emphasized in each of these movies? How do the films

¹ See, for example, Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective: A Black Feminist Statement", *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, ed. Zillah R. Eisenstein, 1979, New York: Monthly Review Press, 362-372; Elena de Oliveira Schuck, "Feminismos em trânsito internacional: a circulação do conhecimento feminista entre Brasil e França", *Monções: Revista De Relações Internacionais Da UFGD*, 6/11, 2017, 89-120 and Julia Schuster, "Why the personal remained political: comparing second and third wave perspectives on everyday feminism", *Social Movement Studies*, 16/6, 2017, 647-659.

address ideas like race, class, and gender, and their intersections? Which identification markers are stressed in each case, and how do they intertwine?

The films selected are: *Um Dia com Jerusa* (D.: Viviane Ferreira, Brazil, 2020), *Que horas ela volta* (D.: Anna Muylaert, Brazil, 2015), *Chuva é Cantoria na Aldeia dos Mortos* (D.: Renée Nader Messoria and João Salaviza, Brazil/Portugal, 2018) and *Era o Hotel Cambridge* (D.: Eliane Caffé, Brazil, 2016). Generally speaking, we can say that these films highlight the political dimensions of coexistence, especially in interpersonal relationships. The films' stories range from partnerships between different groups of people, encounters that result in a sense of belonging, to revealing an oppressive system that is at the heart of Brazilian society but is usually camouflaged. The plots of the films take place in environments as diverse as private homes and squats, in large and small cities or indigenous villages. The focus is different in each film. As stated, what they have in common is a concern with the challenges and potencies of everyday life.

The current work is divided in three parts. The second chapter contains an overview of the history of films directed by women in Brazil. This effort was made with the objective of presenting some of the main contributions women have made to Brazilian cinema, and specially of highlighting the importance of the development of a history of female cinema in Brazil (a research field that is, unfortunately, still very incipient). The promotion of this field of research, as well as that of critical analyses of films made by women, is part of a joint effort to draw attention to their production and advocate for a greater recognition of their work.

The third chapter is an exposition of theories that have inspired the analyzes, ideas with which I have tried to *think-with* across the work. In particular, I discuss some reflections by Donna Haraway presented in the book *Staying with the Trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene*². In it, Haraway offers ways of *thinking-with*, *living-with* and *dying-with* on a *multispecies* earth. She argues that in order to render ourselves capable of response in disturbing times, we must

² Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham: Duke University Press 2016.

stay connected to the present and abandon the idea(l)s of *auto-poiesis* to embrace those of *sym-poiesis*, or of “making-with”³. I believe those ideas tie in very well with the stories told in the movies I will analyze. In their own ways, they deal with the complexities of *living-with* and *making-with* in a “thick present”⁴. At the same time, in this thick present we have all inherited difficult stories, but “not equally and not in the same ways”⁵. This also is true for the films analysed in this work, because they address oppressions suffered by different groups, such as indigenous people, black people, homeless workers, among others. Therefore, the stories of the films in question are told from different perspectives. In addition to discussing some of Haraway's ideas, I present in this chapter some information about intersectionality, as well as about Brazilian black feminism. I also tried to *think-with* these theories both in the selection of the movies and the analyses. Since Brazil is a large country with a very diverse population, I tried to choose films representing the diversity of its population - which includes Europeans, Africans and Indigenous peoples as its main formative groups, as well as the various migratory flows of recent centuries.

The third part of the work concerns the analyses of the four films mentioned. Each movie is analyzed in a different chapter, each of which provides some information concerning the Brazilian social context in relation to the central theme of the film, followed by its analysis. The analyses highlight the ways in which the directors have staged differences, powers and challenges of *living together*. They were adapted to the particular universe focused on in each film. The difference between the films and the universes they represent indicate the size of the challenges, but also of the potentials, faced in contemporary Brazil.

³ For more details, see the Chapter 3, “Sympoiesis. Symbiogenesis and the Lively Arts of Staying with the Trouble”, in Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*.

⁴ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, here p.1

⁵ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, here p. 89.

2. History of Female Film Directors in Brazil

As mentioned in the introduction to this work, publications on the production of women in Brazilian cinema have only recently begun to gain more volume. Current research mentions only two books among the very few publications from the 20th century dedicated to the cinema directed by women in Brazil: *As musas da matinê* (“The matinee muses” in free translation)⁶ and *Quase catálogo 1: Realizadoras de cinema no Brasil (1930-1988)* (in free translation “Almost a Catalogue 1: Women Filmmakers in Brazil (1930-1988)”)⁷, organized by Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda in 1989. The latter provides a survey of all films (regardless of duration or genre) directed by women in Brazil until 1988 - a total of 500 works made by 195 directors⁸. These books and more recent ones demonstrate that the lack of research on the subject is not due to the absence of women working in Brazilian cinema, as is sometimes argued. Despite their timid presence in numbers, women have always been active in the country's film production. However, as emphasized in the introduction, this participation has increased considerably in recent decades. As researchers Luiza Lusvarghi and Camila Vieira da Silva point out, women released an average of four films per year in the 1970s, a number that stayed the same throughout the 1990s, despite the success of *Carlota Joaquina* (D.: Carla Camurati, Brazil, 1995). According to the authors, in 2005 there were already nineteen movies directed by women, and in 2010 there were 36, with increasing numbers in the following years⁹. This increase seems to be in line with what is happening in the rest of Latin America. The growth of productions headed by women in recent decades has not only occurred in Brazil, but throughout the region. In the introduction to the book *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Production, Politics, Poetics*, Ruby Rich summarizes the trend:

“In one generation, Latin American women’s cinema has evolved from the singular achievement of isolated films, discovered and viewed only with difficulty, into a mature corpus of work that has created a field of its own. And yet, the history-making women of Latin American cinema remain

⁶ Elice Munerato e Maria Helena Darcy de Oliveira, *As musas da matinê*, Rio de Janeiro: Edições Rio Arte 1982.

⁷ Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda (Hg.), *Quase Catálogo 1: realizadoras de cinema no Brasil (1930-1988)*. Rio de Janeiro: CIEC/UFRJ; MIS/Secretaria do Estado de Cultura; Funarj 1989.

⁸ See Karla Holanda, Marina Cavalcanti Tedesco (eds), “Apresentação. A pluralidade do feminino no cinema brasileiro”, *Feminino e plural: mulheres no cinema brasileiro*. p. 10.

⁹ See Luiza Lusvarghi, Camila Vieira da Silva (Hg.): *Mulheres atrás das câmeras: As cineastas brasileiras de 1930 a 2018*, here p.15.

outsiders to the Latin American and even Anglophone canon, under-recognised and still urgently in need of champions.”¹⁰

Therefore, despite the growth of the number of movies, these filmmakers receive little attention and recognition for their work. Furthermore, in my research, I did not find a text that provided an overview of the history of women's production in Brazil. The contemporary material found focuses on artists or specific periods (such as the silent cinema period, or the production of the dictatorship years). In the following, I will offer an outline, an attempt to connect some “dots” in order to present a view on female production, from the silent period to nowadays. It will shed light on how difficult it was and still is for women to succeed in this field. The information will serve as a background to the individual analyses of the films selected.

2.1. The Early Years

The contribution of women to Brazilian cinema goes back at least to the 1920s. However, dealing with the country's film history is connected with numerous challenges. First, there is a problem that affects Brazilian cinema as a whole: the lack of preservation of the movies made. Due to a serious and constant political disinterest and the absence of financial investment a considerable part of the archive has been lost. This issue applies even more to the silent movie period, from which many of the most important movies have been ruined. Therefore, researchers have to resort to a series of other resources, for example newspapers, posters, specialized publications, reports, interviews, among others. To make matters worse, from a historical point of view, women's work and in particular artistic contributions, were, and partly still are, considered less valuable.

Within this context, with the exception of actresses, who received more attention and recognition, information about women film professionals in Brazil during the silent period are scarce. There are, for instance, no records of women screenwriters¹¹. Only few female

¹⁰ See Deborah Martin, Deborah Shaw(Hg.): *Latin American Women Filmmakers: Production, Politics, Poetics*. London: IB Tauris 2017, p. XV.

¹¹ See Luciana Corrêa de Araújo, “Cléo de Verberena e o trabalho da mulher no cinema silencioso brasileiro”, *Feminino e plural: mulheres no cinema brasileiro*, eds. Karla Holanda/Marina Cavalcanti Tedesco, Campinas: Papirus 2017, pp. 18-41, here pp. 21-22.

photography directors or editors are known. Even the most prestigious cinematographic function, film direction, has been studied very little when it comes to work done by women. As author Luciana Corrêa de Araújo points out, until our days what we know about Cléo de Verberena, identified as the first Brazilian female director, is limited. In the following, I will deal with the most outstanding women in early Brazilian film production.

Jacyra Martins Silveira was born in 1904 in Amparo, a city in the countryside of the state of São Paulo. At the beginning of the 1920s, she moved to the state's capital, São Paulo. There, she met and married Cesar Melani, who came from a wealthy family, which enabled them to make films. In 1930 they opened the production company Epica-Film¹². Around this time, inspired by Hollywood and European celebrities, Jacira Silveira adopted the artistic pseudonym of Cléo de Verberena¹³, while Cesar Melani became Laes Mac Reni (an anagram of his real name). Shortly after, they started to work on *O mistério do Dominó Preto* (D.: Cléo de Verberena, Brazil, 1931), in which Verberena both directed and acted. Epica-Film quickly announced to the press that it would produce the first movie directed by a woman in Brazil. However, author Luciana Corrêa de Araújo emphasizes that although the novelty of having a woman directing a film caught the attention of the press, when released, the movie did not receive any attention from critics. Moreover, the publicity material only showed Verberena in the role of an actress and never behind the camera, or in any activity that identified her as a director¹⁴.

O mistério do dominó preto did not survive, and much of the information about the movie, including a synopsis and photographs, comes from articles in a specialized magazine. The film was based on a story of the same title by author Aristides Rabello. One of the most interesting aspects of the movie is that Verberena altered the story in relevant points. As author Marcella de Araújo stresses:

¹² Marcella Grecco de Araújo, "Cleo de Verberena. Uma Cineasta Brasileira.", *Movimento*, 13, August 2019, pp. 30-51, here p. 33.

¹³ In some sources, just Cléo Verberena. Corrêa de Araújo, "Cléo de Verberena e o trabalho da mulher no cinema silencioso brasileiro", p. 23.

¹⁴ Corrêa de Araújo, "Cléo de Verberena e o trabalho da mulher no cinema silencioso brasileiro", p. 25.

“[I]n Verberena’s film, before running into her killer, Cléo tells her husband that she is going out to enjoy the carnival. In Rabello’s versions, the main character, who does not have a name, secretly goes to the carnival to see her lover. Ultimately, Verberena makes the female character more daring and independent, gives her multiple lovers, and has her go to the carnival alone, without having to lie to her husband about her activities. Verberena also changed the ending of the story. In her version, the murderer is a man and the character of Cléo is properly buried. On the other hand, in Rabello’s versions, the murderer was another woman, the jealous girlfriend of the lover that Cléo was going to meet.”¹⁵

As the quote shows, the changes made by Verberena seem far from being random, and give the character more agency, independence and presence. Unfortunately, in a scenario where foreign films were considered more profitable than national ones, and were therefore favored by movie theaters, *O mistério do Dominó Preto* did not find an appropriate audience. Verberena and Melani had put all their resources into the making of the film, and ended up bankrupt. Tragically, Cesar Melani was found dead in his home in 1935, when he was just 31 years old¹⁶. Cléo de Verberena, in turn, completely withdrew from cinema. Even though she is the first woman to direct a film in Brazil, her story, if mentioned at all, is addressed only briefly in books on the history of Brazilian cinema. Still, as author Marcella Grecco de Araujo points out, in a time in which the possibilities for women were limited and in which they faced many prejudices regarding their professional capabilities, she directed a feature film, leading a team in which professionals were mainly men.¹⁷

It is important to note that in the period of silent cinema, Brazilian society still frowned upon a white middle-class woman performing paid work outside the domestic environment. In this context, in most cases, women who stood out in film production did so together with a male figure that legitimized them socially¹⁸. As mentioned above, this also applies to Cléo de Verberena, who worked with her husband. Likewise, for example, the actress Eva Nil founded a production company with her father, in which she took over various functions. The movie *Senhorita agora mesmo* (D.: Pedro Comello, Brazil, 1928), directed by her father, for instance, seems to have been a personal project of hers. In this film, instead of playing the sweet and fragile maiden she was known for, Nil wields weapons, depicting a farm girl

¹⁵ Marcella Grecco de Araujo, “Cleo de Verberena”, *Women Film Pioneers Project*, eds. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall’Asta, New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-stg6-p955>, 23.09.2023.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Corrêa de Araújo, “Cléo de Verberena e o trabalho da mulher no cinema silencioso brasileiro”, p. 35.

fighting to defend her territory. Besides acting, she also did part of the photography of the movie, as well as laboratory work.

One personality of the time who was an exception in many ways was the actress and producer Carmen Santos, the biggest star of Brazilian cinema in the 1920s. Contrary to the cases already mentioned, she maintained a relationship during years with the businessman Antonio Seabra, who financed some of her projects, but with whom she never got married, against the moral standards of the time. Moreover, according to Ana Pessoa, she managed her career very independently: “Santos refused to conform to the role of the seductive muse, taking charge of her professional life by choosing her own projects, hiring her directors, and producing, starring, and directing.”¹⁹ In the late 1930s, she began a film directing project, which, however, took over ten years to be realized. Being released only in 1948, already in the sound period, the movie ended up being a box office failure, forcing her to close her production company. As so many times in Brazilian cinema, the film was lost in a fire, and only fragments remain.

It goes without saying that there were other women working in cinema at the time, and more trajectories and contributions could be discovered or better known with more historiographical research. It is interesting to note that the informality from the first decades might have facilitated the participation of women in the area. As this reality gradually changed, women lost space in the field. As author Leslie L. Marsh comments:

“As it modeled itself after the Hollywood studio system, the increasing industrialization of Brazilian cinema during the 1950s resulted in more clearly defined roles in film production, which subsequently resulted in a decrease in the number of women participating behind the cameras as directors. In sum, more well-defined roles in production meant women became less likely to make informal directorial contributions.”²⁰

What can be concluded is that the participation of women in the production at this time was still very restricted, constrained by a predominantly male environment - a reality that in

¹⁹ Ana Pessoa, “Carmen Santos”, *Women Film Pioneers Project*, eds. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall’Asta, New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-cyhg-6s21>, 23. 09. 2023.

²⁰ Leslie L. Marsh: *Brazilian Women’s Filmmaking: From Dictatorship to Democracy*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press 2012, p. 05.

different degrees would persist for many decades, and that is shared with all Latin America. Even so, from the 1940s to the 1960s, some female directors managed to establish a career in Brazil, as is the case with Gilda de Abreu, who in 1946 released the feature film *O Ébrio* (D.: Gilda de Abreu, Brazil, 1946). Not only did the movie capture audiences and critics, it also turned out to be one of the most successful films of Brazilian cinema history²¹.

2.2. Modern Cinema directed by women and the “retomada” years

In the 1960s, Brazilian cinema achieved international recognition with the film movement Cinema Novo, which caught attention at the Festival of Cannes. According to author Karla Holanda, the movies from those years that became canonic, no matter whether they were features or shorts, documentaries or fictions, were almost exclusively directed by men. However, dozens of women directed movies in the 1960s and especially in the 1970s²². Most of those movies did not receive recognition from Brazilian cinema historiography, and remained little known and discussed until recent years. Therefore, Holanda proposes to think about the cinema made by women in terms of “another history of Brazilian cinema”²³.

According to her, many movies of this period have specific characteristics, both thematically and formally. She departs from a definition made by film theorist Ismail Xavier, who defines three main features of Brazilian modern cinema: ‘author politics’, low-budget and renewal of language²⁴. Regarding modern female cinema, these are complemented by another feature, namely feminism. Holanda explains that although not all women movie makers from that time considered themselves feminist or identified with the movement, topics related to feminist issues were commonly addressed in the movies.

²¹ See Neusa Barbosa, “Pioneiras na realização cinematográfica no Brasil”, *Mulheres atrás das câmeras: As cineastas brasileiras de 1930 a 2018*, eds. Luiza Lusvardi / Camila Vieira da Silva, São Paulo: Estação Liberdade 2019, pp. 17-34.

²² Karla Holanda (ed.), “Cinema brasileiro (moderno) de autoria feminina”, *Feminino e plural: mulheres no cinema brasileiro*, eds. Karla Holanda/Marina Cavalcanti Tedesco, Campinas: Papirus 2017, pp. 61-83, here p. 65.

²³ [Trans. M. C. L.] Holanda, “Cinema brasileiro (moderno) de autoria feminina”, pp. 61-83.

²⁴ Holanda, “Cinema brasileiro (moderno) de autoria feminina”, p. 66.

From the 1970s onwards there is a boost in the number of women directors, and it is in the field of documentary that the increase is more remarkable²⁵. According to Holanda, before the 1960s there are no records of documentaries made by women. In that decade, eleven documentaries were directed or codirected by women, and in the 1970s this number rose to 183. Many of them were dealing with feminist issues from that time. This is the case of *A Entrevista* (D.:Helena Solberg, Brazil, 1966), a landmark in Brazilian female cinema. Holanda considers it the inaugural film of the Brazilian Modern Cinema with women authorship.

A Entrevista addresses the anxieties and expectations of upper middle class women about themes such as marriage, virginity, sex, education and work. In its 19 minutes we see images of a young woman getting dressed, going to the beach and wearing a wedding dress. The images are accompanied by a voice-over narration with testimonies from different women about their thoughts on these themes. In the audio narrative, the statements contradict each other. There are assertions that women should only lose virginity after marriage, not be “too independent” so as not to make men “uncomfortable”, or that they should be cultured and educated, but not work outside the home. These are indiscriminately followed by statements in which the interviewed says she cannot stand “being dominated by a man”, or that marriage would curtail her freedom²⁶. The result is a film which does not present us with a doctrinal discourse, nor offers a message that proposes itself as “true”.

As Holanda highlights, this feature significantly distances the film from the Cinema Novo documentaries produced at the time. Those had the purpose of bringing the harsh Brazilian reality onto the screens, showing its people, denouncing their ills. They were marked by explanatory voice-overs seeking to guide the understanding of the movies, which homogenized the narratives. On the contrary, *A Entrevista*, as Holanda points out, is marked by non-linearity, plurality, ambiguity and contradictions. Furthermore, she stresses that the film distinguishes itself from others fundamentally by being about the same social class to which the director herself belonged. The modern Brazilian documentary is marked by a

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 71.

²⁶ Holanda relates the issues raised by the film to those raised in the book “The Feminine Mystique” (1963), by Betty Friedan, a landmark of American feminism. She emphasizes the precocity of the film in dealing with issues that would only be discussed in the Brazilian feminist movement in the 1970s. Holanda, “Cinema brasileiro (moderno) de autoria feminina”, p. 72.

concern to understand and portray the “other” class: the poorest part of the population, to which the filmmakers normally did not belong²⁷. Helena Soldberg's film is remarkable in that it does not do that, approaching an universe which was familiar to the director, and portraying it with ambiguities and contradictions.

Another movie that stands out is *Os homens que eu tive* (D.: Tereza Trautman, Brazil, 1973). Director Tereza Trautman, being only 21 years old at the time, was the first woman to direct a feature fiction film during the dictatorship. The movie tells the story of Pity, a white, wealthy young woman who is in an open marriage. The film follows Pity in her different love affairs, for example inviting one of her lovers to live with her and her husband, leaving the two of them to live with another boyfriend and then going to live in a shared community. This plot was enough for having the movie censored by the regime for 10 years. The ban jeopardized the career of Trautman, who was just directing her first feature film at the time. It is interesting to note that many other movies with more explicit sex scenes did not have the same fate. The “problem” with the film was a moral one: an upper class young woman acting like that could be a bad influence for other women by inspiring them to “misbehave”²⁸.

It is noteworthy that the two films mentioned deal with the stories of women with a very specific profile: white, upper-class and heterosexual. A few years later, in 1984, the first black female director would make a feature film in Brazil, which would also be the first film about a lesbian relationship made in the country. *Amor Maldito* (D.: Adélia Sampaio, Brazil, 1984), would only much later gain recognition. Daughter of a domestic servant, director Adélia Sampaio started her career working as a telephone operator in a distribution company connected to the Cinema Novo movement. Prior to directing the feature film, she was the executive producer of over 70 films²⁹. She also directed four short films that were left in the care of the film library of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, where they disappeared – there are currently no copies of them. According to the director, *Amor Maldito*

²⁷ Holanda, “Cinema brasileiro (moderno) de autoria feminina”, p. 75.

²⁸ Holanda, “Cinema brasileiro (moderno) de autoria feminina”, pp.68-69.

²⁹ Janaína Oliveira, “Por um cinema negro no feminino”, *Mulheres atrás das câmeras: As cineastas brasileiras de 1930 a 2018*, eds. Luiza Lusvarghi / Camila Vieira da Silva, São Paulo: Estação Liberdade 2019, pp. 46-68, here p. 49.

was denied funding by Embracine, the state audiovisual promotion institution at the time, because they would not invest money to disclose “deviations”³⁰ or a “bestiality”³¹. Because of this, the film was shot on a low budget, in a cooperative way.

When ready, the movie could not find screening spaces, being considered too controversial because of its theme (a relationship between two women), until one distributor suggested that they release the film as a porn movie. This was done, and *Amor Maldito* was shown in the whole country, paying its production costs³². Nevertheless, the movie was quickly forgotten, and so it remained until recently. It was only in recent years that the film and the work of Adélia Sampaio have been rediscovered and celebrated for their pioneering spirit, especially by black female filmmakers.

Another common feature in the work of women pointed out by Holanda is an oscillation in their careers. Holanda emphasizes the testimony of Futemma, who claims to have been a director “only occasionally”³³, unlike her husband, who presented himself as a filmmaker. Discontinuities, interruptions and long pauses are commonly present in Brazilian female filmmakers' professional trajectories. This is due both to the difficulty of acquiring funding and to domestic and maternal overload - Adélia Sampaio also states that she had to interrupt her productions to raise her daughters. In the case of female directors from the 1960s to the 1980s, this was accentuated by the fact that this work was even more regarded as female than nowadays. At the same time, many women seem to have difficulties in seeing themselves as “full time” or “real” filmmakers. In this regard, Holanda states: “Similar testimonies of women filmmakers who are shy, or afraid, or doubtful about assuming themselves as such repeat themselves in female-authored cinema”³⁴. Nonetheless, many films directed by women at that time stand out for their distinctive themes and aesthetics, as is the case with the work of

³⁰ Kênia Freitas, Paulo Ricardo Gonçalves de Almeida (eds), “Entrevista com Adélia Sampaio”, programme from the film festival *Diretoras Negras no Cinema Brasileiro*, Brasília, Caixa Cultural, 2017, pp. 60-67, here p. 64.

³¹ [Trans. M. C. L.] Oliveira, “Por um cinema negro no feminino”, p. 49.

³² [Trans. M. C. L.] Oliveira, *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³³ [Trans. M. C. L.] Holanda, “Cinema brasileiro (moderno) de autoria feminina”, p. 81,

³⁴ *Ibid.*

filmmakers such as Ana Carolina and Olga Futemma, for example. As author Leslie L. Marsh sums up:

“In the 1970s and 1980s, women cultural producers working in audiovisual media challenged authoritarian institutions, questioned women’s exclusion, and promoted new understandings of gender, sexuality, and *brasilidade* (Brazilian cultural identity). It is remarkable that women working in film and video demanded rights and privileges as citizens of Brazil at a time when fundamental democratic freedoms did not even exist.”³⁵

According to the author, after the end of the military regime the themes of films made by women changed, and the focus shifted from a struggle for rights to an “examination of the quality of democracy that has emerged”³⁶. In the mid 1990s, the number of women directing movies in Brazil began to grow. *Carlota Joaquina*, directed by Carla Camurati, inaugurated a period that became known as the “Retomada”, when, after a break in the country’s film production during president Fernando Collor’s administration, the cinematographic industry began to grow again in the country. According to Marsh, whilst between 1990 and 1995 women were responsible for approximately 5% of film direction in the country, between 1995 and 2000 this number was around 17%³⁷. Various women filmmakers produced their first feature films at this time, such as Daniela Thomas, Tata Amaral and Carla Camurati herself. This led to some optimism related to the participation of women in Brazilian cinema. However, as Marsh points out, many of the women directors who started to work in that time only accomplished directing one movie, or needed years until their next productions could be made³⁸.

2.3. Contemporary female cinema in Brazil

In my research, I did not find any text that comprehensively approaches contemporary Brazilian cinema made by women. Thus, in this section I will try to condense information found in various articles, in order to offer some data on the current scenario. In the twenty

³⁵ Marsh, *Brazilian Women’s Filmmaking: From Dictatorship to Democracy*, p. 03.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 156.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 158.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 159.

first century, the number of films released in Brazil has substantially grown³⁹. One reason for this is the fact that public investment in the audiovisual area has increased. In the last decade, calls for projects were launched with a specific focus on female and black directors. With those changes, the number of movies directed by women and specifically by black women has also grown, but the numbers are far from being close to equity.

Researchers Luiza Lusvarghi and Camila Vieira da Silva point out that since the 1990s there has been an increase in the number of movies directed by women, with considerable growth in the 21st century. According to the authors, for example in 2005 nineteen movies were directed by women, and in 2010 there were 36, with still increasing numbers in the following years⁴⁰. Author Stephanie Dennison connects the increase in Brazilian film production with the impact of the PT (Workers' Party) federal governments (2003-2016)⁴¹. According to her, the cultural policy led by their administrations has resulted in more diversity in film production. Therefore, groups such as indigenous, black and white women, LGBTQIA+ and black men have gained more space. This change in the profile of who is telling stories has also resulted in a change of the kind of stories being told. As expected, this diversity is also mirrored on the screen, with stories with more diverse protagonists. Although this considerable change is a good thing, it is necessary to emphasize that the number of women working in cinema is still low when compared to the number of men working in the field. And the situation is even more concerning when regarding the participation of black and indigenous women in the audiovisual industry.

The group GEMAA (Grupo de Estudos Multidisciplinares da Ação Afirmativa, "Multidisciplinary Study Group of Affirmative Actions" in English), from University Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, conducted a series of studies about race and gender in Brazilian cinema. One study analyzes the presence of women and men directors in Brazilian film from 1970 to

³⁹ See for example Maria Rangel Candido, Luís Augusto Campos, João Feres Júnior, "A Cara do Cinema Nacional. Gênero e raça nos filmes nacionais de maior público (1995-2014)", *Textos para discussão GEMAA*, 13, 2016, pp. 1-20, here p.1.

⁴⁰ See Luiza Lusvarghi, Camila Vieira da Silva (Hg.): *Mulheres atrás das câmeras: As cineastas brasileiras de 1930 a 2018*. P.15.

⁴¹ Stephanie Dennison: *Remapping Brazilian Film Culture in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge 2020.

2016. The study concentrates only on movies that had more than 500 000 spectators, and it concludes that in almost half a century of production, despite the changes in governments and in political systems (the dictatorship in Brazil ended in 1985), inequalities persist in the field: 98% of the movies analyzed were directed by men (85% of them white; in 13% there was no data to identify them). Neither a male nor a female black director was identified. Only 2% of the productions were directed by (white) women.⁴²

When we focus on the present, some numbers show improvement. Among the films made to be shown in theaters in 2018, for example, 19% had female direction, and 8% mixed direction⁴³. When it comes to short and medium-length films, the presence of women increases. They directed 33% of these in 2018, with 11% of mixed directions. This discrepancy in the female presence according to formats is linked to the fact that short and medium-length films in general require smaller budgets and are considered gateways to audiovisual creation. Thus, the difference demonstrates that women have less access to larger budgets, and are often discouraged from continuing their careers.

Moreover, when the intersection of gender and race is considered, there has not been much improvement. Another 2020 GEMAA bulletin⁴⁴ analyzed the 10 films with the largest audience annually between 1995 and 2014 (excluding documentaries, animations and children's films). The study looked into the roles of screenwriters, directors and actors from the perspective of race and gender. White men are the majority in all fields, accounting for 84% of directors, 71% of screenwriters and 49% of actors. White women come in second, and their participation was higher than that of black women and black men combined. They totaled 21% of the directors, 34% of the screenwriters and 34% of the characters. The study shows how the black population is the most affected by inequality in these functions. Black men made up only 2% of directors, 3% of screenwriters and 13% of actors. Yet, these very

⁴² Maria Rangel Candido, Cleissa Regina Martins, Raissa Rodrigues, João Feres Júnior, “Raça e Gênero no Cinema Brasileiro 1970-2016”, *Boletim GEMAA*, n.2 , 2017.

⁴³ The publication does not include data on race. Ancine, “Participação Feminina na produção audiovisual brasileira”, 2018, https://www.gov.br/ancine/pt-br/oca/publicacoes/arquivos.pdf/participacao_feminina_na_producao_audiovisual_brasileira_2018_0.pdf, 23. 09. 2023.

⁴⁴ Maria Rangel Candido, Juliana Flor, Jefferson Belarmino de Freitas, “Raça e Gênero no Cinema Brasileiro 1995-2018”, *Boletim GEMAA*, n.7 , 2020.

low numbers still exceed the participation of black women, the group with the lowest representation in Brazilian cinema: of the 240 films analyzed by the study, none had a black female director or screenwriter, and they represented only 4% of the cast (off-screen, they correspond to at least 27% of the population, the largest group in Brazilian population). Another group that is not represented in Brazilian cinema are members of the indigenous population - according to one research from GEMAA that analyzed films from 1995 to 2014, they do not even reach 1% of main characters in productions with the largest audiences, and were zero among screenwriters and directors⁴⁵.

What makes these numbers even more worrying is that approximately 51.8% of the Brazilian population is composed of women, as opposed to 48.2% of men⁴⁶. In addition, the majority of the Brazilian population, 56.2%, declares itself to be black. The data demonstrate the enormous racial and gender inequality in the audiovisual area, both behind and in front of the screen. The portrait that Brazilian cinema offers of its people is one of immense distortion: the largest portion of the population is rendered invisible, and if given a place it is mostly with stereotyped characters. For example, an afore mentioned study concluded that 43% of black male characters in the movies analyzed were professional criminals, against 15% of white men⁴⁷. In view of these huge discrepancies, one of the criteria for the selection of films for analysis was that they should contradict these data. Not only were they all directed or co-directed by women, but one of the films, *Um dia com Jerusa*, was the second feature film in Brazil to be directed exclusively by a black woman⁴⁸. In addition, the films feature

⁴⁵ Candido, Campos, Feres Júnior, “A Cara do Cinema Nacional. Gênero e raça nos filmes nacionais de maior público (1995-2014)”, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), from the Continuous PNAD (Continuous National Household Sample Survey) 2019. Educa IBGE, “Quantidade de homens e mulheres”, Educa IBGE, <https://educa.ibge.gov.br/jovens/conheca-o-brasil/populacao/18320-quantidade-de-homens-e-mulheres.html>, 23. 09. 2023.

⁴⁷ The study analyzes the race and gender of characters according to some markers such as their profession and place of living. The conclusion is that they either have no space on the screen or are mostly given negative representations. For example, 43% of black male characters in the movies analyzed were professional criminals (against 15% of white men). Maria Rangel Candido, Luís Augusto Campos, João Feres Júnior, “A Cara do Cinema Nacional. Gênero e raça nos filmes nacionais de maior público (1995-2014)”, *Textos para discussão GEMAA*, 13, 2016, pp. 1-20.

⁴⁸ In 2017, director Glenda Nicácio co-directed with Ary Rosa the feature film *Café com Canela* (D.: Glenda Nicácio/Ary Rosa, Brazil, 2017).

protagonists who break away from this dominant model, most of them women, offering a different portrait of the country.

According to the same GEMAA bulletin mentioned above, it was in the 21st century, during the administrations of Presidents Lula and Dilma Rousseff, that the first public calls for financing short and medium-length films by black directors were launched. This resulted in the release of a series of movies that are among the most interesting recent productions in the country. Likewise, the National Film Agency (Ancine) also began to focus more on the theme of diversity in the current century. Nevertheless, it was only in 2018 that the second black woman, Viviane Ferreira, obtained the necessary resources to direct a feature film in Brazil⁴⁹. Sadly, as the study's authors emphasize, after the 2018 elections, the debate on diversity has been obstructed in the country during four years. The election of Jair Bolsonaro blocked the way for female and black authors⁵⁰. Moreover, the Ministry of Culture was abolished in 2019. To make matters worse, the budget for culture has drastically been decreased. With the end of Bolsonaro's mandate, however, the cultural sector has slowly started to recover. As Brazilian cinema depends heavily on state subsidies, the debate on diversity and the creation of public policies that deal with it is more urgent than ever.

Even with these alarming data, we can highlight some positive changes in the current Brazilian audiovisual scenario. The above mentioned making of short and medium-length films by black women is one of them. In the first two decades of the 21st century they made a series of politically engaged short films. These demonstrate a conscious exercise of expanding black representation in Brazilian cinema, especially that of women. Themes such as memory, affections, territory and ancestry run through the films, which offer stories with black characters that escape the usual stereotypes: poverty, crime and sexualization⁵¹. In contrast to this stereotypes, many of the shorts made by black women tell stories of encounters and resistance. This is the case, for example, in the film *Aquém das Nuvens* (D.: Renata Martins, Brazil, 2012) , which focuses on a middle-aged black couple, showing the last days of the

⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that between the above mentioned *Amor Maldito*, by Adélia Sampaio, and *Um dia com Jerusa*, by Viviane Ferreira, 35 years have passed.

⁵⁰ Maria Rangel Candido, Juliana Flor, Jefferson Belarmino de Freitas, "Raça e Gênero no Cinema Brasileiro 1995-2018", *Boletim GEMAA*, n.7 , 2020.

⁵¹ See Maria Rangel Candido, Luís Augusto Campos, João Feres Júnior, "A Cara do Cinema Nacional. Gênero e raça nos filmes nacionais de maior público (1995-2014)", *Textos para discussão GEMAA*, 13, 2016, pp. 1-20.

wife's life as moments of tenderness. Or from *O dia de Jerusa* (D.: Viviane Ferreira, Brazil, 2014), the short that would later give rise to the feature film *Um dia com Jerusa*, which I analyze in chapter four. Both movies narrate the story of two black women from different generations who become close in a few hours' encounter, discovering common experiences. These are just some of the films made in the last two decades, years that brought an effervescence of black women's cinema - until the political change in recent years. Authors Edileuza Penha Souza e Ceíça Ferreira emphasize the importance of black women assuming the central place in the creation of narratives, being the main protagonists in the representation of their own stories⁵². Many movies made in the period are filled with subversive potential, as they ignore or implode stereotypes, exploring images that were not present in the national cinema until then. Among other advances that deserve to be recognized, we can mention, for example, the presence of women in genre cinema, such as horror films⁵³. Movies with horror or fantastic features have never been so numerous in the country as in the last decade, and women are among the most important creators in this field, having directed some of the most prestigious movies of Brazilian contemporary horror films⁵⁴. In a similar way, another genre where women have been active, but which is commonly dismissed by the critics, is comedy. This genre is known for attracting the largest audiences in Brazil. Although a minority in the field, women have been ahead of productions which achieved commercial success, as is the case of Julia Rezende and Cris D'Amato. Despite the fact that those movies feature

⁵² Ceíça Ferreira e Edileuza Penha de Souza, "Formas de visibilidade e (re)existência no cinema de mulheres negras", *Feminino e plural: mulheres no cinema brasileiro*, eds. Karla Holanda/Marina Cavalcanti Tedesco, Campinas: Papirus 2017, pp. 258-276.

⁵³ Author Beatriz Saldanha highlights some of them. One of the first of this new wave of horror movies is *O Corpo* (D: Rossana Foglia/ Rubens Rewald, Brazil, 2008). The movie uses elements of the horror genre to address the cruelties of dictatorship in Brazil. This strategy of using fantastic and terror elements to approach political issues would be used by other female directors, such as Juliana Rojas, who co-directed with Marco Dutra *Trabalhar cansa* (D.: Juliana Rojas/ Marco Dutra, Brazil, 2011), the first contemporary Brazilian horror movie to achieve widespread repercussion. In it, fantastic elements are used to address social tensions related to unemployment and class prejudice. In 2017, Rojas directed her second feature film, again with Marco Dutra, *As boas maneiras* (D.: Juliana Rojas/ Marco Dutra, Brazil, 2017). The movie talks about childhood and motherhood by means of a story about a woman and a werewolf baby. Other contemporary female directors mentioned by Saldanha are Clarissa Appelt, Gabriela Amaral Almeida, Anita Rocha da Silveira, Maria Meliande, Cynthia Sims, Samantha Ribeiro, Amanda Maya, Luiza Lubiana, Julia Zakia, Darcyana Moreno Izel, Luciana Faulhaber, Monica Demes and Natalia Leite. Besides them, there is the production of the so called "cinema de bordas" (border cinema), that is, movies made outside the recognized cinema, normally by groups of friends or families in precarious conditions. See Beatriz Saldanha, "Poesia, morbidez e insurgência: as diretoras do horror nacional", *Mulheres atrás das câmeras: As cineastas brasileiras de 1930 a 2018*, eds. Luiza Lusvarghi / Camila Vieira da Silva, São Paulo: Estação Liberdade 2019, pp. 99-120.

⁵⁴ Beatriz Saldanha, "Poesia, morbidez e insurgência: as diretoras do horror nacional", *Mulheres atrás das câmeras: As cineastas brasileiras de 1930 a 2018*, eds. Luiza Lusvarghi / Camila Vieira da Silva, São Paulo: Estação Liberdade 2019, pp. 99-120, here p.113.

stereotypes, author Amanda Almeida asserts that they are relevant in the question of representativity. According to her analysis, the representation of gender roles in the comedies directed by women too often bumps into clichés and reinforces prejudices, but at the same time they have more women in leading roles, as well as more diverse female characters than most comedies directed by men⁵⁵.

Last but not least, when it comes to movies directed by women which clearly have political messages, we can find a correspondence between them and the feminist movement in Brazil. Marsh emphasizes the parallels between Brazilian women's productions and feminist theories. Since the 1990s, both women's cinema and the feminist movement in Brazil have been increasingly approaching intersectional perspectives⁵⁶. According to her, many contemporary movies directed by women are still concerned with gender, but also explore its intersections with race, class, sexuality and other identification markers. The movies analyzed in this work are aligned with the tendency described by Marsh. Therefore, when they deal with gender, they are not “only” concerned with this aspect, but normally with its connections or intersections with other identity markers.

The films analyzed in the following pages have in common that they advocate for a more diverse cinema. They tell stories about protagonists outside the dominant pattern in most commercial Brazilian productions, emphasizing their ability in building alliances - or the challenges they face to do that. All in all, they respond to the urgency of reflecting on the glaring inequalities of the country, behind and in front of the screen, as well as exploring the diversity of Brazil's population. In the next chapter, I will discuss some theoretical approaches that have inspired the movie analyses.

⁵⁵ For this subject, see Amanda Aouad Almeida, “Diretoras de comédias: a mulher à frente do gênero de maior bilheteria do país”, *Mulheres atrás das câmeras: As cineastas brasileiras de 1930 a 2018*, eds. Luiza Lusvarghi / Camila Vieira da Silva, São Paulo: Estação Liberdade 2019, pp. 69-84.

⁵⁶ Marsh, *Brazilian Women's Filmmaking: From Dictatorship to Democracy*, p.182

3. Ideas to *think with*

In this chapter, I would like to address theories that will support the analyses of the movies. I will begin by exposing some of the reflections presented by Donna Haraway in the book *Staying with the trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. In the second part of the chapter, I will discuss intersectional feminist approaches, which will also guide the analyses. To use a term often used by Haraway in the mentioned book, these are ideas with which I intend to *think-with* throughout this work, to reflect on some key aspects of the films.

3.1. *Staying with the trouble of partial recuperation*

In *Staying with the trouble*, Haraway reflects on ways of being politically active in contemporary times - or, as she says, in “thick, ongoing”⁵⁷ present. She resorts to a series of wordplays, compositions or separations such as “*living-with*” and “*response-ability*” to think creatively about our times and to emphasize political aspects such as the ability to *respond* to challenges, or the fact that existence is only possible in collective ways. It would be extremely difficult to present all the concepts created in the book, in which images and the use of a creative language abound. And I believe a “linear” exposition would not “fit” the theories of Haraway, who works in a multidisciplinary and “non-linear” way⁵⁸. Therefore, what I will do is address some of these expressions and expose the ways in which I understand them.

I would like to begin the exposition with the expression that names the book: “Staying with the trouble”. The author affirms: “I am not interested in reconciliation or restoration, but I am deeply committed to the more modest possibilities of partial recuperation and getting on together. Call that staying with the trouble”⁵⁹. Therefore, “staying with the trouble” appears to be connected to an effort to escape the seduction of *ideal* solutions. Haraway proposes to give up expecting the complete end of problems and to learn to cope with what is *possible* instead.

⁵⁷ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ See for example Donna Haraway, “Wir sind immer mittendrin: Ein Interview mit Donna Haraway”, *Die Neuerfindung der Natur. Primaten, Cyborgs und Frauen*, Frankfurt am Main / New York: Campus Verlag 1995, 98-123, here pp. 103-104.

⁵⁹ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p. 10.

To accept this approach means to accept there is no ideal, perfect, complete solution. Instead of a blind faith in the future or a pessimistic “game-over attitude”⁶⁰, she suggests that we need to stay present in the realities in which we are involved:

“Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.”⁶¹

Specific contexts matter, she argues, and the conclusion is we should focus on what is in our reach, that is, on *partial solutions*. The author makes it clear that she is not proposing a type of holism, but on the contrary, affirming partiality: everything that *is*, objective knowledge included, exists in a situated way, in specific circumstances⁶². She points out: “Nobody lives everywhere; everybody lives somewhere. Nothing is connected to everything; everything is connected to something”⁶³.

So “staying with the trouble” has to do with accepting contingency and partiality. These thoughts can be connected to the films that will be analysed here because they focus on disputes that take place in concrete and at times seemingly unimportant situations, emphasizing the political dimensions of everyday life. The stories explore how details of *living together* may reveal exclusion or resistance connected to difference markers such as class, race and gender. In my opinion, the narratives of these films *stay with the trouble*, as they do not deal with definitive or general solutions, but with possible and necessary resistances. They deal with characters *rending themselves capable* and developing *responsibility* ⁶⁴ to the political challenges they are faced with.

Using the word “with” *together* with several verbs (*thinking-with*, *becoming-with*, *unbecoming-with*, *worlding-with*, *living-with*, *dying-with*, and others), Haraway emphasizes

⁶⁰ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p. 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 1.

⁶² To read more on Haraway's thoughts about this subject, see her article: “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective”, *Feminist Studies* 14/3, 1988, 575-599.

⁶³ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p. 30-31.

⁶⁴ Those are expressions that Haraway uses through out the book. See, for instance, pages: 02, 07, 11,16, 29,34, 69, 78, 126, 134, 152, between others, from Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*.

the fact that nothing is done in isolation, just as there are no isolated existences. The author argues that independent entities do not exist: no creature exists separated from the world, in being, we are always *with-something*. “Those who have been in relationally all the way down”⁶⁵, to be “one” is always to be “many”. She literally “weaves” a discussion departing from the field of biology, in which she defends the importance of *sympoiesis*. She explains the term:

“Sympoiesis is a simple word; it means “making-with.” Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing. In the words of the Inupiat computer “world game,” earthlings are never alone. That is the radical implication of sympoiesis. Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with, in company.”⁶⁶

Haraway argues that explaining the world based on isolated beings *plus* context would no longer be possible, and that the “best sciences, whether natural or social”⁶⁷, would no longer be able to work with this paradigm. Likewise, thinking within the Man *versus* Nature model would no longer suffice. These reflections are linked to the critique of the ideal of the “self-making human”⁶⁸, who sees himself as separated from a nature which he could dominate and instrumentalize. This view of the world and of the human that prevailed in the West is being challenged especially today, when scientists have come to the conclusion that human action has been inscribed on Earth to the point of representing a new geological era, which has been called the *Anthropocene*. Haraway criticizes the use of the term *Anthropocene*, saying that there is a huge contradiction in labeling the epoch in that way⁶⁹. I understand this as follows: the traditionally dominant narratives about the *anthropos* find a limit here. The “resources” at “his disposal” are limited, as are his powers of action, which reveal to be inscribed in the materiality of the earth. In the current period, humanity is forced to see itself as a part of nature, and forced to look at the instability (and historicity) of its own concept of nature - and

⁶⁵ “Donna Haraway. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene—Staying with the Trouble”, Art & Education, 05.09.2014, <https://www.artandeducation.net/classroom/video/66322/donna-haraway-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene-staying-with-the-trouble>, 23. 09. 2023.

⁶⁶ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p. 58.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 30.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 40.

⁶⁹ At the same time, Haraway emphasizes that she is not saying that we do not need approaches that work with notions such as the “anthropocene”, or “gaia” or “global”. However, she points out that she is signaling their limitations (methodological and otherwise) and historical and material specificities. See more in the lecture “Donna Haraway. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene—Staying with the Trouble”.

this goes against the narratives about *anthropos* as the one who is separated, who is apart, above or in opposition to the natural world. In this way, the current period would represent, instead of the time of the *anthropos*, the fall of the ambitious ideal of the *anthropos*, as it was constructed in the dominant narratives of the West. In the words of Haraway, the expression *Anthropocene* “is both too big and too small” to name this current period⁷⁰, which needs other stories than those that have been repeatedly told by Western society. To emphasize the profound relationship of the *Anthropocene* with capitalism, she coins the term *Chthulucene*⁷¹, or suggests the term *Capitalocene*, an expression previously used by author Jason W. Moore.

In the essay *The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis*, Jason W. Moore draws attention to a series of criticisms involving the discussions around the term *Anthropocene*. In the first place, he states that the concept reinforces the idea of human and nature as separate things, binary oppositions. Secondly, he argues that the term tends to unify humanity as a homogeneous thing, without discussing the differences between human groups and, above all, without really discussing the socioeconomic system that has led to the current climate crisis. Another argument Moore traces in defense of the use of the term *Capitalocene* is that it is important to think about the social changes which occurred on the planet before the eighteenth century - the date which is commonly chosen for discussions around the anthropocene and modernity. Moore argues that it is necessary to go back further in time. He argues:

“The erasure of capitalism’s early-modern origins, and its extraordinary reshaping of global natures long before the steam engine, is therefore significant in our work to develop an effective radical politics around global warming...and far more than global warming alone! (...) That transition marked a turning point in the history of humanity’s relation with the rest of nature.(...) While there is no question that environmental change accelerated sharply after 1850, and especially after 1945, it seems equally fruitless to explain these transformations without identifying how they fit into patterns of power, capital and nature established some four centuries earlier.”⁷²

Following this line of argumentation, W. Moore suggests that we are not living in the anthropocene, but in the “Capitalocene – the ‘age of capital’ – the historical era shaped by the

⁷⁰ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p. 174.

⁷¹ For more information on Haraway’s notion of the Chthulucene, see the chapter “Tentacular Thinking. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene”, in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*.

⁷² Jason W. Moore, “The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis”, *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44/3, 2017, 594-630, here p. 596.

endless accumulation of capital”⁷³. This view is relevant to the discussion here as it considers the colonization and slavery, which are fundamental to understand the current reality of the world. As he puts it:

“Start the clock in 1784, with James Watt’s rotary steam engine (Crutzen 2002a), and we have a very different view of history – and a very different view of modernity – than we do if we begin with the English and Dutch agricultural revolutions, with Columbus and the conquest of the Americas, with the first signs of an epochal transition in landscape transformation after 1450.”⁷⁴

As will be seen, the stories of the movies that will be analyzed here address the challenges of a society built on genocides, enslavement or the violent oppression of non-European groups. To be fully comprehended, they need to be understood as the ongoing story of this past. Tracing back the discussion to the fifteen century allows us to consider colonization as a world-changing process, which is essential to uncover the differences hidden in the unifying term “humanity”.

3.2. Storytelling for *becoming-with* and *living together*

The critique of the “self-making human” reinforces the need for a storytelling other than the narratives centered on the common pattern of the individual hero. Donna Haraway proposes to *think-with* Ursula Le Guin, who in her essay *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* criticized “hero-centered” narratives. Le Guin draws attention to a narrative tradition that focused on telling stories of heroes, who wield deadly weapons and bravely win terrible battles. The author claims that this tradition formed an idea which suggests that what has been important in the history of humanity, what has been essential both for its survival through the centuries and for telling relevant stories, is the war against enemies. According to her, this can be seen in the images of people hunting mammoths, represented in prehistoric caves, and has occurred again and again. It would still be present in contemporary cinema images, as in the beginning of the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), in which the moment when a chimpanzee understands how to use a bone as a weapon was chosen as an emblematic scene of human evolution. The author criticizes this idea, stating that what ensured human survival were neither weapons nor battles, but the act of gathering/collecting.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Le Guin jokes with the fact that turning a mammoth hunt into an exciting story was obviously an easier task than doing the same with collecting seeds with the children, and that those stories, with their protagonist heroes, quickly hijacked all the attention for themselves. But she proposes to tell other stories, and in those, instead of valuing weapons, she proposes valuing recipients: “A leaf a gourd a shell a net a bag a sling a sack a bottle a pot a box a container”.⁷⁵ Something that holds another thing, some kind of recipient, something like a bag, would have been, according to her, the essential invention to the survival of the humanity. A bag would have allowed to transport things and beings from one place to another. With a bag it would have been possible, for example, to carry seeds and vegetables to another part of the forest or home (another kind of container), so that there they could be shared with others, stored, used for the preparation of medicines. It would have been possible to carry a baby while harvesting the seeds with both hands, it would even have been possible to carry the meat back to the house after the mammoth hunt. Following the same reasoning, the author also criticizes the idea of the story form as being that of an arrow that moves in the direction of a goal. She states: “I would go so far as to say that the natural, proper, fitting shape of the novel might be that of a sack, a bag. A book holds words. Words hold things. They bear meanings”⁷⁶. According to her, it would be possible that the dominance of the hero's story was coming to an end, and that, in order to survive, we would need to turn to these other stories, much less told, in which not everyone exists because of the hero.

Thinking with Le Guin, Haraway also criticizes the narrative model in which there is “only one real actor, one real world maker, the hero, the self-making human, the human-making machine of history”⁷⁷. She states:

“All others in the prick tale are props, ground, plot space, or prey. They don’t matter; their job is to be in the way, to be overcome, to be the road, the conduit, but not the traveler, not the begetter. The last thing the hero wants to know is that his beautiful words and weapons will be worthless without a bag, a

⁷⁵ Ursula K. Le Guin, “The carrier bag theory of fiction”, *Dancing at the Edge of the World : Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*, New York: Grove/Atlantic, Incorporated, 1997 (Orig.: 1989), 151-155, here 152.

⁷⁶ Le Guin, “The carrier bag theory of fiction”, p. 154.

⁷⁷ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p. 39.

container, a net. Nonetheless, no adventurer should leave home without a sack. How did a sling, a pot, a bottle suddenly get in the story? How do such lowly things keep the story going?”⁷⁸

Changing the focus in the storytelling would not mean to exclude the figure of the hero, but to go beyond him, to tell stories which are not about him. It would also mean to *think-with* other actors, other-than-human ones, who also keep the story going. It is certainly a challenge for contemporary narratives to work with these changes. Among the films I will analyze, for instance, only one accentuates understandings of nature that are different from the dominant ones in non-indigenous cultures. As will be discussed in the chapter about this film, the story is concerned with an indigenous community that establishes other forms of relationship with “nature” than non-indigenous societies. Yet on the other hand, what the films have in common is that they to some extent deviate from the hero model described by Le Guin.

3.3. Intersectionality: precursors and repercussions in Brazil

Another striking feature of the movies is that they tend to work with more than one identity marker. In 1989 African-American feminist and legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw used the word “intersectionality” in an emblematic talk published with the title *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*⁷⁹. In it, Crenshaw employed the term intersectionality as a way to address the multidimensionality of Black women subjectivity and the oppressions they face. The term gained recognition and started to be used to address discrimination suffered by several groups. In the mentioned article, Crenshaw analyzes judgments on discrimination cases in the United States, demonstrating how the doctrine on discrimination at the time prejudiced Black women. She cites decisions of courts at different trials. Crenshaw shows how, in some cases, Black women were considered incapable of representing the category “women”, because of being “only” Black women, and consequently not being considered able to represent the entire category. In other cases, they were regarded by courts as unable to represent Black employees from a company because of being “only” women. Yet at the same time, in other instances, courts denied the possibility for Black women to seek

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics”, *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140, 1989, 139-167.

justice for having suffered discrimination as “Black women”, arguing that they were wanting to create a separate and privileged category, and that they should choose between having suffered discrimination in terms either of gender or race⁸⁰. Therefore, Crenshaw points out how, behind the apparent neutrality of these categories, the judgments showed the existence of a hierarchy, since white women were accepted as representatives of “women”, as well as Black men accepted to represent Blacks generally. Differently from Black women, both white women and Black men were generally accepted to represent an entire category without being questioned about their authority to do so.

Departing from this examination, the author highlights two important things: in the first place, the term “women” is thought, implicitly, as a category of white women, as well as “Blacks” as a male category. Thus, the focus and the privilege to represent the whole is given generally to the most privileged group inside a category. In this context, Black women tended to be jeopardized. In the second place, Crenshaw argues that with the employment of single-axis approaches, which treat “race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis”⁸¹, Black women have their experiences ignored. To approach the experience of Black women, Crenshaw proposes the metaphor of a traffic intersection:

“Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination.”⁸²

Therefore, the idea of crossing different axes of discrimination would surpass the understanding of categories as being exclusive or hierarchical⁸³. Crenshaw also criticizes the inability of the single-axis framework to understand the specific and combined ways in which oppressions operate together in many cases. The analysis she proposes is, instead of an *either/or* analysis, a *both/and* analysis. At the same time, she does not propose intersectionality as

⁸⁰ Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex”, pp. 141-143.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 139.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 149.

⁸³ See Louise Haitz, “Medienwissenschaft und Intersektionalität”, *Handbuch Intersektionalitätsforschung*, eds. Astrid Biele Mefebue, Andrea D. Bührmann, Sabine Grenz, Springer VS Wiesbaden, 2022, 229-242, here p. 230.

the result of an addition of categories, because, as she puts it, “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism”⁸⁴.

Crenshaw argues that, depending on the case, Black women can experience oppressions in different or in similar ways from the ways in which white women or Black men experience them. In some cases the discriminations are analogous to the ones white women suffer, in other times they are comparable to the ones faced by Black men, sometimes they are a combination of the two of them, and yet other times “they experience discrimination as Black women- not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women”⁸⁵. As author Kathryn Sophia Belle points out, Crenshaw is “explicitly rejecting single-axis approaches to oppression as well as the notion that racism and sexism are discrete (i.e., individually separate or distinct).”⁸⁶ To make here a connection with Haraway, we can say that the specificities of the oppressions matter, it matters how they combine and act together in real situations.

Since Crenshaw’s use of the expression in 1989 up to now, intersectional approaches have been gaining ground both in social movement work and in academia. Although Crenshaw's text is considered fundamental for studies in the area, many theorists draw attention to the fact that different authors would have previously worked in an intersectional way, even if not using this term specifically. This is the case, for example, of the collective of Black socialist, feminist and lesbian women Combahee River, commonly considered as a precursor to intersectionality. In a statement from the 1970s, the collective emphasizes that they wanted to fight against mechanisms such as racial, heterosexual, sexual and class discrimination, and that to do this they were trying to develop an “integrated analysis and practice” since “the major systems of oppressions are interlocking”⁸⁷.

⁸⁴ Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex”, p. 140.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁸⁶ Belle, “Interlocking, intersecting, and intermeshing”, p. 172.

⁸⁷ Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective: A Black Feminist Statement”, *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, ed. Zillah R. Eisenstein, 1979, New York: Monthly Review Press, 362-372, here p. 362.

The political struggles against racism which have taken place since the second half of the 19th century are also precursors to the development of the notion of intersectionality in the United States⁸⁸. In this context, the speech of Sojourner Truth, who had been enslaved for 40 years and lived another 40 as a free woman, stands out. Truth gave a speech on the stage of the first National Convention for the Rights of Women in the United States, in 1851, where she emphasizes how she has worked so much and so heavily “as any man”, which would not make her less a woman⁸⁹. In a similar way, in the case of Brazil, Black female activists have been working with what we could call today an intersectional approach long before the term was coined. In this context, we can cite the work of authors as Lélia Gonzalez, Sueli Carneiro e Beatriz Nascimento. In a 2017 interview, when asked why she defined herself as a Black feminist, but not as an intersectional feminist, for example, philosopher and educator Sueli Carneiro replied:

“I have never used this concept because I am much older than its emergence, although the meanings it carries are present in my texts and those of other Black women of my generation. When Crenshaw arrived with this debate on intersectionality, I already had this consolidated conception of Black feminism. But this new generation is bringing new concepts.”⁹⁰

In a more recent approach of the notion in the book *Intersectionality (Key Concepts)*, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge propose that intersectionality “investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life”⁹¹. They define it as an analytic tool which understands markers such as “race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age – among others – as interrelated and mutually shaping one another”⁹². The authors also argue that intersectionality always combines critical inquiry with critical praxis, emphasizing the importance of social movements and activists work to the development of the theory.

⁸⁸ See Gabriela M Kyrillos, “Uma Análise Crítica sobre os Antecedentes da Interseccionalidade”, *Revista Estudos Feministas* 28/01, e56509, 2020.

⁸⁹ This speech by Truth is also quoted in Crenshaw's aforementioned article. As it was done orally, there are different written versions of it, and discussions about which would be more accurate. Here, I referred to the version transcribed by Marcus Robinson three weeks after Truth speech in the “Anti-slavery Bugle”, an abolitionist publication edited by him. However, the most famous version of the speech, in which the line “Ain't I a woman?” is repeated several times, was transcribed by white feminist and abolitionist Frances Gage twelve years after the convention. See Kay Siebler, “Far from the Truth: Teaching the Politics of Sojourner Truth's ‘Ain't I a Woman?’”, *Pedagogy* 10/3, 2010, 511–533.

⁹⁰ [Trans. M. C. L.] Sueli Carneiro, “Sobrevivente, testemunha e porta-voz”, *Revista CULT*, n. 223, 2017, 12-20.

⁹¹ Sirma Bilge, Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016, p. 20.

⁹² *Ibid.*

Some theorists in Brazil have criticized the use of the notion of intersectionality as a concept from the global north, in whose universities the approach seems to have become more popular⁹³. However, I support the view of authors such as Claudia Lima Costa and Katrin Sophia Belle, who argue that concepts in feminist theory may coexist in productive ways, without having to necessarily exclude each other. As Claudia Lima Costa points out, “the legacy of intersectionality was questioning the universal and white category of woman (traditionally constructed as the subject of feminism), based on an intersectional view of oppression”⁹⁴.

I will use intersectionality to analyze the films insofar as it seems to me a useful way to critically reflect about such a multiple country, where it is so common for people to be confronted with diverse and combined oppressions. The number of films that seek to discuss these multiple oppressions and that opt for protagonists who escape the model of the male, heterosexual, white “universal hero” seems to be growing. As discussed in the second chapter, this is even more relevant when one considers that the majority of the population is not in this “heroic” group. The largest population group in the country, Black women, still face very low and stereotyped representation, as do the different indigenous peoples. As addressed in the second chapter, it is also important to value the fact that Brazil is slowly taking steps to leave a cinematographic panorama whose overwhelming majority of creators are white and male.

There is a lot to tell about worlds little focused on in Brazilian cinematography. I believe the films that will be analyzed can give us clues about how to think about ways of living together in a world where we need to recognize different and multiple narrative forms. Returning to the first part of the chapter and the reflections outlined by Haraway, it can be said that the movies tell stories about characters that are learning how to “cultivate and invent the arts of living with and for damaged worlds in place, not as an abstraction or a type, but as and for those living and dying in ruined places”⁹⁵.

⁹³ Claudia de Lima Costa, “Interrogando Lugones: reflexões sobre um debate inconcluso”, *Revista Estudos Feministas* 30/1, e85070, 2022, here p. 2.

⁹⁴ [Trans. M. C. L.] Costa, “Interrogando Lugones: reflexões sobre um debate inconcluso”, p.3.

⁹⁵ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p. 143.

4. *Um dia com Jerusa* and the power of encounters and trajectories

A minimalist plot: the student Silvia works as a researcher for a soap powder company, going daily to houses in different neighborhoods to do questionnaires about consumer habits. She stops by the house of Jerusa, an elderly woman who claims to be celebrating her 77th birthday, and waiting for her family to arrive to celebrate. Dona Jerusa agrees to answer the questions on the questionnaire, but as the questioning starts, she refuses to reply to them objectively. Each question takes her to a different memory. This is the plot of the film *Um dia com Jerusa* (“A Day with Jerusa” in English, D.: Viviane Ferreira, Brazil, 2020), which I intend to analyse in more detail in this chapter. Most of the film unfolds during the meeting of these two black women from different generations. Although the movie is fictional, it was based in true facts of the history of the city of São Paulo. Therefore, it cannot be understood in all its power outside the *living together* in which it was fabled. First, I will provide some context information on Brazil, and then go on with the actual discussion of the movie⁹⁶.

4.1. The myth of racial democracy and the ideology of whitening

Um dia com Jerusa evolved from a short film of almost the same title, also directed by Viviane Ferreira six years earlier: *O dia de Jerusa*. Although it was selected for the “Short Film Corner” at the 67th Cannes Film Festival, the short film was turned down in competitive showings at the main film festivals in Brazil at the time. In a talk about the movie, director Viviane Ferreira stated that one of the reasons given was the bewilderment about the fact that there were only black actors in the film⁹⁷. As has already been observed in the second chapter, the black population has traditionally been underrepresented or stereotyped in Brazilian audiovisual productions. It is important to emphasize that a refusal based on the opposite, i.e.

⁹⁶ In order to carry out the film analyses, I am also guided here by what is presented in the book: David Bordwell/Kristin Thompson/Jeff Smith, *Film art : an introduction*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education 2020.

⁹⁷ Mariana Queen, “Por que Brasil rejeitou filme negro?”, Portal Geledés, https://www.geledes.org.br/mariana-queen-por-que-brasil-rejeitou-filme-negro/?fbclid=IwAR0QBbRrA8RF-p8KMqB9cXIHCK5saN6MwqUo7-gW3DRBjBH_PCImCDmHnLA#axzz3HRNn9vzl, 23. 09. 2023.

on the fact of a cast being only white, would be almost unimaginable. That takes us back to Crenshaw's criticism, mentioned in the third chapter, when she discusses how black women were not considered able to represent neither the category "women" nor the category "black". In the Brazilian context, a movie with an exclusively white cast would definitely not face the same kind of criticism, although the majority of its population is black.

Author Joel Zito Araújo argues that this absence of black people in Brazilian audiovisual is related to two historical political projects: the ideology of whitening and the myth of racial democracy⁹⁸. According to him, the ideology of whitening⁹⁹ emerged at the end of the 19th century, having been developed by sociology and anthropology pioneers. It was based on the European scientific theories of the time about the superiority of a "white race", but it gained its own version in Brazil. Its defenders supported the progressive whitening of Brazilian society through miscegenation, which was considered to be a solution to what was called the "black problem"¹⁰⁰ in the country. This ideology was widely promoted by the state and the media, and Araújo points out that many measures were taken by the state in order to accelerate the process of whitening its population. He mentions, for example, that European immigration was furthered by the Brazilian government as part of this population whitening program. Within this context, many actions were promoted, including the financing of immigration propaganda campaigns in European countries to attract an "European public" to Brazil. In addition to that, in 1890 it was decreed that Africans and Asians should be prevented from entering the country without previous authorization. In 1946, another decree was issued determining that immigration should be controlled in order to preserve the "European ancestry of the Brazilian population"¹⁰¹. All these measures focused on

⁹⁸ Joel Zito Araújo, *A negação do Brasil: O negro na telenovela brasileira*, São Paulo: Editora Senac São Paulo, 2019, p. 16.

⁹⁹ In the Portuguese original "ideologia de branqueamento".

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

progressively whitening the population, which was seen as a necessary step to “civilize” the country and to ensure its “development”¹⁰².

In the introduction of the book *O Negro brasileiro e o Cinema* João Carlos Rodrigues notes how the ideology of whitening is present in paintings such as *A Redenção de Cam*, from 1895, by Spanish painter Modesto Brocos (Figure 01). As we can observe, in this painting, a multiracial family is depicted: on the left, an old black woman raises her hands, as if saying thanks to the sky. Beside her are her *pardo* daughter, the white son-in-law, and the whiter grandchild. As Rodrigues states: “The propagandistic message is so direct that it becomes almost obvious: it is a very successful illustration of a theory then in force, according to which black Brazilians would disappear in a few decades, faded by miscegenation”¹⁰³.



Figure 01: *A Redenção de Cam*, Modesto Brocos, 1895, Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

Such historical facts are still ignored by most of Brazil’s population, who often believe that the country is a place of harmonious coexistence of all ethnicities, that is that Brazil is a “racial democracy”. This image of the country is widely spread, both within Brazil and

¹⁰² Joel Zito Araújo, *A negação do Brasil: O negro na telenovela brasileira*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁰³ [Trans. M. C. L.] João Carlos Rodrigues, *O negro Brasileiro e o cinema*, Rio de Janeiro: Pallas Editora, 2011, p. 10.

abroad. According to author Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães, the portrait of Brazil as a “racial paradise” was spread around the globe for centuries, much before the term “racial democracy” emerged; and the idea of this harmonious paradise gave origin in modern Brazil to a “mythical construction of a society free from prejudice and racial discrimination”¹⁰⁴.

The concept of racial democracy is usually attributed to the anthropologist Gilberto Freyre and his idea that the “cultural mixture of the three founding races (Black, White and Indigenous) was a positive experience in the formation of Brazilian culture”¹⁰⁵ and that, due to the intense coexistence of these three races, there was no racism in Brazil. However, Alfredo Guimarães notes that the expression “racial democracy” was not coined by Freyre, neither was it used by him in his most famous works, appearing in Brazil in the 1930s¹⁰⁶. In the 1960s, author Florestan Fernandes identified the term as a myth that operated in Brazil as a way to veil racism and racial inequalities. Particularly from the beginning of the 1970s onwards, the Brazilian Black movement began to address the myth of racial democracy as an “ideology that impeded antiracist action”¹⁰⁷. Since then, the fighting of this myth has been one of the movement main goals.

It is within this very context that Brazilian Black Cinema and specifically the film *Um dia com Jerusa* should be understood. It was in opposition to a scenario of absence or stereotypical representation of black characters that director Viviane Ferreira conceived the short and the long feature films. Therefore, both movies are a conscious exercise on the representation of black people and its political implications. According to the director, the idea of turning the short film into a feature film came from the audience itself, who said they

¹⁰⁴ [Trans. M. C. L.] Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães, “Democracia racial: El Ideal, El Pacto y El Mito”, *Estudios Sociológicos* 20/59, 2002, 305-333, here p. 307.

¹⁰⁵ [Trans. M. C. L.] Joel Zito Araújo, *A negação do Brasil: O negro na telenovela brasileira*, p 18.

¹⁰⁶ Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães, “A Democracia Racial Revisitada”, *Afro-Ásia* 60, 2019, 9-44, here p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ [Trans. M. C. L.] Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães, “Democracia racial: El Ideal, El Pacto y El Mito”, here p. 323.

wanted to spend more time with the main character¹⁰⁸. Six years later, it was released, with a similar storyline, but with the addition of new elements. Like in the short movie, the feature film's cast is formed almost exclusively by black actors. Author Edileuza Penha de Souza argues that when black women take over the command of film productions, they create narratives that break with the stereotypes which they are normally narrowed to. They develop new gazes, new aesthetic perspectives and characters with more complex identities¹⁰⁹. Let us now analyze how *Um dia com Jerusa* does that.

4.2 *Um dia com Jerusa* and dimensions of living together

The narrative of *Um dia com Jerusa* can be divided in two parts: a glimpse on the lives of Jerusa and Silvia, of the neighborhood in which the latter lives, and the meeting of the two women. The movie begins with a frame in which goldfish swimming in dark water are seen from a high-angle shot. The image is accompanied by the sound of moving water and a song sung by Virginia Rodrigues, “Ao senhor do fogo azul” (a song which in turn opens the album *Mama Kalunga*, an homage to Afro-Brazilian religion and culture). Then follows a mostly dark frame, in which only Jerusa's profile is visible, illuminated by a beam of light, probably coming from something like a hole or a projector in the wall (Figure 02). Jerusa looks into the light, as if spotting images on the other side of the wall.

This image already brings us into contact with the political dimension of what director Viviane Ferreira is proposing. It is the black woman who looks and who, at the same time, is highlighted in this frame. The scene evokes bell hooks' assertion that “there is power in looking”¹¹⁰, and that the act of looking can be connected to the desire to change things¹¹¹. Later on, we realize that Jerusa is constantly taking pictures of everything she witnesses. Her

¹⁰⁸ Among them was the Nigerian director Newton Aduaka, who encouraged her to turn the story into a feature film. See Juliana Costa, “Transitar e pertencer: uma conversa sobre *Um Dia com Jerusa*. Entrevista com Viviane Ferreira”, Cine Festivais, <https://cinefestivais.com.br/transitar-e-pertencer-uma-conversa-sobre-um-dia-com-jerusa/>, 23. 09. 2023.

¹⁰⁹ Edileuza Penha de Souza, “Mulheres negras na construção de um cinema negro no feminino”, *Aniki (Coimbra)* 7/1, 2020, 171-188, here 184. Tradução por ML.

¹¹⁰ bell hooks, “The oppositional gaze: black female spectators”, *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: a Reader*, eds. Reina Lewis/Sara Mills, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, 207-222, here p. 207.

¹¹¹ “By courageously looking, we defiantly declared: ‘Not only will I stare. I want my look to change reality’.” *Ibid*, p. 208.

passion for photography will be stressed again and again, symbolically referring to black women's appropriation of the creation of images and the register of their own history, mirroring director Viviane Ferreira herself.



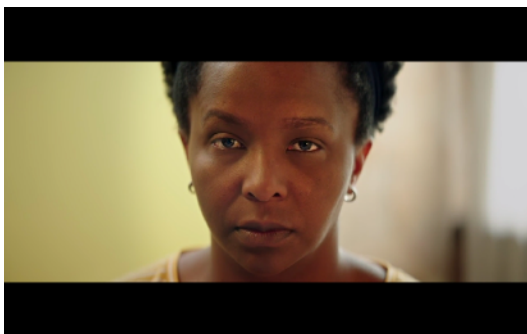
Figure 02: Jerusa looks into a hole in a wall, herself being illuminated by the light

The sound of water and singing is subtly joined by the sound of a street: the rattling of a bicycle and a police siren. Then the image of a cyclist fleeing from a police car appears, but the framing does not allow us to see her face. The bicycle and the police car make a turn and go out of frame, and what we then hear is a crash, followed by an image in which only one of the bicycle's wheels remains on the ground, still spinning. The police violence against the black population in Brazil, a theme that reoccurs in the narrative, starts being alluded to here. In the next scene, details of a room are framed: a fan on full blast, a globe, a book open on one page where the title “the slaves” can be read and the tip of a laptop, from which comes the sound of a class. The teacher is talking about racism, racial democracy and the dictatorial regime in Brazil. We continue listening to her voice while the camera shows us other details of the room (including a board full of notes and photos, among them one of Silvia hugging her girlfriend), until we finally see Silvia, sleeping in front of the laptop. Her image comes up at the same time as the teacher says: “There is nothing more subversive in Brazil's history than to exist as a black woman. And being a black woman willing to dream is an unquestionable expression of civil disobedience”.¹¹² This line echoes throughout the rest of the movie, as we get to know Silvia and Jerusa, their dreams and histories. It emphasizes the

¹¹² Trans. M. C. L., *Um dia com Jerusa*, 00:03:04.

director's choice to approach resistance not through a major political event, but through everyday life. The line also foreshadows that later on in the film Silvia passes an exam allowing her to improve her professional life; thus, her “civil disobedience in dreaming” seems to pay off.

Silvia wakes up and a frontal close-up on her face follows, in which she moves her head slowly, as if in a trance-like state (Figure 03). The sound of the lesson gradually mixes with others: a whistling, percussion and again a police siren. Then Silvia's face is interspersed with a frontal shot of another woman, who is apprehensively riding a bicycle, without moving (Figure 04). This is the first scene in which Silvia is in the state of a medium, something that happens to her through the movie. She will get in this state of trance in many other scenes in the narrative, which show her connection with her ancestry and with Afro-Brazilian spirituality. Might the woman seen be the cyclist whose face we could not discern in the opening sequence? She is visibly nervous, and wears the same clothes as the cyclist we saw before. In an interview, Viviane Ferreira said that that scene was about how the black population felt in contemporary Brazil: as if they were moving, but could not get out of where they were - as if they were stuck¹¹³.



Figures 03 and 04: Looking directly at the camera, Silvia gets in a state of trance, then her image is interspersed with the image of a cyclist who can not move out of place

In the next sequence, we get to know the neighborhood in which Jerusa lives and the people with whom she shares that space. The camera moves through a street in which the predominant colors are pastel shades, as light yellow, light blue and salmon pink - unlike what you would find in a typical real street in São Paulo, where grayish tones predominate (Figure

¹¹³ Juliana Costa, “Transitar e pertencer: uma conversa sobre Um Dia com Jerusa”, Cine Festivais, <https://cinefestivais.com.br/transitar-e-pertencer-uma-conversa-sobre-um-dia-com-jerusa/>, 23. 09. 2023.

05 and 06). Amid boxes, cardboard and pallets, two mature black women with white hair are kissing under a blanket (Figure 06).



Figure 05 and 06: A bit of the shared life in Jerusa's neighborhood.

A cart driver passes by and greets them, he also chats with Jerusa, while an offscreen voice recites a poem by Luiz Gama, the most important Brazilian abolitionist (Figure 05). As the voice says “Black, the color of slavery”, the frame shows us the owner of the voice: a homeless man (Figure 07). He is wearing a stylized outfit, which gives his figure a theatrical, unnatural aspect. Suddenly, the man changes his tone and says “hide, the guys are coming”¹¹⁴. “The guys”, in Portuguese “os caras”, is an expression often used in Brazil to refer to the police. The man simulates shots and acts as if he were hit by a bullet, falling to the ground (Figure 08). It is certainly not by chance that the director chooses a homeless man to recite the poem of the most renowned abolitionist of the country. In this scene, Viviane Ferreira pays homage to Luiz Gama, who had been enslaved himself for many years and later became a self taught lawyer¹¹⁵. She also establishes a connection between the abolition of slavery in Brazil, which happened without any concept of inclusion and has therefore led to the fact that the poor population in the country has to this day been predominantly black¹¹⁶. The poor and black population are also the main victim of institutional violence, which explains the performance of the man pretending to be shot by the police.

¹¹⁴ Trans. M. C. L.

¹¹⁵ Brazil was the last country in the world to abolish slavery in 1889. Official historiography for many years placed emphasis on the figure of Princess Isabel, who signed the decree which abolished slavery, instead of on the revolts and movements organized by abolitionists in the country, among them Luiz Gama.

¹¹⁶ See for example Poder 360, “Taxa de pobreza de pretos e pardos é duas vezes maior, diz IBGE”, <https://www.poder360.com.br/brasil/taxa-de-pobreza-de-pretos-e-pardos-e-duas-vezes-maior-diz-ibge/>, 23. 09. 2023.



Figures 07 and 08: reciting poetry, a character falls in the grown in front of a police station, as if he was shot by them

Throughout the film, Viviane Ferreira addresses the violence perpetrated by the Brazilian state against its black population, and many references like that are made. Thus, in the continuation of this scene, as Jerusa braids her hair with the same two women we saw under the covers, the three of them witness a scene of police violence (Figure 09). Across the street, three black boys are juggling with balls, when they are approached by two policemen, who ask for their documents and search them (a common police practice, which commonly criminalizes black youth, that is seen by the policemen as “suspects”). The women watch carefully from across the street, and Jerusa photographs the scene, until the police release the boys, who are welcomed by the women (Figure 10). Here, Jerusa’s act of documenting the scene becomes an act of resistance: Echoing the director herself, she resists by photographing what she sees, not letting the situation go unrecorded. Later in the movie, in the conversation between Silvia and Jerusa, we find out that Silvia’s father was killed by the police one night coming home from work: “they said he looked like a suspect”, she tells her.

In this presentation of the neighborhood, several stereotypes commonly associated with homeless people are deconstructed. The two women making love on the street, for example, are not depicted in a moment of suffering, but rather smiling, sharing intimacy. The cart driver also appears not as someone devoid of individuality, but as someone known by the people who live there. For example, he greets the lovers on the street and, in a later scene, congratulates Jerusa on her birthday, asking if he will finally meet her family (a foreshadowing of the fact that Jerusa's family will end up not showing up for her birthday).



Figures 09 and 10: Jerusa and her friends watch the police search black kids for no reason

With these scenes director Viviane Ferreira fights the depersonalization to which homeless people are usually subjected, and at the same time the stereotyping of black characters. Her choices differ from what is commonly seen in Brazilian cinema. In the book *O negro brasileiro e o cinema*, Rodrigues states:

“One of the most frequent questions posed to Brazilian cinema by black intellectuals and artists is why our films do not present individualized real characters, but only archetypes and/or caricatures: “the slave”, “the sambista”, “the hot mulata”. The accusation makes sense, although modern Brazilian cinema generally prefers characters of this type, schematic or symbolic, black or not.”¹¹⁷

In Rodrigues' view, black characters are represented in the history of Brazilian cinema through archetypes or caricatures (for example, the “black mother”, the “martyr”, the “black with a white soul”, the “noble savage”, the “rebellious”, the “lover”, the “rascal”, the “slum-dweller”, the “hot mulata”, among others)¹¹⁸. According to the author, these archetypes were not necessarily created with a negative intention. They come from types imagined by white creators (either out of fear and hatred, or with the intention of solidarity and admiration). This is complimented by an appropriation of the orixás (gods of African or Afro-Brazilian religions, whose worship is widespread in Brazil). The characters in *Um dia com Jerusa* escape this stereotyping. The director goes one step beyond by choosing to work with an almost exclusively black cast. In one scene, Silvia stops at a magazine stand where all magazines have black women on the cover, all of them recognized personalities - a contrast to the real covers one would find on a Brazilian magazine stand, where a eurocentric ideal of beauty prevails.

¹¹⁷ [Trans. M. C. L.] João Carlos Rodrigues, *O negro Brasileiro e o cinema*, Rio de Janeiro: Pallas Editora, 2011, p. 19.

¹¹⁸ In the original in Portuguese, the stereotypes described by Rodrigues are: “o preto velho”, “a mãe preta”, “o mártir”, “o negro de alma branca”, “o nobre selvagem”, “o negro revoltado”, “o negão”, “o malandro”, “o favelado”, “o crioulo doido”, “a mulata boazuda”, “a musa” e “o afro-baiano”. João Carlos Rodrigues, *O negro Brasileiro e o cinema*, Rio de Janeiro: Pallas Editora, 2011. [Trans. M. C. L.]

In addition, besides the deconstruction of stereotypes, what we may read in the director's choices is an emphasis on *living-together*, on the existing relationships between those who share a place - even if the place in question is a megacity like São Paulo. Jerusa's house is explicitly placed in a specific neighborhood, the Bixiga. So the meeting between the two main characters is situated in specific surroundings. "Nobody lives anywhere, everybody lives somewhere", we could say with Haraway¹¹⁹. Moreover, attention is drawn to coexistence, and to the encounters that take place. The depersonalization and anonymity that are usually stressed in the representation of large cities give way to the relationships that are co-created, even the briefest ones.

According to the director, in the short movie her main concern was to propose a reflection on the loneliness faced by black women, especially the older ones. She says that her main point was to show that reducing the impacts of loneliness in another person's life is not just a concern of the family or the person's partner, but a shared duty. "It is a responsibility of each one of us who cross each other's paths, regardless of how close we are"¹²⁰, she states. When producing the feature film, she had already other concerns, and wanted to address the violence that the black population faces in Brazil - especially the high number of deaths of black youths. Therefore, she says the feature film comes from a reflection on who has the right to grow old in Brazil, and about ways of aging and ways of dying.

In this context, the choice of the Bixiga area is intentional. This is a place famous for being a historically Italian neighborhood that attracts many tourists to its traditional pasta places and family restaurants. Yet, it is widely unknown that Bixiga has a history that precedes the arrival of the Italians. In an interview, Viviane Ferreira explains that the area used to be a large farm, cut by navigable rivers. When enslaved black people from the surroundings ran away, they fled to Bixiga, because there - due to the river - they could provide for themselves¹²¹. It was many years later that the Italian immigration begun. The majority of the Italian migrants faced

¹¹⁹ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p. 30.

¹²⁰ Juliana Costa, "Transitar e pertencer: uma conversa sobre Um Dia com Jerusa", Cine Festivais, <https://cinefestivais.com.br/transitar-e-pertencer-uma-conversa-sobre-um-dia-com-jerusa/>, 23. 09. 2023.

¹²¹ According to Viviane, they also stayed there because of the presence of a fair where everything could be bought, "from cattle to people". *Ibid.*

difficult conditions, but at the same time, as mentioned before, the Brazilian state supported European immigration to the country, providing people with land or offering economical help.

About that, Viviane says:

“(T)he money the State of São Paulo paid them to remain in the city did not allow them to economically dispute the territories occupied by white people, so they went to dispute the territories occupied by black people. Many of them received the right of acquisition in the courts. People refused (to give their lands) and they acquired the right. This is a history that São Paulo deals with in a very perverse manner, as if it did not exist.”¹²²

Therefore, the choice to root Dona Jerusa in the Bixiga neighborhood was motivated by the director's interest in retrieving the black history of the city where she lives. With that, she inserts Jerusa in the context of a struggle for territory, in which living in that place could already be read as a demonstration of resistance. More specifically, Viviane says that this idea came from an interview she had done for another film with a black woman who lived in a house in Bixiga. The woman was being pressured by real estate companies to leave her house, where she lived alone, and where generations of her family had lived. The property was losing value because she could not afford to keep it in good conditions, but she said she would not give in and abandon the place, telling Viviane that “as long as she were alive, she would stay there – the whole house could fall to pieces, but she was going to stay there”¹²³. This provoked the director, who stated: “We have historically been disputing over territories and we live – I say ‘us’ the black community – as nomads, right?”¹²⁴.

It is interesting to note that this is a layer of the film that can only be accessed when searching for real information about the city. And this applies to many things in *Um dia com Jerusa*. The film is permeated by a number of elements that are not essential for its first understanding, but which, after investigation, reveal to be historical or cultural references, and add to its general meaning. Although being a fictional movie, the film relies on small details to open up and unfold in layers that point beyond it, interweaving fiction and reality. This story design makes us think of Ursula Le Guin's writings discussed in the third chapter. The narrative does not unfolds like an arc moving towards a goal, following a straight line toward an ending. It is

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ [Trans. M. C. L.] *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ [Trans. M. C. L.] *Ibid.*

also not focused on the resolution of one central conflict. On the contrary, the film's narrative seems more to open up in multiple possible directions. Forgotten historical facts from Afro-Brazilian culture and ancestry emerge in the form of objects, a hairstyle, a song. This is the case, for example, of two central references in the film, the samba school Vai Vai and the Saracura River (Figure 11). The Vai Vai samba school was founded at the end of the 1920s and witnesses to the black presence in the neighborhood. The Saracura is the river that used to cut through the city in Bixiga. The river is mentioned multiple times throughout the film by Jerusa, and it is inseparable from the history of her family: her mother and grandmother drew their source of livelihood from it, working as washerwomen. Viviane keeps the Saracura (and the black history of that territory) alive by means of a well dug by Jerusa's father in the house. This well connects to the river. It is there that, at a certain point in the film, Silvia will see, in disbelief, the fish shown in the first image. About this, Viviane says:

“When there is a river inside Jerusa's house it is an allusion to the samba school's defense of the source of the Saracura River. Why doesn't Vai Vai leave that place? Vai Vai stays there to keep alive the memory of the Saracura. The Vai Vai is located at the spring of the Saracura.(...) It is really thanks to Vai Vai and to the black people that remain there that the black Bixiga survives, because Bixiga has some black families that stay there out of spite. It survives on the energy of stubbornness. And the stubbornness is the energy of the waters, it is the energy of the river. You can try to finish with all the rivers, but you can't solve the problem of the floods.”¹²⁵

Knowing this, one understands the metaphor of the flood that comes up in one scene, in which the river invades the street and things are turned upside-down (Figure 12). The movie tries to show how the gentrification of the city is fought through communities who refuse to have their stories ignored or erased. The characters of this neighborhood resist simply by *living-together*, by cultivating the space and by not accepting to be expelled¹²⁶.

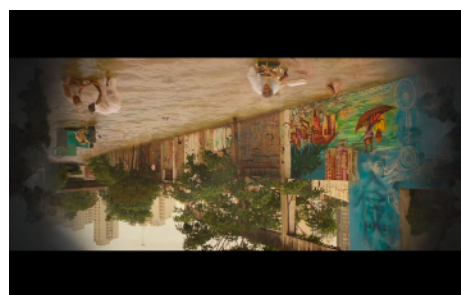


Figure 11 and 12: a scene with the samba school Vai Vai and one where the saracura river floods the street: images that evoke Bixiga's history as a black neighborhood

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Author Edileuza Penha Souza argues that relations with territory and ancestry are commonly approached in the movies of Brazilian black women filmmakers. See Edileuza Penha de Souza, “Mulheres negras na construção de um cinema negro no feminino”, *Aniki (Coimbra)* 7/1, 2020, 171-188.

4.3 The meeting

After the introductory scenes, the meeting of Jerusa and Silvia takes place, lasting until the end of the film. In the kitchen, Jerusa tastes a cake she is preparing, when the doorbell rings. She opens it anxiously, probably expecting someone from her family. But it is Silvia, asking if she can conduct a consumer survey with her. Jerusa invites her in (Figure 13). In her living room (and also, as we will discover, in the rest of the house), the neatness and tidiness of every detail stand out. Everything exudes a sense of care and zeal. Antique wooden furniture, along with silverware and black and white portraits, hark back to an earlier time. Next to the door there is an altar. Jerusa invites Silvia to sit on the sofa. The shots are either fixed or contain very little movement. In the course of the conversation, Jerusa says it is her 77th birthday, and Silvia gives her a congratulatory hug (Figure 14). Jerusa surrenders to the embrace, not wanting it to end. Silvia proposes to do the research quickly as a birthday gift - which doesn't exactly seem to excite Jerusa. One of the themes of the movie is emphasized here: the loneliness in aging. Jerusa is an old lady who lives alone. She claims she is expecting her children for lunch, which she then changes into an afternoon tea (she says she got confused); but, as we will see, they will never arrive. On the contrary: later on in the movie, Silvia secretly enters her room, and finds pictures of Jerusa last birthdays in which she

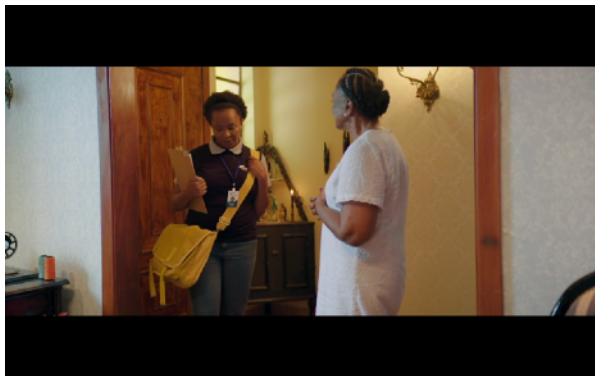
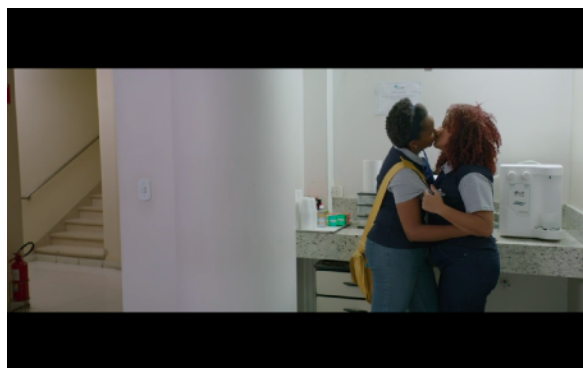
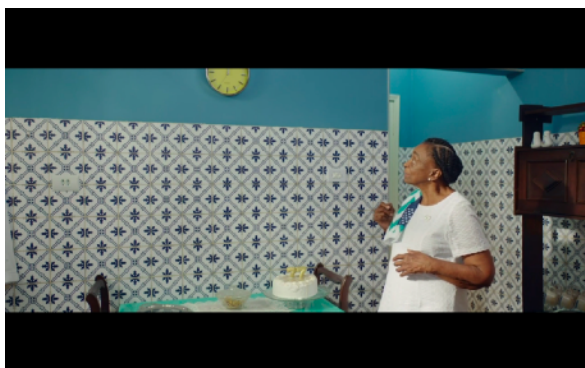


Figure 13 and 14: Jerusa and Silvia first meet, Jerusa affectionately hugs Silvia, who does not know how to react

is celebrating with random people: a doctor, a technician, etc. The differences between the characters presented in the movie can be seen from an intersectional point of view: the intertwining of gender, race, age, class and sexuality are addressed and performed here. The movie is never concerned with portraying only one identity marker, but rather draws an intersectional picture of the characters and their stories. Therefore, one can consider the problem of the loneliness of elderly black women, represented through the character of Jerusa,

as well as the challenges of being black and queer, shown by means of Silvia, who has difficulties introducing her girlfriend to her grandmother - just to name a few (Figures 15 e 16). The movie also addresses intersections between race, gender, and class: for example, in the way Silvia strives to pass in an exam, in the way Jerusa resists by not leaving her home in Bixiga, or in the way the narrative focuses on marginalized groups (the homeless characters, the young black boys, etc) and the institutional violence they face in everyday life.

Silvia's research is about a soap powder, which gives scope for Jerusa to criticize the current soaps - "nowadays, even the soaps are posh" - and to start telling the story of her mother and grandmother, who worked on the banks of the Saracura River washing clothes for the city's bourgeoisie. With that, Ferreira introduces the previously mentioned historical elements of the neighborhood, and enacts a form of resistance against the erasure of the history of this community. The symbolism of water and rivers, so central to Afro-Brazilian religions, should also not be ignored. Here, with the reference to the Saracura river, is the idea of a rescue of ancestry and of resistance.



Figures 16 e 17: Jerusa stares at the clock, waiting for guests who won't come, and Silvia secretly kisses her girlfriend at work: intersectional gazes to the characters' lives

From the start of the meeting, the conversation between the two develops in a pattern in which Silvia asks Jerusa a question, and she diverts the subject to some memory or comment, refusing to fit into the objectivity and depersonalization of the questionnaire. Thus, for example, we find out that her grandmother had been enslaved, but had managed to escape and make a living as a slave for hire; that the name Jerusa had been invented by this same grandmother, to gain the sympathy of the man who had marked her as a slave for hire: she lied that her name was Maria Jerusa Anunciação, in a great homage to Christianity and in a demonstration of her faith. We also discover that Jerusa's father had been one of the founders

of the Vai Vai samba school, which further inscribes her as a living witness of the “black Bixiga” mentioned by Viviane Ferreira.

As she narrates her life, Jerusa walks around the house, through the different rooms, all marked by impeccable care. We see the meticulous way in which she separates papers of sweets in the kitchen, and the furnishing of her dining room, with beautiful white curtains, as well as a remarkably white tablecloth. Silvia often tries to bring her back to the focus of the questionnaire, failing miserably each time. When asked, Jerusa replies to the questions wittily. “Sex? I’ve always liked it, but only with consent. Sexual orientation? On the banks of the Saracura, everyone had their own preferences.” Silvia’s patience gradually wears thin, but this does not seem to bother Mrs. Jerusa, who involves her in domestic activities, such as defrosting her freezer. Little by little, Jerusa reverses the roles, asking Silvia about her life: who she lives with, if she receives visits, from whom, etc. Silvia gradually opens up, telling about her love relationship. The climax of the intimacy in this encounter occurs when Jerusa braids Silvia’s hair (Figures 17 and 18). In this scene, we see Silvia in a frontal close-up, as Jerusa brushes her hair and asks about her family’s history. The soundtrack of a piano is to be heard, accompanied, again, by the sound of a police siren. Once more, Silvia’s face is interchanged with that of the cyclist, as she gets in a trance state. We hear the offscreen voice of Jerusa’s, saying:

“It is necessary to exercise memory. It was through memory that we became free. Cultivation is the best teacher. If you cultivate forgetfulness, you feed the memory of pain, to convince yourself that you have to forget; if you cultivate memory, you can choose to feed the pain or the impulse of freedom.”¹²⁷



Figures 17 and 18: Silvia and Jerusa share a moment of almost spiritual intimacy as Jerusa plaits her hair.

¹²⁷ [Trans. M. C. L.] *Um dia com Jerusa*, 00:49:10.

The importance of cultivating history is highlighted by the fact that Silvia, when listening to the stories about Jerusa's grandmother, shows little knowledge about the past of the enslaved population in Brazil. When Jerusa says that her grandmother's arm was marked with an iron stamp, she is amazed, asking if this happened to all her family, perhaps demonstrating how much she is unaware of the country's past. On the other hand, in her episodes of trance, it is as if Silvia could recognize the ancestral connection that exists between the two of them. Therefore, one of the movie's main concerns is to highlight the importance of understanding the past. *Um dia com Jerusa* pays homage to the power of encounters and the recognition of belonging to a shared history. This recognition and the importance of it to foster better ways of *living-together*, as well as of *resisting-together*, has its apex at the end of the film. Coming back from the bathroom, Silvia finds Jerusa sleeping on the sofa, after having finally filled out her questionnaire (Figure 19). She lays her head down on her lap, and lifts the sleeve of Jerusa's arm, realizing that Jerusa's arm is also marked. She then takes a pen from her purse and marks her own skin.



Figure 19: Silvia marks her own arm, showing she realized that both of them share a collective past

4.4. Conclusion

At the center of *Um dia com Jerusa* is a visit. Thinking with Haraway, we can say that this is a film about “going visiting”. The author talks about how her thinking has been influenced by Viviane Despret. She discusses how Despret works with a kind of “politeness” that goes far beyond “good manners”. Despret's politeness has to do with the idea of “going visiting”, of

assuming the posture of a visitor going to an unknown place. Haraway states: “Visiting is a subject-and-object-making dance, and the choreographer is a trickster. Asking questions comes to mean both asking what another finds intriguing and also how learning to engage changes everybody in unforeseeable ways.”¹²⁸

The visitor opens up to the unexpected. The other is not who they expect to visit, just as they are not who the other expects them to be. They are driven by a risky curiosity, which may lead them down unforeseen paths. Therefore, the practice of visiting is a practice of curiosity, which can offer risks. Moreover, it is a challenging practice, because it requires “the ability to find others actively interesting, even or especially others most people already claim to know all too completely”¹²⁹. This is the risk in which *Jerusa* involves Silvia, even though Silvia offers some resistance. The visit is prolonged and reinvented, as *Jerusa* destabilizes the utilitarian logic that had generated it in the first place. The film is about this risk, the risk of encounters that do not go as planned, but which, because of that, allow going visiting. However, in the case of the movie, openness to otherness is revealed as an encounter with oneself: the unexpected to which the visit leads is a recognition, a discovery of oneself through a shared past, a past which is inseparable from the present.

The movie chooses to approach the political tensions that arise from *living together* with a positive perspective, while not ignoring the violence that the black population in Brazil is often subjected to. Despite portraying scenes of everyday violence and oppression, it avoids perpetuating stereotypes. At the center of the narrative is a positive and generative encounter. This encounter shows the power that *living together* can reach when the characters dare to detour from a previous script and to *become-with* each other. The film highlights the importance of encounters which render its characters stronger. Ancestry, territoriality and communality are at the heart of this story. Therefore, the plot may seem simple at a first glance. Yet, upon analyzing it, it turns out to be rather rich in terms of the development of new intersectional gazes in Brazilian cinema.

¹²⁸ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham: Duke University Press 2016, p. 127.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

5. What time will she be back?

The film I would like to analyze in this chapter is also set in São Paulo. As the movie analyzed in the previous chapter, *Que horas ela volta* (“The Second Mother” in English, D.: Anna Muylaert, Brazil, 2015) was also written and directed by a woman, has women protagonists, is set in a domestic environment most of the time and is about encounters happening in everyday life. However, the encounters in question and the environment in which the story takes place are very different from the ones in *Um dia com Jerusa*. The plot unfolds mostly in an upper-class house in a posh neighbourhood of the city - a two-storey building, with a large garden and a swimming pool. In this house Val, the protagonist, lives and works as a maid and nanny for a nuclear family consisting of a couple and their son. Val lives in a small room in the house, located next to the kitchen, in the back of the dwelling. She has been with the family for at least a decade, having been a nanny for Fabinho, the couple's son, since his childhood. Fabinho, who has a maternal relationship with her, is now a teenager preparing for his university entrance exams. This domestic arrangement is disrupted when Val receives a call from her daughter, Jessica, whom she has not seen for over ten years. Jessica lives in the countryside of Brazil, and was raised by Val's support network, while she was working in São Paulo. She tells Val that she wants to stay with her to also take the admission exams to the University of São Paulo, one of the most demanding in the country, the same exams that Fabinho will take. However, Jessica does not know that her mother lives with her employers, which she discovers only when she arrives in town.

Her arrival is the necessary trigger for the house's routine to be transformed and, above all, questioned. With her visit, the naturalness of that domestic arrangement is disturbed, as she refuses to adjust to the unspoken rules that separate employees from bosses. Her presence arouses the charm of the family's father, Doutor Carlos¹³⁰, who becomes interested in her, and even ends up awkwardly asking her to marry him. She provokes a mix of envy and admiration on Fabinho's part, who is clearly jealous of her relationship with Val. Her constant trespassing rules also irritates Dona Bárbara, who decides to take more offensive actions to stop her. And

¹³⁰ There is a tradition in Brazilian popular language of calling people from the so-called elite “doctors”, independent of their education. Exactly this is the case with Doutor Carlos, signaling Val's lower social status. The “dona” in “dona Bárbara” is used in a similar way - the one who calls her only “Barbara” is, not accidentally, Jéssica.

especially, it awakens a series of conflicts in Val, her mother, ranging from disapproval and despair to a change of perspective that culminates in her leaving the house to live with Jessica.

Que Horas Ela Volta was one of Brazil's greatest successes not only with the audience but also with the critics. It was awarded prizes both at the Berlinale and at the Sundance Film Festival, in addition to being nominated by the country to compete for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film competition¹³¹. The movie exposes a problem that is only beginning to be faced: that of paid domestic work, and the way in which it still bears traces of the slavery system that over centuries predominated in Brazil¹³². It also addresses the possibility of social rise that was showing its first results at the time. This was a consequence of public policies implemented in the years before the movie was made, such as the increase in minimum wage, targeted income support programs, and the quota policy in Brazil's public universities, which, by allocating part of the vacancies both to black students and to students from public schools, meant that for the first time in the country's history public universities were less exclusively elitist and "white" spaces. The movie captured a moment of historical change and the zeitgeist of the time, in which part of the population felt optimistic towards the country's future¹³³.

In the following pages, I would like to explore how *Que Horas Ela Volta* addresses political dimensions embodied in everyday life that are very revealing concerning domestic work in Brazilian society. I intend to analyze the particular ways in which the movie enacts these tensions related to living-together - or maybe not *that* together, after all. The film does that by focusing on situations which happen when a space is shared by people from different social classes.

¹³¹ In 2015 the movie was awarded a prize in the section Panorama during the 65 Berlinale, and the special prize of the jury in the Sundance Festival for the acting of its protagonists, Regina Casé e Camila Márdila. Sf. Monica Kanitz, "O cinema popular de Anna Muylaert", *Mulheres atrás das câmeras: As cineastas brasileiras de 1930 a 2018*, eds. Luiza Lusvarghi / Camila Vieira da Silva, São Paulo: Estação Liberdade 2019, pp. 168-177, here p. 171. Stephanie Dennison also remembers that Muylaert was the second Brazilian women to receive a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film competition, after Suzana Amaral in 1986 with the movie *A hora da Estrela*. See Dennison, *Remapping Brazilian Film Culture in the Twenty-First Century*, here p.61-62.

¹³² Slavery in Brazil has lasted more than 300 years, starting in the 16th century and being officially abolished in 1888. However, the Brazilian black movement does not celebrate this date, as the change was carried out without any policies of social insertion for the former enslaved persons. The inequalities that persist in the country today are a reflection of this period. See for example Tayguara Ribeiro, "Entenda o fim da escravidão no Brasil e as consequências do 13 de maio de 1888", 12.05.2021, *Folha de São Paulo*, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2021/05/entenda-o-fim-da-escravidao-no-brasil-e-as-consequencias-do-13-de-maio-de-1888.shtml>, 23. 09. 2023.

¹³³ At the same time, society had started to be more politically divided, something that would become stronger in the following years and eventually end up in the election of far-right wing candidate Jair Bolsonaro, three years after the movie premiered.

5.1. The care giver: a many facetted figure

Let us begin by analyzing the first scene of the film, which serves as a prologue to what will be staged. It is the only scene that takes place when Fabinho, the boy Val takes care of as a nanny, is still a child. The opening shot shows a swimming pool and a garden with green, tended trees in the background. Deckchairs and a table with an umbrella complete an idyllic environment for leisure and recreation. Around the pool a number of toys, in particular toy cars and rubber dinosaurs are scattered. There is no one in the scene, only the wind, which gently sways the trees and the umbrella. Suddenly a boy in swimming trunks crosses the frame quickly, bouncing. The name of the main actress of the film, Regina Casé, is presented, and she then appears in the same framing, playing with the boy and a dog. Dressed in a white uniform (the practice of wearing this type of uniform is common in some Brazilian homes), she puts the boy in the pool. He asks her to look at him and swim with him, and she replies: “Me, swim? And I have a swimming costume to swim in?”.



Figure 20: Val puts Fabinho in the pool. The boy wonders why she does not swim with him

She sits in a chair, with her back to the screen, and talks on the phone to someone and by her tone (since we do not hear the voice of the other side) we understand it is her daughter. The boy gets out of the pool and stops in front of her, waiting for her to dry him and give him attention. She ends the call saying “I love you”. The boy is curious to know who it is she loves, and she replies it was her daughter. He then enquires where she is, and she answers she is far away. Then he wants to know where his mother is. Val replies that she is working, and he asks: “What time will she be back?” (Figure 21).



Figure 21: Fabinho asks Val when is his mother is coming home, while she talks with her daughter on the phone

This suggestive question is the Portuguese title of the film¹³⁴. In it, as well as in the opening scene as a whole, the film synthetically announces the problem that will be dealt with more profoundly in the narrative: Val, who we see caring for another woman's child, also has a daughter, Jessica, whom she was unable to raise. The film takes an intersectional approach by addressing how the classes of these two women change the ways in which they can fulfill maternal and caregiving roles. Fabinho's waiting for his mother, who is replaced during the day by Val, echoes Jessica's waiting - only unlike the former, the latter cannot count on her mother returning home at night. Throughout the narrative, this bitter irony is explored: that while caring for another woman's son, Val fails to be a mother to her own daughter, by abandoning her. At the end of the film, Jéssica also tells Val that when she was a child she kept asking the same question when Val left town after visiting her: "What time will she be back?"

The theme of care (of who cares for whom, how, and under what conditions) is at the center of the narrative. The film addresses a common reality in Brazil, which is the outsourcing of both care and domestic work. The practice of hiring someone to do the cleaning, cooking and care services is not limited to the country's upper class, as the salaries paid for these services are extremely low. All this is a remains of the slavery period, and, until recently, domestic work in Brazil was not regulated. Only in 2013, that is, two years before the film's release, legislation was passed which equaled the rights of domestic workers with those of other

¹³⁴ "Que horas ela volta?" literally means "What time will she be back?".

workers¹³⁵. Although this was a timid and very late change, it caused extreme upheaval in the country, with strong reactions from more conservative sectors of society. As author Eliane Brumm summarizes in the preface of the book *Que horas ela volta? (Roteiros do Cinema Brasileiro)*:

“It was a Brazilian institution that was threatened: the privilege of a white family having, for a derisory sum, its black or poor white semi-slave, generally from the Northeast region of the country; the privilege of being able to become a career woman, emancipated, without changing the gender structure within the home. The middle classes reacted in response, as if they were cutting into their own flesh, because that was how they felt. The conquest of basic rights didn't affect the richest, who still had money to pay their maids and servants, but it did affect the family budget of the middle class at a time when the economic crisis was already looming.”¹³⁶

The reaction of Brazilian society has also shown to what an extent it is structured around the outsourcing of domestic work and childcare. It also made clear how gender, class and race intersect in this area of work. Moreover, it demonstrated how white women have gained the labour market by exploiting the work of other women, mostly black. Currently, Brazil is the country of the world with the biggest number of domestic workers, 93% of them are women, and 61,6% of them are black¹³⁷. Commonly, employees live in the homes of the contractors. This practice has led to the fact that even flats with three or more rooms generally also have what has traditionally been called a “maid's room”, usually located at the back of the house, next to the kitchen¹³⁸. It is in one of these “maid's rooms” that Val lives. Her walls are filled with shelves in which electronics gadgets like fans accumulate, which she saves for the moment she would have her own house.

The fact that these discussions are finally achieving some prominence in Brazil is owed to the intensive work of Black feminists. As mentioned in chapter three, the limitations of a feminism centered only on the issues of white women has been pointed out for decades by

¹³⁵ See Rachel Randall, “Cordiality and intimacy in contemporary Brazilian culture: introduction”, *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 2018, 24:3, 295-310, here 301-302.

¹³⁶ [Trans. M. C. L.] Eliane Brum, “Prefácio: A boa sinhazinha e a boa escrava – nunca mais”, *Que horas ela volta? (Roteiros do Cinema Brasileiro)*, São Paulo: Klaxon / BrLab Edições 2019, 6-12, here p. 11.

¹³⁷ See Máira de Deus Brito, “Que Horas Ela Volta silencia sobre racismo e os privilégios da branquitude”, *Geledés*, 30.11.2015, <https://www.geledes.org.br/que-horas-ela-volta-silencia-sobre-racismo-e-os-privilegios-da-branquitude/>, 23. 09. 2023.

¹³⁸ This architectural invention that appears to be genuinely Brazilian is ironized, for instance, in the mockumentary short film *Recife Frio* (D.: Kleber Mendonça, Brazil, 2011).

black feminist groups. Similarly, care work and its entanglements with gender, class and race is a current subject of contemporary feminist discussions worldwide. One can, for example, cite the work of Françoise Verger, who stresses the racialization and feminisation of cleaning and care work around the globe¹³⁹. Among the Black feminists in Brazil, we can highlight the work of Lélia Gonzalez, who already in the 1980s discussed problems that persist today. Gonzalez addresses the stereotypes associated with black women, among them the domestic worker and the “mulata” (the famous dancers of Brazilian carnival). She analysed the history of these stereotypes, tracing them back to the slavery system, connecting them to the figure of the “mucama”¹⁴⁰.

The *mucama* was the young enslaved woman who worked at the slave holders’ homes, doing domestic service and taking care of their children, frequently being their wet nurse. She gave origin to a figure of colonial Brazil, the “black mother” (“mãe preta”), because she commonly assumed the role of mother for white children, caring for and educating them. But besides that, Gonzalez highlights, the origin of the term *mucama* came from the quimbundo language, meaning “lover slave” (in Portuguese, “amásia escrava”). She draws attention to the fact that generally enslaved women were also treated as sexual objects by the slave owner, with their sons commonly being encouraged to have their first sexual relationships with them¹⁴¹. This could be seen as the origin of the stereotype of the sexy, seductive “mulata”. Therefore, according to Gonzalez, both the figures of the “mãe preta” and the contemporary stereotypes of the domestic worker and the “mulata” come from the figure of the *mucama*, with the latter two representing two opposite sides of her. In conclusion, Gonzales argues that the *mucamas* were responsible for the “africanization of Brazilian culture”¹⁴². If this culture can be considered as “eminently black”¹⁴³, she says, it is because they passed on their culture to the

¹³⁹ See Françoise Vergès, *Um feminismo decolonial*, São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2020 (Orig: *Un féminisme décolonial*, Paris: La Fabrique Éditions, 2019), here 84-94.

¹⁴⁰ See for example Lélia Gonzalez, “A mulher negra na sociedade brasileira: Uma abordagem político-econômica”, *Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano. Ensaios, intervenções e diálogos*. [org. Flavia Rios/Marcia Lima] Rio de Janeiro: Zahar 2020 (Orig: 1982), 59-82 and Lélia Gonzalez, “Racismo e sexismo na cultura brasileira”, *Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano. Ensaios, intervenções e diálogos*. [org. Flavia Rios/Marcia Lima] Rio de Janeiro: Zahar 2020 (Orig: 1983), 97-122.

¹⁴¹ See for example Randall, “Cordiality and intimacy in contemporary Brazilian culture: introduction”, p. 297.

¹⁴² [Trans. M. C. L.] Gonzalez, “A mulher negra na sociedade brasileira: Uma abordagem político-econômica”, here p. 64.

¹⁴³ [Trans. M. C. L.] *Ibid*, p. 65.

kids they took care of. This was a form of passive resistance: “Consciously or not, they passed on African cultural categories which they were representatives of to ‘white’ Brazilians”¹⁴⁴.

Thus, the *mucama* filled the roles of mother, lover and object of desire in “white” families in Brazil. Therefore, Gonzalez sees a hidden cause for Brazilian racism in this: because the role of black women was actually so relevant and present in the society, the very same society needed to erase this, forget them, ignore them, render them invisible¹⁴⁵. As it has been previously discussed in this text, this invisibility has been present in the history of Brazilian audiovisual culture. And *Que horas ela volta* is not an exception. The director did not choose black women for the roles of Val and Jéssica (neither did she for the other domestic worker who appears in the movie), a fact that was criticized by some academics and black movements in the country¹⁴⁶. They pointed out that the film does not directly address the issue of race, which is problematic because, as discussed above, it is impossible to completely separate the reality of paid domestic work in the country from its history of slavery.

In an interview, director Anna Muylaert has stated that she wanted Jessica to be played by a black actress, but she was later convinced that “if she (Jéssica) was black, it would be a film about racism, and if she was white, it would be a film about classism”¹⁴⁷. She was convinced that if Jéssica’s role was played by a white actress, the discussion brought up by the movie would be “beyond race”¹⁴⁸. Although it is understandable that the director did not want to make a film exclusively on racism, the question arises whether it makes sense to sacrifice a reality, in this case the fact that most domestic workers are black women, in order to make a more general statement. This discussion takes us back to the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw mentioned in the third chapter. As Crenshaw argues, the idea that black women could neither represent the entire group of “women” nor that of the black population has rendered them invisible to many analyses. In Brazil, domestic work is undeniably inseparable from race.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ For a deeper reflection on the theme and on how racism can be considered “the *symptomatic* that characterizes the *Brazilian cultural neurosis*”, see Gonzalez, “Racismo e sexismo na cultura brasileira”, 97-122.

¹⁴⁶ See for example Maíra de Deus Brito, “Que Horas Ela Volta silencia sobre racismo e os privilégios da branquitude”.

¹⁴⁷ [Trans. M. C. L.] Anna Muylaert, *Que horas ela volta? (Roteiros do Cinema Brasileiro)*, São Paulo: Klaxon / BrLab Edições 2019, here p 34.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Therefore, in this sense, the movie failed in its intersectional approach, or to address multiple oppressions in the way they occur in real life. This limits its reflection on the very issue it addresses. Muylaert has commented on that herself mentioning the “Jéssicas of real life” she met after showing the movie around Brazil:

“The whole point about the film in Brazil is that with Jéssica it called a spade a spade. And the “Jéssicas” understood themselves as a group, the film was a mirror. From that time on, the name started to be used, “I am a Jéssica”, they said. And we decided to do research on the “Jéssicas” for a documentary about the Jéssicas from real life. The *Jornalistas Livres* placed a post on Facebook and about 800 testimonials from Jessicas came in. The real-life Jessicas are black, 95%. (...) The final conclusion is that the great inclusion - of course, it's social - but, more than anything, it's racial.”¹⁴⁹

On the other hand, although the movie does not directly focus on race, it deals with another prejudice existing in Brazil. The character Val comes from the Northeast region of the country. A significant part of the population currently living in São Paulo has its roots in this region, as a large number of people arrived from the 20th century onwards in search of work in the city. Until today, prejudice against people coming from this region persists. When Jessica arrives at the house, Fabinho comments that “she talks like Val, right”, laughing - a comment that demonstrates his prejudice. Val laughs along, but Jessica gets visibly embarrassed. Therefore, the choice of rooting Val in the Northeast touches on the existing negative stereotypes in São Paulo concerning the region, which adds to an intersectional view of her character. We can also highlight the choice of Regina Casé to play Val. Casé is an extremely popular and well-known actress, comedian and TV presenter, being known as a humorous and charismatic figure. As Stephanie Dennison has pointed out, the choice of a skilled humorist for the role provided comic relief to a narrative that could otherwise be less palatable to the audience¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁹ [Trans. M. C. L.] Muylaert refers to a campaign on social networks organized by the independent journalist group *Jornalistas Livres*. They asked for Jéssicas of the “real life” to send their testimonies. With the success of the movie, the term “Jéssica” became popular and began to be used as a name to refer to people who had been benefited from the aforementioned public policies, especially those who were the first in their families to have access to universities. *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Stephanie Dennison, *Remapping Brazilian Film Culture in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge 2020, here p. 63.

5.2. One roof, different spaces

Class differences and related differences in taste and access to “privileges” are another central theme of the narrative. This already begins to be addressed in the opening of the film, for example in the “nanny’s uniform” Val wears, as well as in her refusal to enter the water because she “doesn’t have a swimming costume”. The pool, as we shall see, is an important element in this narrative and in the staging of differences in access, being present in the main turning points of the story. Throughout the film, a series of scenes are contrived to emphasize the differences between Val and the family she works for. The film takes place almost entirely within a domestic space¹⁵¹. Employers, their son and maid share the same roof, but not in the same way, not with the same access to the facilities of this space.

Political aspects of living together are depicted in the narrative in different manners, one of which being the representation of the space itself. For example, there is a frame that is repeated several times in the film: the camera, fixed, frames the kitchen. Half of the frame shows the kitchen wall, which clearly marks a symbolic division of the space. In the middle of the frame is the kitchen door, which opens to the dining-room, where we can see the end of a table. On the right side, the view of the dining-room is limited by the refrigerator. In one scene in the first minutes of the movie, this vary frame appears, and Doutor Carlos, Val’s employer, is seated at the dining table (Figure 22).



Figures 22-23: Doutor Carlos waits in the living-room to be served

Only the edge of the table is visible, Doutor Carlos is shown in profile. Val goes from the kitchen space to him and asks if he has finished eating, and if he wants anything else, and he orders a soda. She returns to the kitchen, opens the refrigerator in the foreground, gets the drink, returns to the living room and pours it into a glass, while he just waits at the table. The

¹⁵¹ A preference of the director evidenced in other films of hers, as Monica Kanitz points out in “O cinema popular de Anna Muylaert”, p. 171.

framing remains unchanged (Figure 23). The scene shows in a very economical way how Doutor Carlos expects to be served all the time, not even getting up to fetch a drink. At other times, the frame is repeated, but the person sitting at the table is Dona Bárbara, Val's boss, also waiting to be served. As Lucia Sá has noticed, what is most disturbing about those scenes is that the employers are not expecting to be served because they are busy, but simply because this appears to be Val's task, and not theirs. Thus, in the afore mentioned scene, Doutor Carlos is literally "staring at the wall, doing nothing except waiting to be served by the maid"¹⁵². Later, when already interested in Jessica, we will see him for the first time going personally into the kitchen to get something to drink - and then the division of the space is referred to explicitly by Val, who asks him what he wants in *her* fridge.



Figure 24: Not only the boss is served by Val. In this scene, the male employees of the home are served by her and complain about the sizes of the portions

Most importantly, these scenes establish the kitchen as Val's space, commanded by her, while her trips into the living room are more limited. The kitchen appears to be not only her territory, but also where the other employees of the family are "allowed" to socialize. Thus, in one scene Val, Edna (a second domestic worker), the gardener and the driver are eating in the kitchen. In this scene, Muyllaert subtly depicts differences happening inside the same class: while the two men eat, sitting at the table, Val serves them. Also without getting up, they complain about the small amount of food, or ask for other dishes, establishing a clear difference in gender roles (Figure 24).

¹⁵² Lúcia Sá, "Intimacy at work: servant and employer relations in *Que horas ela volta?* (*The second mother*)", *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 24:3, 311-327, here p. 321.

Another frame which is employed many times is one that shows the corridor of the house, with the doors to the bedrooms closed. Several times in the film we see Val walking through it (Figure 25). The frame emphasizes how she circulates through the house, entering and leaving the rooms. Lucia Sá has noticed how the movie emphasizes “doors, thresholds, partial views” as “spaces where Val sometimes can enter (for example, when she has to clean or wait on her employers) and other times has to remain outside, listening behind doors”¹⁵³ (Figure 26). This characterizes Val as a figure who is both an insider and an outsider in the house, a feature which is typical of domestic servants in Brazil.



Figures 25-26: Val walks through the corridor between the rooms/ tries to listen to her employers' conversation about their son Fabinho

With those scenes, a geography of the house is marked. In this territorial division, the kitchen, along with her bedroom, are spaces where Val is allowed to be more comfortable. The corridor could be seen as a somewhat “neutral territory” (after all, it is the space “between” the spaces). The other areas belong to the family alone. Val circulates between them to work, but does not belong there. Therefore, the film investigates how the characters form the space they live in, showing that not only physical barriers separate the universes of maid and employer. As explained in the introduction of the book *Media Crossroads: Intersections of Space and Identity in Screen Cultures*: “Spaces not only shape the connections and relationships that manifest in their confines, but the spaces themselves are simultaneously inflected by the very social interactions and intersections staged within them”¹⁵⁴.

¹⁵³ Sá, “Intimacy at work: servant and employer relations in *Que horas ela volta?* (*The second mother*)”, here p. 322.

¹⁵⁴ Paula J. Massood, Angel Daniel Matos and Pamela Robertson Wojcik, “Introduction: Intersections and/in Space”, *Media Crossroads: Intersections of Space and Identity in Screen Cultures*, New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2021, 1-17, here p 1.



Figure 27: The cups and saucers' set Val gives Dona Bárbara for birthday

Que horas ela volta also depicts how differences manifest themselves in a series of other things, such as objects, clothes and even food. For example, Val works either wearing a uniform or loose blouses, souvenirs from different international destinations, such as “Vienna” and “Houston”. These gifts once again emphasize the social distance between her employers, who can afford going abroad, and her. One object acquires central relevance in the narrative: a birthday present Val buys for dona Bárbara. It is a black and white set of cups and saucers (Figure 27). Dona Bárbara visibly does not like it, but thanks her and asks her to put it in the closet “for a special occasion”. The next scene stages Barbara’s birthday dinner. A hand-held camera follows Val as she leaves the kitchen with a tray and walks through the party, offering food to the guests. Some accept, others refuse, but the striking thing is that none of them look at her directly - it is as if she were invisible. The only guests who not only look but interact with her are the teenagers - Fabinho and his friends. Back in the kitchen, Val proudly arranges the above mentioned gift for the “special occasion” and takes it into the living room (Figure 28). The camera stays again frames the kitchen’s wall and the door, which is now closed. Seconds later Val enters, pulled in by Dona Bárbara, who asks if she has gone crazy, telling her to use the coffee set she bought in Sweden instead (Figure 29). As we will mention later, the unwanted gift reappears in the final scene of the film, symbolizing the change that Val goes through after the arrival of her daughter.



Figures 28-29: Val proudly takes the cup set to the living room on Dona Barbara’s birthday, but the latter quickly sends her back to the kitchen, asking her to use another one

5.3. An unexpected “guest”

It is with the arrival of Jessica that the differences between Val and her bosses begin to become all too evident - and to be transgressed. Even before she arrives, the family's indifference to the fact that Val also has a family of her own is already highlighted: when Val tells her that Jessica has contacted her, Dona Bárbara's first reaction is to ask who Jessica is. This forgetfulness is compensated by Dona Bárbara's readiness to receive Jéssica: after all, as she says, Val “helped” her to raise her own child, and is “almost a part of the family”. This sentence is commonly used in Brazil to describe domestic servants who have worked for the same family for years. As Lúcia Sá highlights, it pin-points a central idea of the movie:

"The “almost” used by Bárbara is thus not casual, but a crucial part of the phrase: it means that the person in question partakes (or is forced to partake, in the case of domestic servants) in the family intimacy, but only to a certain point. This is, I would argue, the main topic of *Que horas ela volta?*: what does being “almost family” mean in the context of domestic service in Brazil?”¹⁵⁵

The character who starts unraveling what this means in the movie is Jéssica, the daughter of the “almost family” member. As soon as she arrives, Jessica is received with condescension - it is hard for the elite family to believe that the maid's daughter would have any chance of entering one of the most sought-after and renowned universities in the country. The aforementioned transformation of the Brazil is exemplified in a speech by Dona Bárbara, who, upon hearing Jessica's confidence regarding her plans to study architecture (also a traditionally elitist course), says “See? The country is really changing. Nice.” Still on her first day, Dr. Carlos gives Jessica a tour of the house and shows her the empty guest room (a suite). Jessica praises the accommodation, and jokingly asks if she will be staying there, since she is a guest. With that, she manages to get an invitation from him to stay in the room - much to the indignation of Val, who protests that this would be complete inappropriate, and to the disliking of Mrs. Barbara, who, however, does not have the courage to contradict the offer made by her husband.

¹⁵⁵ Sá, “Intimacy at work: servant and employer relations in *Que horas ela volta?* (*The second mother*)”, p.317.

In an interview, Muylaert has stated that she got inspired by a short story by Argentinian writer Julio Cortazar, called “Casa tomada” (House taken)¹⁵⁶. The short story had given her the idea for the movie’s structure: that of a house being taken over, step by step. As soon as she gets there, Jessica begins to occupy the territory in a completely new way, subverting its rules. It starts with the guest room. Next, in the morning after her arrival, Val fails to prepare breakfast for her employers, one of her daily tasks. Dona Bárbara, on her way to work, is surprised that nothing is ready. Then Jessica arrives, still yawning, and sits down at the kitchen table. Not only does Barbara have to make her own breakfast, but she ends up serving Jessica. She asks Jessica what she wants to drink and Jessica asks which juice *she* is drinking. Her message is clear: I want the same as you (Figures 30-31).



Figures 30-31: Jéssica and Dona Bárbara encounter at the kitchen

The disruptive dimension of her posture is accentuated by the interest she arouses in Fabinho, but also in Doutor Carlos, who is the only one who in fact treats her as a guest. Indeed, the scenes are meant to contrast how he treats Jéssica and how he treats Val. Thus, while showing the first around the house, he keeps giving orders to the second, never failing to make a distinction between the two of them. At the same time, to make matters more complicated, there is also a lot of discrepancy between the way Val treats Fabinho and Jéssica (Figures 32-33). While she approaches the first in a protective, affective and intimate way, she criticizes and disapproves of Jéssica’s behavior all the time. In the above mentioned scene, in which she does not wake up to make Dona Bárbara’s breakfast, she gets angry that the girl dared to seat at the table of the bosses and had the nerve to ask the landlady to serve her. “Is there any other table here? Should I eat standing?” is Jessica's prompt answer before leaving the room. Almost at the same time as she gets out, Fabinho comes in and sits down, while Val kisses his forehead and asks what he would like to drink and eat, in a loving, dedicated way.

¹⁵⁶ Anna Muylaert, *Que horas ela volta? (Roteiros do Cinema Brasileiro)*, here p 19.



Figures 32-33: The differences of the relationship Val has with Fabinho and with Jéssica are highlighted in the movie

The next step of Jéssica's occupation of the house occurs when Doutor Carlos invites her to have lunch with him, much to the astonishment and discomfort of Val and Edna (the other domestic servant). The scene again focuses on the division between kitchen and dining room, with the kitchen wall being framed. Close to the door, Val and Edna try to eavesdrop on the conversation in the living-room, reacting desperately and giving the scene a comic tone. Jessica praises the food and tries to help Val clearing the table - but is interrupted by Doutor Carlos, protesting, "No, let Val do it". To Val's dismay, she then asks if there is anything for dessert. Then another element of distinction is introduced. Doutor Carlos asks Val to serve them "the" ice cream. She brings in an ice cream package which the Brazilian audience would immediately recognize. It is an ordinary plastic box with a red lid in which many ice creams come. However, Doutor Carlos reprimands her, saying that she should bring the posh one, with chocolate and almonds. Val, who glares at Jessica, protests that this is Fabinho's ice cream. "Fabinho's! Everything here is ours, is Jessica's", Dr. Carlos replies. The irony of the situation is obvious: everything there is *theirs*, it's Jessica's - but is not Val's. As Lúcia Sá has observed:

"Despite being the maid's daughter, Jéssica is not a social outsider like Val: she is applying to the same university as Fabinho, reads some of the same books Carlos reads, is able to navigate the internet better than Fabinho, and is said by Fabinho to possess excessive confidence. Not being a social outsider, Jéssica is thus not qualified to be 'almost part of the family.'"¹⁵⁷

Therefore, we could say that it is precisely because she is not a "social outsider" to the family that she cannot be an "almost" insider like Val. At the same time, the fact that Jessica

¹⁵⁷ Lúcia Sá, "Intimacy at work: servant and employer relations in *Que horas ela volta? (The second mother)*", p. 323.

transgresses the social borders makes those borders explicit. She does not accept being treated, as she says in a confrontation with her mother, like a “second-class citizen”. To Val's consternation, she does not adopt a subservient posture, and is not intimidated by her mother's employers. Nor does she accept regarding them as her own employers. At one point she states this clearly. “Where have you ever seen a maid's daughter sit at the bosses' table?” says Val, to which Jessica replies, “They are not *my* bosses, Val”.

The social immobility of Brazilian society and the way Val has internalized it is also emphasized in other scenes. For example, in another confrontation, Jéssica tells Val that she does not understand where she has learned so many rules, that so many things are not allowed for them to do. Val answers that these things do not need to be learned, one is born knowing them. As Stefanie Denninson points out, the conflict of the film also comes from the fact that “these unwritten rules were not drawn up with the possibility of social ascension in mind”¹⁵⁸. Not only does the family have to struggle with the changes introduced by Jéssica, but also (and especially) Val. Each of the characters has to come to terms with the subversion of the “apartheid logic”¹⁵⁹ provoked by her.

In a way, Jéssica's character stages a disobedience and a secure attitude which can be seen as nonconforming not only concerning class expectations, but also gender ones. In one scene, Val tells her that she is very stuck up. Jessica responds she does not think she is better than anyone else, she just does not think she is worse. Her non-acceptance of being treated in the way she defines as “a second-class citizen” culminates in her leaving the house, which in turn occurs after the episode in which she transgresses its main territorial taboo: the pool.

5.4. Who swam in my pool? - the swimming pool as leitmotiv

There is one “territory” that receives special attention in the film, having a narrative of its own that accompanies the general development of the story: the swimming pool. It is present from the above mentioned opening scene. Yet it is with the arrival of Jessica that the pool acquires

¹⁵⁸ Dennison, *Remapping Brazilian Film Culture in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 62.

¹⁵⁹ An expression used by Eliane Brum in the text “Prefácio: A boa sinhazinha e a boa escrava – nunca mais”, p. 9. [Trans. M. C. L.]

special attention. For starters, it is the first thing she is shown during her tour of the house (Figure 34). In the following, Jessica accompanies her mother while she works, and puts her foot in the pool, admiring the cleanliness of the crystal-clear water. Val, however, says that it is not even for her to look at. J  ssica asks if Val has never swum there, not even once. Val answers by asking “Am I going to swim in the pool at *someone else’s* house?”. That is, although she lives there, and has done so for at least ten years, for her the limits that demarcate what belongs to “other people’s” leisure are very clear. Val warns Jessica that if they invite her to swim she should say that she does not have a swimsuit, either (Figure 35).



Figures 34-35: The pool is proudly presented to the guest, Val warns J  ssica that she can’t swim there

Directly after that, Fabinho arrives with a friend and the two of them do invite her to the pool. Jessica obeys Val, but the boys ignore her answer and start playing, spraying her with a hose and eventually throwing her to the water. In the water, the three enjoy a moment of freedom. In this sequence, the difference emphasized is the one between teenagers and grown-ups (Figures 36-37). While the first ignore the rules and share a minute of liberty, the second arrive to restore order, shocked and revolted by their disrespect and disregard of the social expectations. The scene conveys the feeling that J  ssica entering the pool is a terrible and unforgivable infraction, as it is the culmination of a series of small violations of rules perpetrated by her: the guest room, the breakfast with Dona B  rbara, the lunch with Doutor Carlos, Fabinho’s ice cream, and, finally, the swimming pool (not to mention the wedding request). J  ssica’s entering this territory that should be off-limits to her marks both the apex of her subversions of space and a turning point in the narrative.



Figures 36-37: the kids enjoy the pool

After that, Mrs. Barbara begins to react, first by removing Jessica from the guest room with the excuse that she will receive someone else, and then getting to the point of explicitly asking Val not to let her circulate beyond the confines of the kitchen. Furthermore, after the pool episode, she has the pool's water exchanged. Here, class contempt reaches the point of disgust. The excuse given by her for is having seen a rat inside the pool, which obviously does not convince Jessica, who ironically asks Fabinho in a conversation if they think she is a rat. After these scenes she dramatically leaves the house, despite Val's pleas for her not to do so, in the night before her exams.

However, the leitmotif of the pool soon reappears in the film, as Val discovers that Jessica has passed the exams (while Fabinho has failed). At that moment, Val sneaks into the pool, which is still being filled after “the rat” was spotted, and calls Jessica from inside, making her hear the water (Figure 38). With this, the film stages the first change of behavior in Val's character, the beginning of a deconstruction of her internalized submissiveness. Proud of her daughter's results, she begins to equally break rules. This culminates in her giving notice and moving in with her daughter, after finding out that Jessica also has a son, whom she also left in her hometown in order to do the university exams.



Figure 38: Val enters the pool to celebrate her daughter's approval at the university

By making Jessica also the mother of a child, the movie continues to explore the complexities of care work in the lives of characters marked by gender and class. In the scene in which she is in the car going to Jessica's house, she feels the sun on her face, with the window open, and smiles. The sky and the sun are in contrast to the confinement of the life she lived in the “other people’s” home. The film ends with Val's unexpected arrival at her daughter's house. She has taken along the gift she gave to Dona Bárbara at the beginning of the narrative, the tea set, confessing (laughing) to Jéssica that she stole it. She proudly puts the set on the table, saying it is modern and different, just like Jéssica. Right after, she asks her to fetch her son to stay with them. Jessica smiles at her for the first time in the movie, and also finally recognizes her as her mother, asking “Are you going to take care of him, mom?” (Figure 39). Therefore, the movie finishes with a somewhat happy ending, or at least with a touch of hope, which also embodies the social expectations about the country’s future at the time (Figure 40).



Figure 39-40: Jéssica and Val reunite in Jéssica’s new home

5.5. Conclusion

As *Um dia com Jerusa*, *Que horas ela volta?* depicts a universe that is disrupted by the arrival of a visitor. By not following the unspoken rules understood by everyone else, Jéssica unveils the oppressions suffered by her mother. At the same time, she embodies resistance and transformation: although Val does not realize this in the beginning, the two of them become allies. We may think that Val and Jéssica practice a sort of *sympoesis*, as they begin to compose new ways of relating, of positioning themselves in the world. As in *Um dia com Jerusa*, the movie depicts an encounter that changes its protagonists’ lives.

The film also investigates how various identification markers are established and the way they intertwine: the space itself (the areas of the house in which Val lives and where she works), clothes (her uniform or the souvenir t-shirts she wears), objects (Val's gift), the knowledge of

a different language (at one point Dona Bárbara talks to Doutor Carlos in English so that Val cannot understand), food (the juice Dona Bárbara has for breakfast, Fabinho's ice-cream) and the access to places (the pool, the university). In this way, the movie addresses identification markers by staging everyday situations and exploring their social and political dimension. As mentioned before, the film does not directly address the racial dimension associated with the issues it approaches. This limits the intersectional analysis of the theme it could otherwise offer. Nevertheless, it stages how inequalities operate in Brazil in a most accurate way, in addition of imagining the possibility of change.

Que horas ela volta? pictures alternative ways of *living together* that could arise when one of the parties - in this case Jessica - does not accept the place assigned to them. In a broader context, concerning the concepts discussed in the third chapter, we can say that the film addresses possible forms of *response-ability* and resistance, as well as clearly denouncing mechanisms of oppression that everyday practices seek to hide.

6. *The dead and the others*

In this chapter, we leave the megalopolis of São Paulo to go to the countryside of Brazil. More specifically, to the village of Pedra Branca, where a group of the indigenous people Krahô or Mêhĩ live¹⁶⁰. It is there that the movie *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* (“The dead and the others”, Renée Nader Messoria and João Salaviza, Brazil/Portugal, 2018) is set. The movie depicts the path of the teenager Ihjãc, the process of him becoming a shaman. In doing so, it presents a bit of the cosmology and culture of the Krahô, while at the same time staging some problems that come up in the contact between them and “white” people. In this analysis, I would like to explore how the movie enacts political tensions in different ways. First, I will analyze the sequences of the movie in which the protagonist, Ihjãc, leaves his village and has contact with white people in the city, focusing on the political dimensions of these scenes. This segment of the film portrays tensions between indigenous groups and the Brazilian state.

6.1. Different *worldings* in one country

Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos has a slow pace, with fixed, long shots. There is no non-exegetical musical track; rather, numerous dialogue-free scenes are present. Many of these scenes underscore the lushness of the forest, emphasizing its vitality and the inherent life it possesses. When there are dialogues, they are mostly spoken in the Krahô language. This is rather rare in Brazilian cinematography and can be seen as an example of how cinema can address the diversity of the country. It is currently estimated that more than 150 indigenous idioms are spoken in Brazil - the numbers vary according to the source, coming to 180 or even 274¹⁶¹. As those languages are almost never spoken, neither in commercial nor in art house feature films, *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* is indeed outstanding.

¹⁶⁰ The name “Krahô” is often used to refer to the group, but is not used by the indigenous group itself, who define themselves as “Mêhĩ” or “Mehim”. For this reason, I will alternate between the use of these terms in this text. Sf. Julio Cezar Melatti, “Povo: Krahô”, *Instituto Socioambiental. Povos Indígenas no Brasil*, 20.01.2021, <https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/Povo:Krahô>, 23. 09. 2023.

¹⁶¹ Although this may sound like a large number, it is small if one takes into account that between 600 and more than 1000 languages were spoken in the territory when the Portuguese arrived. Sf. Monica Cardoso, “Plataforma do letramento: O Brasil e suas muitas línguas”, *Instituto de Investigação e Desenvolvimento em Política Linguística*, 13/10/2016, <http://ipol.org.br/tag/linguas-do-brasil/>, 22.07.2023; Caio Santana, “Um Brasil de 154 línguas”, *Jornal da USP*, 10.01.2020, <https://jornal.usp.br/cultura/um-brasil-de-154-linguas/>, 23. 09. 2023.

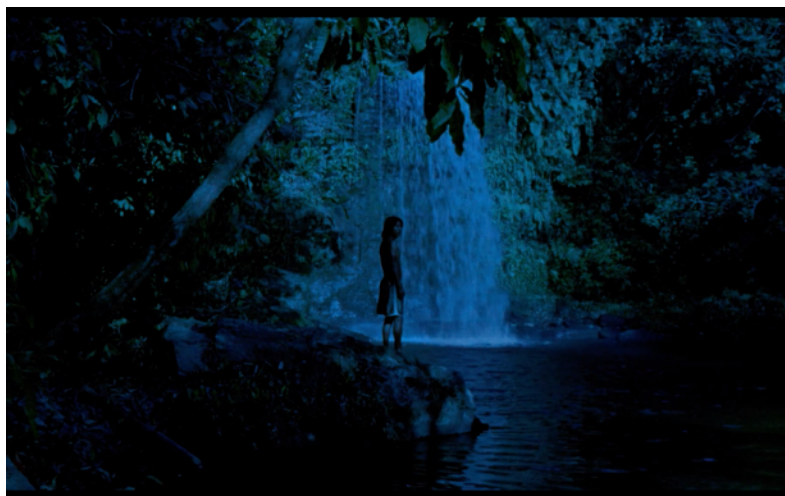


Figure 41: Ihjãc comes to a waterfall in the middle of the night and talks with his dead father

The movie starts with the vibrant sounds of the woods. The loud noises accentuate the fact that the forest is not an inert object, but that it ‘breathes’. Then the frame shows young Ihjãc walking in the bush at night. He comes to a waterfall and calls for his father. His father’s voice answers, asking if he can see him (Figure 41). Ihjãc says no, and the father’s voice warns him that he is forgetting to do his funeral ceremony. Because of that, he cannot go to the village of the dead, and has been wandering out in the cold. He asks Ihjãc to do his duty, so that he can go home. Right after saying this, he invites Ihjãc to get in the water, saying he will catch a fish. Ihjãc declines it and throws a piece of wood in the water, which starts burning (Figure 42). Anthropologist Amanda Horta explains that the Krahô consider that when a living person misses someone who died, it is dangerous that they will also die to join the dead. Missing a dead person (to feel “saudade”, in Portuguese) makes a person’s body vulnerable and can make them become sick. Therefore, the mourning for the dead needs to have an end, which is done with a funeral ceremony. After that, the living should forget the dead, that is, should stop crying and missing them¹⁶².

¹⁶² Sf. Amanda Horta, “Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos. Diretores René Nader Messor e João Salaviza. Produção Brasil, Portugal. 2018. 113 min. cor.”, *Anuário Antropológico* v.46 n.1 | -1, 2021, 322-326.



Figure 42: The piece of wood Ihjãc throws in the water starts to burn

Afraid of what others could think about him or of what could be happening to him, Ihjãc does not tell anyone about this experience¹⁶³. At the same time, he tries to follow his father's advice and prepare the ceremony, counting on the help of his wife, with whom he has a baby, and other relatives. However, in the middle of the preparations he feels weak. One day, while he is working, a macaw flies over him, and due to this he falls ill (Figures 43 and 44). His family take him to a *Wajakà* (a shaman, in Mẽhĩ terms), who explains this is happening because he is becoming a shaman himself, and that the macaw is his master. Ihjãc tells him that the macaw has been visiting him, but that he does not wish to become a shaman. But the *Wajakà* answers that the macaw wants him, and will not leave him alone anymore. Scared, Ihjãc tries to escape this transformation and leaves the village, in the hope that the macaw will forget him with time. He goes to a city nearby, and searches for help in a medical center.



Figures 43-44: A macaw flies over Ihjãc; he becomes sick

¹⁶³ According to Creuza Prumkwyj Krahô, there are two kinds of shamans among the Krahô, the good and bad ones, and people are afraid of the latter. This might be one of the reasons why Ihjãc is afraid of telling the others about his encounter with his father. Sf. Creuza Prumkwyj Krahô, "Mulheres-cabaças", *PISEAGRAMA* 11, November 2017, p. 110-117.

One way to analyze how the political tensions that emerge in *living together* are depicted in the movie is focusing on this part of the narrative, in which Ihjãc goes to the “white people’s” city. The scenes of this sequence address different kinds of conflicts existing between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Brazil, in indirect and direct ways. For example, in the first scene after leaving his village, Ihjãc gets a ride and, while the car enters the city, a commercial is heard on the car’s radio. The advertisement announces a religious event, a many days’ festival of gospel music. The spot indirectly evokes the growing presence of evangelic groups in Brazil, also among indigenous peoples¹⁶⁴. It also points to the historically tense relationship between religious missionaries and indigenous cultures. Across the centuries, many diseases were spread among the indigenous population by missionaries, not only causing numerous deaths but also the extinction of entire groups. Moreover, whole cultures have been repressed or destroyed due to the missionaries’ activities¹⁶⁵.

In the city, Ihjãc goes to a medical center, where cultural challenges begin to present themselves more directly. The nurse attending him asks for documents (his identity card and a card for accessing the public health service) which he does not have. The dialogue emphasizes how cultural differences are present in things so small as a person’s name: when she asks him his “white name”, he says it is “Henrique, Henrique Ihjãc Krahô”. It is the first and only scene in the film in which he uses this name. As mentioned, the group does not refer to themselves as “Krahô”, but as “Mêhĩ”¹⁶⁶. The nurse then asks for his parents’ name, but fails to write them. Although these are small details, this type of difficulty in translation represents real obstacles faced by the indigenous population in assessing services of the state. The scene ends with the employee needing to call someone more specialized who can help her make his registration. Yet the real problem is not the translation between languages, but in the gap between cultures. Finally, Ihjãc is taken care of, and after that he is driven to a “casa de apoio

¹⁶⁴ About this theme, see for example Rone Carvalho, “O que explica multiplicação de templos evangélicos no Brasil”, *BBB Brasil*, 12.07.2023, <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/articles/crgl7x0e0lmo>, 23. 09. 2023; or Júlia Barbon e Ian Cheibub, “Evangelização de índios por índios se alastra e provoca críticas de entidades”, *Folha de São Paulo*, 05.01.2019, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2019/01/evangelizacao-de-indios-por-indios-se-alastra-e-provoca-criticas-de-entidades.shtml>, 23. 09. 2023.

¹⁶⁵ For a moving account on the destructive effects of missionary activity in a Yanomami village, see Davi Kopenawa's testimony in Davi Kopenawa/ Bruce Albert, *The falling sky : words of a Yanomami shaman*, United States: Harvard University Press, 2013.

¹⁶⁶ However, in the contact with the non-indigenous, they commonly call themselves Krahô as a last name, as Ihjãc does in this scene.

à saúde indígena (CASAI)” - literally a “support house to indigenous health”, a type of indigenous health center where indigenous people and their relatives can stay while receiving medical treatment in the city. However, during the ride the driver lets him know that in the hospital he was regarded as a mere hypochondriac. These scenes depict how a health system informed only by western medical knowledge is not capable of offering care to indigenous groups. As the directors emphasized in an interview, “the notions of person, body or illness for an indigenous person are very different from those that operate among us”¹⁶⁷.



Figures 45-46: an oxen and horses parade in the city where Ihjãc stays

Moreover, while Ihjãc is in the car on the way to the “casa de apoio”, another subtle reference to a threat to indigenous peoples is made. This time the car passes a parade in which men and women with cowboy hats show off their horses and oxen (Figures 45 and 46). Landowners have been historically in dispute with the indigenous for territories, and many massacres of indigenous groups have happened, including one against the Krahô in the 1940s¹⁶⁸. In the last two decades, landowners have achieved growing political power in parliament, pressuring for the approval of laws that weaken indigenous rights. Anthropologist Manuela Carneiro da Cunha summarizes the situation:

“Over the past several legislative sessions, the House of Deputies and the Senate have been dominated by a number of representatives and senators who—regardless of their political party affiliation—vote as a bloc on certain legislative proposals. These elected officials make

¹⁶⁷ [Trans. M. C. L.] Júlio Henriques/Joëlle Ghazarian. “Um cinema mediador de mundos. Entrevista com João Salaviza e Renée Nader Messora”, *Flauta de Luz* 8, 2021, 82-93, here p. 87.

¹⁶⁸ The trauma of this massacre is still alive in the collective memory of the Krahô, and is one of the themes addressed in the directors’ new movie with the Krahô, *A flor do Buriti* (D.: Renée Nader Messora e João Salaviza, Brazil/Portugal, 2023), which premiered at the Cannes Festival in 2023 in the section “Un Certain Regard”. The movie was awarded with the “Prix D’ensemble” for its film crew.

up what is called the “ruralista front.” They express the interests of the great landowners, involved principally in extensive cattle ranching and large-scale farming of soy, corn, and sugarcane, who are the public face for the totality of Brazilian agribusiness, which also includes huge corporations such as Cargill, Bunge, Syngenta, and others. (...) Their platform includes the end of new demarcations of indigenous land, the abolition of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), a reduction in the size of areas set aside for environmental conservation, and the loosening of environmental regulations.”¹⁶⁹

For many, the political articulation which has become informally known as the “BBB -Boi, Bala e Bíblia” front, which could be translated as the “BBB- Beef, Bible and Bullet”¹⁷⁰ front constitutes the main menace for indigenous populations in Brazil. The movie indirectly addresses it with the two scenes mentioned above, both of which happen while Ihjãc is in the car, crossing the city. They suggest the power and the omnipresence of these groups in urban areas, and therefore the hostility indigenous populations face. However, the story does not dig deeper into these problems, addressing them directly only in these two brief scenes. The main issue addressed in the contact with the non-indigenous is, as mentioned, the inefficiency of the public health system. Another scene highlighting this, for example, happens in the Pedra Branca village, when Ihjãc and his relatives are working together on his father’s piece of land. At one point, the men go hunting and rest in the ruins of a building. Ihjãc's grandfather tells them that the place used to be a health center, where Krahô from several nearby villages went to receive medical care. He does not explain what has happened, but we can see that today only ruins of the centre remain, symbolizing the neglect of the state (Figures 47 and 48).



Figures 47-48: Ihjãc’s grandfather in the ruins of an indigenous health center

¹⁶⁹ Manuela Carneiro da Cunha et al, “Indigenous peoples boxed in by Brazil’s political crisis”, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7/2, Autumn 2017, 403-426, here p. 405.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 406.



Figures 49-50: Ihjã listens to music in his room and walks in the city

During his stay at the “casa the apoio”, Ihjã does some typical city activities: he watches football on tv, listens to the radio, walks around the city (Figures 49 and 50). Bored, he basically waits for the macaw to forget him, so he can feel safe and return home. However, after a while, he is required to leave the “casa de apoio”. The administrator tells him he has stayed there for too long and, since he has no medical condition, he needs to leave. Ihjã refuses to and tries to convince the woman of the seriousness of his problem. He tells her that she “neither understands the life of the Krahô nor their diseases”. Adamant, she replies that *he* does not understand white people, that she has too much work to do and he is just not their responsibility anymore. In a last attempt, he threatens her, saying that if he gets in the car and dies in the village it will be her responsibility, but it is all in vain. She says if he does not go back to the village with the driver he will be out on the streets, which in fact is what happens. Banned from the “casa de apoio”, Ihjã knocks on the door of a man who first refuses to let him in, but in the end accepts to have him staying with him. The movie does not make it clear who this person is, but it seems to be an anthropologist or someone connected to indigenous causes.



Figures 51-52: Kôtô and Tepto go back alone to their village; without having where to go, Ihjã sits on a bench in front of a market



Figures 53-54: Ihãc falls asleep on the bench; an indigenous walks around the city holding a torch

It is thanks to this man, and not to any institution or authority in fact responsible for indigenous populations, that Ihãc does not end up sleeping in the streets. In the following days, the man repeatedly calls the authorities, but nobody takes responsibility or advises him what to do. During this time, Ihãc's wife Kôto comes to the city with their child Tepto and tries to convince him to come back. However, in the night before their return, Ihãc cannot sleep, feeling the macaw still wants him - he tells Kôto his eyes burn and his heart keeps beating fast. On the day of his return, he refuses to enter the car in the last minute, and Kôto and the child go back to the village alone (Figure 51). Without having where to go, he ends up on a bench in front of a market (Figure 52). There, he falls asleep and has a dream or a spiritual experience. In it, an indigenous man holds a torch and walks around the deserted city at night (Figure 53-54). As Amanda Horta points out, the man might be Ihãc's father, but it is impossible to know¹⁷¹. Then, a flicker of a fire illuminates Ihãc's sleeping face, and when he wakes up, he returns home walking, alongside a dirt road, lorries passing him, and a giant full moon rising in the background.

In the village, he finally organizes his father's funeral celebration (Figures 55 and 56). Many relatives come to mourn his father and to be able to forget him after that. During this process, Ihãc comes to terms with his shamanic transformation, which allows him to get in touch with entities from different worlds.

¹⁷¹ Horta, "Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos. Diretores Reneé Nader Messoria e João Salaviza. Produção Brasil, Portugal. 2018. 113 min. cor.", here p. 324.



Figures 55-56: Ihjãc prepares his father's funeral ritual with his mother; the ritual takes place

Therefore, the movie highlights political dimensions of *living together* addressing how difficult it can be for indigenous people to assess their rights in Brazil, specifically in obtaining proper health care. The scenes show how precarious the support indigenous people find is. Often, they do not have their rights recognized. Yet there are other ways in which the movie deals with *living together*, which will be analyzed next.

6.2. Blurring the borders between documentary and fiction

Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos was shown in festivals as a fiction film. However, the movie blurs the boundaries between fiction and documentary. The directors have defined it as belonging neither to one genre nor to the other, stating that it “explodes the line that traditionally separates these two dimensions”¹⁷². The film's main plot is played by Mẽhĩ non-professional actors, and it was inspired by real facts. The movie is based on an episode which happened two years before with Wôôcô, a Mẽhĩ friend of the directors. Also a teenager, he suffered a shamanic spell and became sick. Trying to protect himself, he left the village and went to the city, also accompanied by his wife and their new born son, staying there for one year. During this period, the film directors accompanied him in hospitals, trying to help him communicate his experience to the health professionals. But they - not possessing the indigenous knowledge which was necessary for his case - could not discover or understand what he had. According to Renée Nader Messoria and João Salaviza, this story sparked them to want to do a feature film with the Krahô.

¹⁷² [Trans. M. C. L.] Henriques/Ghazarian, “Um cinema mediador de mundos. Entrevista com João Salaviza e Renée Nader Messoria”, p. 89.

The definition of the documentary genre is in itself shrouded in a series of conceptual debates. Bill Nichols, in *Introduction to Documentary*, states that the difficulty of conceptualizing the genre comes, on the one hand, from the constant changes and innovations that force the term to be redefined, and on the other hand, from the fact that no definition encompasses all the films that can be considered documentaries: “Documentaries adopt no fixed inventory of techniques, address no one set of issues, display no single set of forms or styles”, he points out¹⁷³. For this reason, he states that the definition of the documentary is “always relational or comparative”¹⁷⁴, defined by its differences to other types of films (fictional, experimental, avantgarde¹⁷⁵). He points out that documentaries are obviously not mere reproductions of reality, but “a *representation* of the world we already occupy”¹⁷⁶. One of the ways he suggests to conceptualize documentaries is the fact that they refer to the historical world in which we live, rather than to an invented world: “Because documentaries address *the* world in which we live rather than *a* world imagined by the filmmaker, they differ from the various genres of fiction (science fiction, horror, adventure, melodrama, and so on) in significant ways”¹⁷⁷.

However, this definition already leads us to a problem which emerges when movies work with indigenous societies: what happens when the worlds - the *worldings* - are different? Different indigenous peoples have different ways of elaborating what the world is, and of experiencing it. The worldview of the Krahô, for example, cannot be completely apprehended through a western lens. *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* deals with an experience - the transformation into a shaman - not entirely translatable into western terms. Therefore, a representation of the “world in which we live” for a Krahô person could be understood by a western audience as a representation of an imagined world. The opening scene is exemplary of how the boundaries between the documentary and fiction genres are challenged by the film. It is filmed with the technique of “day for night”, in which a shot filmed during the day is

¹⁷³ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, here p. 21.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, here p. 20.

¹⁷⁵ See chapter two, “How Do Documentaries Differ from Other Types of Film?”. Nichols lists different ways how one could identify a documentary: their institutional framework (i.e. the institutions that produce and/or disseminate the documentary), the public who watch documentaries, the documentarists who make the films and the films and videos themselves. Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 20-41.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, here p. 20.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, here p. XI.

made to look like it was filmed at nighttime (see Figures 41 and 42). The transparent edition also brings the movie closer to the fictional register, and when Ihjãc stops at a rock in front of a waterfall it is, in view of the directors, almost as if he was in “an amphitheater”¹⁷⁸. The scene is clearly staged. About the meanings of this opening, they say:

“This sequence is not an interruption of any normality, because the *mecarõ* exist in everyday life, on a continuous plane where crossovers and overlaps take place, encounters between the living and the dead; or between the living and the dead who have not yet realized that they are dead.”¹⁷⁹

Therefore, the scene does not depict a dream, but a real experience, because such an encounter is possible for a Mẽhĩ shaman. Films like these, which try to represent indigenous worlds, have multiplied in Brazil in the last decades. Within this context, probably the most notable and successful experience is the project *Video nas Aldeias*. It began in 1986, with an initiative by anthropologist Vincent Carelli, who filmed the Nambiquara indigenous people and showed them the footage he had shot. This provoked a collective movement that led to the expansion of the project to include audiovisual training workshops for various indigenous groups, with the distribution of filming and exhibition equipment among several of them. According to the project's website, “each people incorporated the video in a particular way”¹⁸⁰, and a distribution network from the videos produced by the indigenous in the project was created, stimulating exchanges and approximation of different groups. *Videos nas Aldeias* has produced more than 70 films, many of which were awarded prizes both in Brazil and abroad, and the project has become a reference in the indigenous struggle for rights and strengthening of their cultural identities¹⁸¹. In addition to the project, we can also mention the documentary *A última floresta* (*The last forest*, D.: Luiz Bolognesi, Brazil, 2021), which deals with the struggle of the Yanomami indigenous group. The film includes a dramatization of a Yanomami myth. In this case, however, the boundaries between documentary and dramatization are more clearly defined, and the two registers do not collide, in contrast to what happens in *Chuva é Cantoria na aldeia dos mortos*.

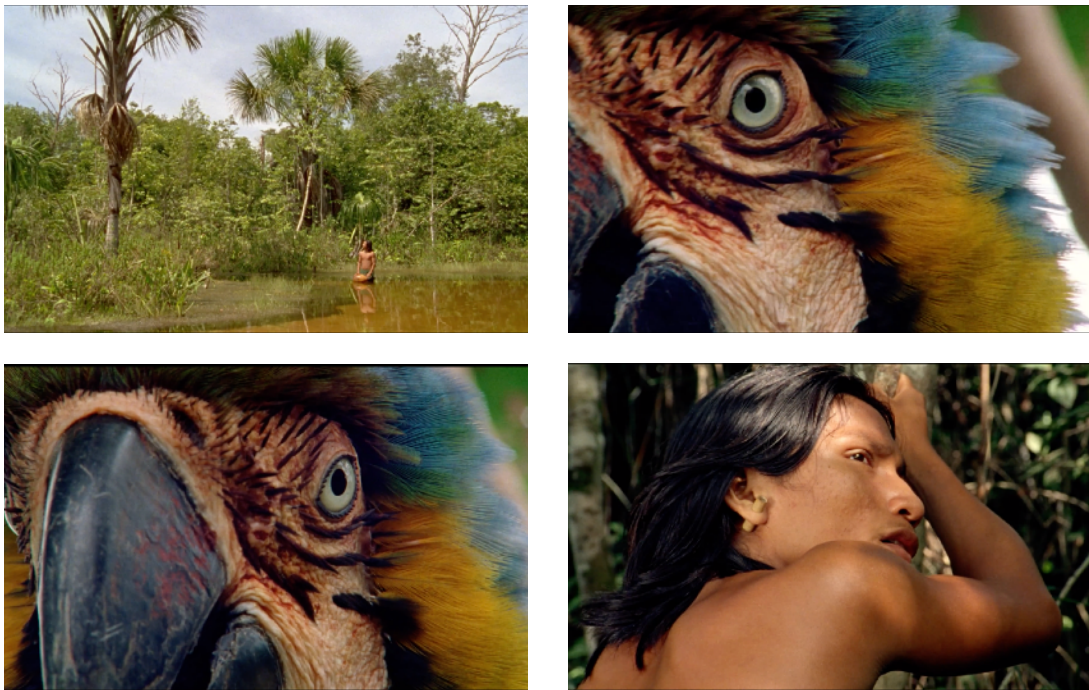
¹⁷⁸ [Trans. M. C. L.] Henriques/Ghazarian, “Um cinema mediador de mundos. Entrevista com João Salaviza e Renée Nader Messoria”, p. 88.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ [Trans. M. C. L.] Video nas Aldeias, “Vídeo nas Aldeias. Apresentação”, *Video nas Aldeias*, <http://www.videonasaldeias.org.br/2009/vna.php?p=1>, 23. 09. 2023.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Chuva é Cantoria na aldeia dos mortos also addresses political dimensions of *living together* in trying to depict a Krahô *worldling*. One example of how the directors try to do this is the staging of the relationship between Ihjãc and the macaw. The scenes denaturalize the way animals are usually represented in the cinema, in an attempt to give the macaw the agency it has in the Mẽhĩ worldview. Even before the macaw appears, we hear the sounds of its cries and the movement of its wings. Emphasized like that, these sounds take on a threatening aspect. Under the bright sun, Ihjãc looks up, tense, as if feeling watched, and searches for the macaw. Suddenly, he sees it flying above him in the reflection of the stream (Figure 43 and Figure 57). Little by little, he becomes weaker, but he continues working with his relatives. A few scenes later, the macaw flies over him again. Once more, it announces itself with cries and the rustle of its wings. Then, close-ups show the macaw's gaze, emphasizing its power. At the end, Ihjãc falls to the ground, sick (Figures 58 to 60).



Figures 57-60: Ihjãc becomes weak in the macaw's presence

As the directors explain, for the Krahô, an armadillo can be an armadillo on one level, and an ancestor on another¹⁸². It is this displacement that the film seeks to convey by focusing on an

¹⁸² [Trans. M. C. L.] Henriques/Ghazarian, "Um cinema mediador de mundos. Entrevista com João Salaviza e Renée Nader Messoria", p. 92.

experience as intimate and ungraspable to non-indigenous audiences as the transformation of an individual into a shaman. They explain: “Reality is much more than what is seen, and our experience of grasping this image must also be 'tamed' by the Mẽhĩ”¹⁸³. For non-indigenous audiences, the film brings up the strangeness of the contact with a different *worldling*, one that is not fully understandable or recognizable. By doing so, we might say that it proposes a decolonization of the gaze: western parameters of what is or is not reality (or what is the “historical world”, in Nichols’s aforementioned words) do not apply here. The movie intends to tell a story as close as possible to a Mẽhĩ point of view. Yet, considering the limitations imposed by the fact that the directors are not Mẽhĩs themselves, this translation might be understood as a reinvention.

6.3. A collective practice

Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos can be seen as the expression of a long process of collaboration. Renée Nader Messoria e João Salaviza have been in a partnership with the inhabitants of the village Pedra Branca for years. The filming of the movie took nine months. Yet according to the directors, most of the days the camera stayed tucked away, because they needed to adapt the shooting to the Krahô’s sense of time, which contradicts the logic of productivity that normally dictates a film production: “In nine months many things happen in a village, and the film was being influenced by reality, by the small daily rites, which end up becoming filmic material”¹⁸⁴. Due to their proximity to the Mẽhĩ, some moments of the film feel intimate and other scenes feel like recordings of everyday-life, like one in which women play football in the village. Therefore, we can better appreciate the film if we regard it not only as an independent object, but also as a part of a relationship. This is yet another way in which we can think about the political dimensions of *living together* in this movie. In Haraway’s terms, the film is the product of practices of *thinking* and *making together*, of encounters in which different people seek ways of resist and develop *response-ability* together. The directors are aware of this and advocate the importance of rethinking the politics of cinema: “When we talk about ‘political cinema’, we often deviate from a deeper reflection

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 87.

on the ‘politics of cinema’. How can a film be made? This question should always be present”¹⁸⁵, they say.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to analyze how *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* enacts the political dimensions of *living together* in different ways. First, in how the movie portrays the conflicts in the encounters between indigenous people and the Brazilian state. I tried to argue that the limitations that appear in these encounters are the crystallization of a deeper political difference, which is based on diverging world-views. This difference is related to the second way in which I believe the movie addresses *living together*. The film makes an effort to depict both the Mẽhĩ worldview and the Mẽhĩ ways of living, mixing scenes from everyday-life activities with encounters such as the ones Ihjãc has with the macaw or with his dead father. By presenting a cosmology different from the dominant one in the country, the film advocates a healthy coexistence between different Brazilian societies. For non-indigenous audiences, *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* allows a reflection on the richness of different ways of *worlding*. In the last section, I tried to highlight how the movie was generated by a productive *working together*. This means not only the movie itself can be analyzed in its political dimensions, but also the politics of its creation can be seen as actively engaging with the challenges and benefits of *living together*. Made collectively, the film seeks to approach the imaginative capacities of the Krahô people. This experience can indicate ways of *working together* and resisting the threats of a “single story”¹⁸⁶.

Moreover, we may think that the contact with different societies and their ways of *worlding* may be helpful when it comes to coping with the current environmental/sociopolitical crisis. As Susanne Lettow and Sabine Nessel point out in the introduction of the book *Ecologies of gender and the nonhuman turn*, “images and narratives are crucial points of disembarkation for developing new modes of thought and existence”¹⁸⁷. When it comes to the ability to

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ An expression used by novelist Chimamanda Adichie which refers to the importance of the existence of multiple stories about things, so that things are not reduced to a single version. See: “The danger of a single story”, Chimamanda Adichie, TEDGlobal 2009, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en, 23. 09. 2023.

¹⁸⁷ Susanne Lettow/Sabine Nessel(eds), “Introduction”, *Ecologies of gender : contemporary nature relations and the nonhuman turn*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2022, 1-12, here p. 1.

“envision non-extractivist and emancipatory multispecies correlations”¹⁸⁸, a lot could be learned with indigenous peoples. This seems to be also the opinion of the directors, who argue: “Kopenawa says that we, the whites, sleep a lot and only dream about ourselves, and that is exactly what happens. So it's time we understood that we have failed and started listening to what is being said”¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁹ [Trans. M. C. L.] Henriques/Ghazarian, “Um cinema mediador de mundos. Entrevista com João Salaviza e Renée Nader Messoria”, p. 85.

7. *Era o Hotel Cambridge* - an interesting experiment

In this chapter, we go back to the city of São Paulo with the movie *Era o Hotel Cambridge* (“The Cambridge Squatter” in English, D.: Eliane Caffé, 2016, Brazil)¹⁹⁰. The film tells the story of a squat in the center of the city, in which homeless Brazilian families and refugees fight for a place to live. The plot takes place during the days before the squatters will be evicted by the State. It focuses on the lives of the squatters during this time, their interactions, leisure activities, romances and fights, emphasizing the stories of refugees who live in the building. The squatter’s lives are overshadowed by the permanent menace of eviction - which, they all know, will involve police violence. At the heart of the narrative is the investigation both of collective action and of how the dwellers occupy the building, giving life to it whilst living their own lives.

Era o hotel Cambridge is similar to *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* in the sense that it plays with the limits between documentary and fiction. The movie was filmed in the actual squat of a formerly posh hotel in the center of São Paulo, the Hotel Cambridge. Most of the actors are not professional ones, but people who most of the time play themselves. During the preparation and shooting of the film, creative processes and collaborative ventures emerged. The people involved (refugees, squatters and film crew) approached the project collectively, and many of these relationships have continued beyond the screening of the film. Therefore, in this chapter I would like to discuss not only the movie itself, but also the process through which it was created. Both the narrative and the making of the film value the powers of collective resistance. The movie and the process of its making address political dimensions of *living together* in a very direct way, since a squat is a place where different people must come together to be able to resist outside pressures.

7.1. Living together between partial recuperation and demolition¹⁹¹...

¹⁹⁰ The literal translation of the Portuguese’s title would be something like “Once upon a time there was the Cambridge Hotel”.

¹⁹¹ I “borrowed” the title of the article “Era o Hotel Cambridge: entre a reforma e a demolição”, by Pedro Drummond, which could be translated as “Era o Hotel Cambridge: between renovation and demolition”, and altered by the term used by Haraway, which I found useful for this discussion.

Era o hotel Cambridge begins with a series of shots of buildings that look destroyed - unpainted, covered in graffiti, with broken windows or windows covered in cardboard. Those are “sister buildings” of the film's protagonist, a building that once housed the luxurious Cambridge Hotel. Victims of the same fate, abandonment, some have remained empty, as if awaiting demolition, while others are brought back to life by squatter movements. One frame focuses a red flag stretched across the façade of one of these buildings, with the letters FLM written in white paint. The acronym refers to the *Frente de Luta por Moradia* (*Front for the Struggle for Housing*), one of the several housing movements active in downtown São Paulo. It is to this group that the residents of the Cambridge Hotel belong. They are the ones who save our “protagonist” from demolition, by making it the stage for their struggle for housing. The camera approaches a red door, and as it zooms in, it is as if we were entering the bowels of the hotel's body. The shots show pipes and wires exposed in uneven walls with peeling paint (Figures 61-64). On the one hand, those structures keep the building standing and functioning, on the other, they reveal its vulnerability and constant threat of extinction. The soundtrack is hyper-realistic: sounds of liquids running through pipes or the sizzle of electrical wiring “denounce that there is a secret life that inhabits these spaces first presented as empty”¹⁹².



Figures 01-04: the first images of the hotel emphasize the building's vulnerable state

¹⁹² [Trans. M. C. L.] Pedro Drummond, “Era o Hotel Cambridge: entre a reforma e a demolição”, *Rebeca - Revista Brasileira de Estudos de Cinema e Audiovisual* 9/1, 2020, 207–227, here p. 209.

Those images are followed by shots of windows seen from the inside, and then two shots of the staircase, seen first from above and then from below. It is on the staircase that we come across, in the next scene, the Palestinian Hassan carrying a bed frame with his nephew Kalil, who has recently arrived from Palestine and does not speak a word of Portuguese. He is interrupted by a woman who tells him that he is “not in a camp in Jordan, and ‘here’ you have to have furniture, a house set up”, with whom he begins to argue. At the same time, the group is greeted by Mrs. Gilda, who walks around the building with Ghandu, a refugee from Congo, and is soon charmed by the newcomer's presence and “arrests” him to teach him Portuguese.

The staircase is the heart of the 15-story building, which has no elevator. On its steps the characters presented in the narrative come and go. Among them, some are more prominent, like those mentioned in the previous paragraph: Hassan, who comes from Palestine, runs a mini-market in the squat and welcomes his nephew Kalil in Brazil, insisting that he be accepted to live in the building. Gilda, a lively old lady with a somewhat magical past: she was the keeper of an elephant in a circus. Ghandu, a refugee from Congo who is trying to rebuild his life in the country, but still has conflicts to solve with his family in his homeland. In addition, there is Apolo, Gilda's nephew, who is busy with the various renovations works in the building and at the same time maintains an amateur theater group with squatters; Uta, an artist who makes a blog with videos about the daily life of the hotel to publicize the political agenda of the movement; and Carmen, the coordinator of the Cambridge Hotel, who organizes the structure needed for the squat to work. Other characters are also presented in the film, which creates a micro-universe in which the challenges and sometimes joys of living together are explored.

As mentioned, one of the ways the film does this is by focusing on everyday situations that take place in the microcosm of the hotel. In a scene about cultural differences, for example, Gilda and a Colombian immigrant invite the newcomer Kalil to dinner, but offer him a traditional Colombian dish with pork, not knowing that he cannot eat it. Miscommunications also occur between the couple formed by Uta and Ghandu. Interested in the latter, she tries an approach, but is scolded by him, who says that in his country one is not allowed to hold hands before being in a serious relationship - something he proposes later, by giving her a present,

also a tradition from his land. Other scenes focus on the quarrels that take place among the residents, especially between Brazilians and refugees, such as one in which a Brazilian resident complains that refugees are using the common computers all day long, instead of sharing them with the others. The animosity between some members and the refugees is most evident in a scene depicting a general assembly, at which the squatters receive the news that they will be evicted in two weeks' time. One member says that it is already difficult enough to look after the Brazilians, let alone to take care of the refugees. Mr Kazongo, another refugee from Congo, argues that they are responsibility of Brazil, which offers them refuge, but then does not give them any assistance (Figure 65). Hassan asks for the floor and argues that they are all refugees - the Brazilians involved in the movement are refugees of the Brazilian state, everyone of them is deprived of their rights (Figure 66).



Figure 65 and 66: Kazongo and Hassan defend their rights in a general assembly in the building

In scenes like this, the film depicts the social organization maintained by the squatters, and seeks to demystify the housing movement, which is often criminalized by Brazilian media. The common belief is that these squatters are criminals, because they are invading property that does not belong to them. To deconstruct this belief, the movie depicts scenes such as this general assembly, which shows how decisions regarding the life on the squat are collectively taken (attendance at these meetings is compulsory for all residents of the building). In this way, the film emphasizes the political organization that is maintained in the movement, highlighting how the active participation of its members is one of the principles of the FLM.

At the same time, by focusing on everyday situations with humour, like the aforementioned dinner or nights of drinking, it portrays them as not only activists, but also people living

“ordinary” lives. Cultural activities are also highlighted, such as a party with music by residents from different countries, “rodas de samba”, or Apolo’s amateur theater group, which mirrors the acting workshops which were held by the film team for the non-professional actors of the movie (Figures 67 and 68). We can also include Uta's videos about life in the squat, which also reflect the presence of the film crew in the building. *Era o Hotel Cambridge* also emphasizes the collective work required to keep the building standing. Scenes depict residents working on the (precarious) maintenance of the hotel's electrical and hydraulic systems, or in the communal kitchen. All these pieces make up the mosaic of a housing movement in the centre of a Global South metropolis.



Figures 67 and 68: Apolo directs Kazongo in his amateur theater group, dwellers play music during the night: cultural activities in the building’s life are highlighted in the film

Moreover, female leadership is emphasized in the movie. Women have a prominent role in Brazilian housing movements, being the majority of the members and coordinating many squats¹⁹³. This is also partly due to the fact that most single parent families are headed by women, and that they form a poorer part of the population in comparison to men. In one scene, Carmen explains how they should behave in front of the judge who will decide upon the building’s eviction: she tells the women should bring their children, in an attempt to touch the magistrate's heart. Moreover, they should take a lot of fruits with them, above all bergamots, to give to the kids, because those have a strong aroma that should help tiring out the person. The scene is an example of how they also deal with humor with the tragical conditions they are faced with. However, the dialogue is followed by close-ups on the worried

¹⁹³ See, for example, Giovanna Furlan Tozzi, “Mulheres e a luta por moradia: trajetórias de empoderamento e autonomia na experiência do MST-Leste 1”, *Arch Daily*, 16.12.2020, https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/952841/mulheres-e-a-luta-por-moradia-trajetorias-de-empoderamento-e-autonomia-na-experiencia-do-mst-leste-1?utm_medium=email&utm_source=ArchDaily%20Brasil&kth=2,040,383, 23. 09. 2023.

and tense faces of the same characters that were laughing before, balancing the narrative between humor and the seriousness of the situation it intends to expose.

The character of Carmen is a good example of women leadership in the squatting movement, both in reality and in the movie (Figure 69 and 70). In real life, her story resembles that of the fictional character Val, protagonist of the film *Que horas ela volta?*: coming from a state in the Northeast, she fled a situation of domestic violence, leaving her eight children behind and departing to São Paulo in search of better economic conditions. In the movie, we do not get to know her personal life, but her character is presented as the central leader of the building, the one who controls what goes on there and who makes sure that the collective maintains its order and follows the movement's rules.

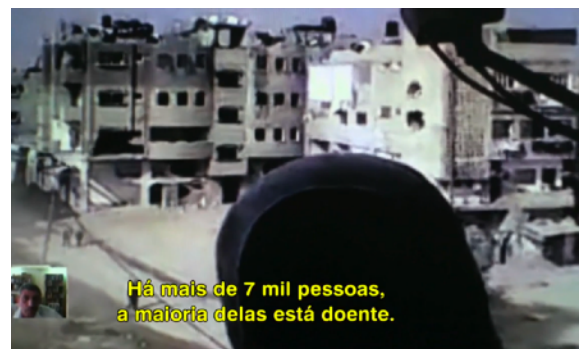


Figures 69-70: Carmen da Silva, leadership in the squat in the movie and in real life

Most scenes of the film take place inside the building, which appears as a micro-universe, a city within the city. Therefore, the movie enacts the tensions of living together by focusing on how the squatters keep the building working while the building also gives them the basic conditions to live and work. Haraway's idea of *partial recuperation* is very appropriate here, because the squatters do not fix the building completely, they recuperate it as much as they can in order to be able to live their own lives. We can think of Brazilian housing movements as working with partial recuperation. They save damaged buildings from demolition and give them the conditions to shelter families who are in need of a place to live. Moreover, they try to partially recuperate the lives of their members, staying with the trouble of fighting for their basic rights.

7.2....and between fiction and documentary

The movie's interplay between professional and non-professional actors is quite interesting, as Gilda and Apolo are played by two well-known Brazilian actors, Suely Franco and José Dumont. Part of the audience, upon recognizing these veteran actors, who have participated in numerous telenovelas, can quickly realize that they are not watching a documentary. However, this perception might be blurred by other traces of the narrative. First, as mentioned, it is set in a real squat, something rather uncommon for Brazilian fiction. Moreover, most characters of the movie, such as Hassan, Ghandu and Carmen play themselves to a large extent. In fact, as mentioned before, Carmen is the leader of the building. Hassan and Ghandu, on the other hand, are characters with more fictional traces. The former owns a grocery store in the building that does not exist in real life, and was set up by the film's art team. Both he (played by Isam Ahmad Issa) and Ghandu (played by Guylan Mukendi) did not live in the squat, and were found by the film's production crew. However, both are really refugees from the Palestine and Congo, and the life stories of the characters they play are based on their own. Moreover, different scenes in the narrative depict them making video calls with people in their home countries. Those were real calls with real friends or relatives recorded by the film team. They focus both on the dramas of those who stayed behind and on the difficulties of those who were forced to flee (Figure 70 and 71).



Figures 70-71: Real relatives and friends from the actors Guylan Mukendi and Isam Ahmad Issa appear in the movie in video calls

However, Caffé introduces yet other elements that play with the separation between documentary and fiction. When Ghandu's character sleeps, he dreams of "memories" of his life in Congo. These are images of cassiterite mines, with people working under inhuman conditions. A voice-over narrator explains how this activity is directly related to the civil war in the country, as well as to the production of the smartphones and computers consumed around the world. But these "memories" of his dream are actually footage taken from the documentary *Blood in the mobile* (Frank Piasecki Poulsen, 2010, Denmark). Similarly, the images presented in Hassam's reverie are taken from the documentary *A chave de casa* (*Home Key*, Stela Grisoti, Paschoal Samora, 2009, Brazil), in which he participated¹⁹⁴. As Pedro Drummond points out, "it is as if, by appropriating such images, Eliane Caffé also offered her own film as a space to be occupied by images she did not produce"¹⁹⁵. Not only that, but she offers her fiction to be occupied by documentary images, adding complex layers to the narrative.

Therefore, although the director has said that the film is clearly fiction, one may question this statement and affirm that the movie mixes and plays with boundaries between genres. Another argument for this questioning comes from the director's own testimony, when talking about the difficulty of editing the film. According to her, it took them a year and a half to finish it, and the main difficulty encountered by her and the editor was that life kept going on at Cambridge after the filming ended. She states: "Imagine the level of anxiety involved in trying to piece together a movie while seeing the characters of that very movie running amok in the real world and creating new situations that could improve, mature and enhance even further the original storyline"¹⁹⁶. These real-life developments led to one of the film's most moving scenes, in which Cambridge residents occupy a new building. The action took place three months after the crew had departed from the set. Eliane explains that they had no budget

¹⁹⁴ The film focuses on the last 48 hours in the life of a group of Palestinians in a refugee camp on the border between Iraq and Jordan before they leave for Brazil. After 9 months, it reunites five of them in different regions of Brazil and looks at the changes in their lives since then. See Isaura Daniel, "Exploring the Intimacy of Palestine Refugees in Brazil", *BRAZZIL*, 20.05.2009, <https://www.brazzil.com/10757-exploring-the-intimacy-of-palestine-refugees-in-brazil/>, 23. 09. 2023.

¹⁹⁵ [Trans. M. C. L.] Drummond, "Era o Hotel Cambridge: entre a reforma e a demolição", p. 216.

¹⁹⁶ Eliane Caffé, "Constructing the movie The Cambridge Squatter", *The Cambridge Squatter: Architecture, Cinema and Education*, ed. Carla Caffé, São Paulo: Sesc 2017, Kindle Edition. Unfortunately the English version of this book is only available in a Kindle Edition, which does not have numbered pages.

to stage such a scene. When it happened, they only had time to call some of the film's actors to participate, many of whom were already participating because they were still in the movement, and to mobilize a camera and a sound unit. The only intervention made by the film crew in the action was to ask Carmen to wear the same blouse she had worn in a shot of the film months before. This piece of clothing ensured the possibility of creating a dramatic unity in the montage (Figure 72 and 73).



Figures 72-73: two different shootings united in the edition. In the first, a staged meeting in the stairs shot during the filming. In the second, in the actual register of an occupation, Carmen helps a woman get out of the bus with to occupy a new building.

On the other hand, the final scenes of the movie, which show the violent eviction of the Cambridge Hotel, were made by groups of independent journalists (Jornalistas Livres, Mídia Ninja, Fora do Eixo etc) during the real eviction of another squat (after all, the Cambridge Hotel was never reinstated). The editor gathered the images and reorganized them with staged ones to make the scene look like the eviction of the Cambridge Hotel (Figures 74 to 77). Thus, documentary images were again used by the director to assemble the fictional universe of the film. Moreover, many images that show the everyday life of the dwellers, such as the aforementioned “roda de samba” or talks on the stairs, were behind-the-scenes recordings captured by documentary filmmaker Sandro Kakabaze, which according to the director “migrated from a documentary archive to compose the spiritual world of the building and the fictional characters”¹⁹⁷.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*



Figures 74-75: registers from the eviction of another building were used to compose the fictional story



Figures 76-77: scenes from the eviction were also staged and combined in the editing with the journalistic registers

This play between fiction and documentary is perceived by the viewer, who often feels disoriented when trying to distinguish between one and the other while watching the movie. We could say, together with Pedro Drummond, that the film “does not seek to refuse or overcome the stalemate situation between the fictional and the documentary, but rather to inhabit this conflict”¹⁹⁸. Or we could think, with Consuelo Lins and Caio Bortolotti Batista, that in this movie the documentary occupies the fiction¹⁹⁹. Far from proposing a definitive interpretation of the dispute raised by the film, it is interesting here to highlight the negotiation between the two genres staged by it. This aspect can be better understood through the story of the production of the film, which will be presented in the next section.

¹⁹⁸ [Trans. M. C. L.] Drummond, “Era o Hotel Cambridge: entre a reforma e a demolição”, p. 218.

¹⁹⁹ Consuelo Lins/Caio Bortolotti Batista, “Era o Hotel Cambridge. Quando o Documentário Ocupa a Ficção” *Contemporanea Comunicação e Cultura* 18-2, , mai-ago 2020, 6-24.

7.3. The story of the movie: interweaving art and reality

According to director Eliane Caffé, her original intention was to make a movie about a refugee living in Brazil. However, this idea was conceived before a major wave of refugees came to the country, after which she started to feel that focusing on just one character would be insufficient. Furthermore, she had another problem: she did not know where to set the story. A newspaper article about the violent dissolution of a squat in São Paulo gave her an insight which resolved those issues: “The connection was immediate: after all, what do most Brazilians obviously have in common with the majority of the refugee population? Lack of housing, lack of the right to a safe and stable residence to balance soul and family and endure the chaos of daily life”²⁰⁰, she reflects. In São Paulo, the housing shortage is particularly severe, and countless families without a roof over their heads join homeless movements. Some of them are looking for a way to live not too far from their workplace (commuting daily for six hours is a common reality in the city), others have no means to pay rent in any location. As Nabil Bonduki explains:

“Giving empty and underused buildings a social function has been a strategy employed by housing movements since the 1990s as an instrument of their struggle, which seeks simultaneously to denounce real estate speculation; guarantee well-located accommodation, however precarious and temporary, for homeless families; pressure the local administration to implement housing projects in these downtown buildings; and, more broadly, establish an urban and housing policy that provides for such.”²⁰¹

The decision to place the story in a squat got the project going. Caffé remembers: “The housing theme gave the narrative a territory, a specific geography within which its body and shape could develop. The context of an imaginary building soon emerged, a place where all types of refugees (foreign or Brazilian), stripped of their rights, could live together.”²⁰² After deciding about the “territory” for the story, the crew had to find a squatters' group that would agree to participate in the film. However, due to the often negative coverage of housing movements in the official media, these movements have a certain distrust of film and media projects. After visiting several squats and meetings of the squatter movement Frente de Luta

²⁰⁰ Eliane Caffé, “Constructing the movie *The Cambridge Squatter*”.

²⁰¹ Nabil Bonduki, “Towards a New Model of Urban Development: From the Struggle for Housing in Downtown Areas to Advances in the Master Plan”, *The Cambridge Squatter: Architecture, Cinema and Education*, ed. Carla Caffé, São Paulo: Sesc 2017, Kindle Edition. Unfortunately the English version of this book is only available in a Kindle Edition, which does not have numbered pages.

²⁰² Eliane Caffé, “Constructing the movie *The Cambridge Squatter*”.

por Moradia (FLM - Housing Struggle Front), the film team finally began working with the activist Carmen da Silva, the coordinator of the Hotel Cambridge squat, who was very open to the project and would later become one of the film's protagonists.

Before starting to shoot, the crew tried to get familiar with the housing movement. In fact, they spent three years accompanying the movement before the filming began. This gave them an intimacy with the dwellers and the hotel space that can be felt in the movie. Concerning this process, the squat coordinator Carmen da Silva comments that it was not their first movie, but in the other films they had felt like “a live set, *their* real set, but we were not protagonists”. “We saw ourselves as mere extras”²⁰³, she explains. In contrast to this, the *Era o Hotel Cambridge* film team worked *with* the dwellers: “In our meetings with the producer and the film-maker Eliane Caffé and the rest of the crew, we first exchanged ideas in workshops. They didn't just come here and start shooting. We were not a mere movie set this time. It was an actual exchange of experiences”²⁰⁴, she says.

Therefore, the film was *created with* the squatters. After participating in their meetings and getting to know their routine and way of working, the film team started to think of ways how they could share the movement's principles. They decided they also wanted to offer a contribution to the squatters, apart from the film itself. Hence, the crew had to decide how they could make *themselves* useful to the movement and to life in the Hotel Cambridge²⁰⁵. For this purpose, a collaboration was sought with Escola da Cidade, a school of architecture. Students were selected to work with the art department of the movie, guided by the film's art director and professor of the school, Carla Caffé. The art team worked on the boundary between architecture and cinema, trying to offer improvements, especially in the common areas of the building. At the same time, they were working with a scenography budget, not with an architectural project's budget, and their main objective was still to serve the intentions

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Carmen Da Silva Ferreira, “Interview: Carmen da Silva Ferreira, Leader of Frente de Luta por Moradia (FLM-Housing Struggle Front)”, *The Cambridge Squatter: Architecture, Cinema and Education*, ed. Carla Caffé, São Paulo: Sesc 2017, Kindle Edition. Unfortunately the English version of this book is only available in a Kindle Edition, which does not have numbered pages.

²⁰⁵ It might be worth emphasizing this way of working, which proposes that instead of coming with an external project to a community, the filmmaker (or researcher, or educator, etc) should first approach the community. Only after this, should they develop *with* them a project, which should be understood as important by all the actors involved. This is a typical way of working of Brazilian popular movements. Those have been inspired, among others, by the work of authors such as Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal.

of the film's art. Thus, their goal was to work together to ensure that not only changes concerning the film would be done, but also modifications that would continue after the film was finished. However, it would not make sense for them to think of the architecture in a traditional way, since a squat is a provisional space which is in constant change. For this reason, the team worked with the notion of “ephemeral architecture”, that is, an architecture that does not intend to be permanent²⁰⁶.

As a result of this collaborative work, the building got a new library, with computers which could be used by the dwellers. The sewing workshop of the movement also got a new room, and a second hand store was created. Moreover, a workshop with the activist group *Basurama* was offered. In it, the students learned to make furniture with recycled materials, such as armchairs made of old tyres. Those were spread around the building, including the lobby. Besides providing these original chairs, the art team created a space for the children, which was received with enthusiasm by the dwellers. Carla Caffê comments on how the partnership was good not only for the movement, but also for her students in the Escola da Cidade: “The students were able to have a first-hand understanding of what goes on in the internal spaces of a squat, what a movement for housing rights is and how architecture skills can be applied to solve the housing issues that plague most contemporary cities.”²⁰⁷ In the end of the project, she organized the book *The Cambridge Squatter: Architecture, Cinema and Education*, in which a photo narrative explains the process step by step.

In addition to the work with the architecture school, video workshops were offered, which in the beginning were mainly attended by the squatters' children. The kids were the first to open the doors of the Hotel Cambridge to the film crew. They created “Cambridge TV”, “a home news and entertainment channel about everyday life in the squat”²⁰⁸. All of this led to an intensified relationship between the film crew and the squatters. The squatters had a sense of

²⁰⁶ Carla Caffê, “The movie and the school”, *The Cambridge Squatter: Architecture, Cinema and Education*, ed. Carla Caffê, São Paulo: Sesc 2017, Kindle Edition. Unfortunately the English version of this book is only available in a Kindle Edition, which does not have numbered pages.

²⁰⁷ Carla Caffê, “Introduction: How it all came about”, *The Cambridge Squatter: Architecture, Cinema and Education*, ed. Carla Caffê, São Paulo: Sesc 2017, Kindle Edition. Unfortunately the English version of this book is only available in a Kindle Edition, which does not have numbered pages.

²⁰⁸ Eliane Caffê, “Constructing the movie The Cambridge Squatter”.

participating that was in stark contrast to what they had experienced in previous shootings. With the team's constant presence in the building, private spaces opened up for the film.

However, although the setting had been settled on, the film team still had to find refugees who would agree to participate in the project, as there were none living in the Hotel Cambridge. The next step was investigate the situation of refugees in São Paulo. Officials claimed that refugees hardly ever stayed in occupied houses, yet after some research it turned out that exactly the opposite was the case. With the help of NGOs, contact was established between the Cambridge Hotel and refugees. The majority of these were from the Republic of Congo, Haiti, Palestine and Syria. Many of them did not know what squatting was but agreed to move into the hotel. The encounter initiated by the project ended up changing the lives of many of them, who have become politically active since then, as well as changing the housing movement itself. Regarding this process, the director states the following:

“After a few months, thanks to this bond, some refugees ended up officially joining the MSTC and formed the Grupo de Refugiados e Imigrantes Sem-Teto (GRIST – Homeless Refugees and Immigrants Group), which is still active today. Once again, the fictional plot mirrored reality remarkably – although the fiction was much more generous. One of the most moving aspects of this artistic alliance was the MSTC leadership opening up its membership to foreigners and learning how to unite people from such different cultures, customs and languages in the struggle. Thus, the meaning that was lacking to motivate the participation of actual refugees in the movie was being organically constructed between them and the Cambridge residents. We had never imagined that art could have such aggregating power in real conflict zones”.²⁰⁹

Nonetheless, during the contact with the FLM, the film team was so infected by the squat's universe that the problem of refugees lost its central position in the script. Gradually, they decided to give the same dramatic value to the refugee characters as to the Brazilians - which is also in line with the principles of equality and collectivity of the housing movement. Eliane Caffé states:

“Regardless of nationality, they all became protagonists and contributed equally to the plot. That was how the epic and polyphonic structure of the script emerged: within the same narrative focus, the various voices alternate without any of them assuming alone the leading thread of the story. If we had to choose a main protagonist for *The Cambridge Squatter*, that might be the building itself.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Therefore, the non professional actors co-determined the script to a large extent. The script was also rewritten several times - according to Eliane Caffé, there were at least 16 versions of it until they finished filming. The film's photography also reflects the collective aspect of the project, as images from different cameras of varying quality were left in their original state, “leaving evident the traces of the combined ‘gazes’”²¹¹. Despite its fictional elements, the film was praised for capturing the atmosphere of a squat and for focusing on unusual angles, such as everyday conversations, jam sessions, neighbors helping each other, and so on. In real life, all achievements, including the children's video workshop, the refugee political group, the library equipped with computers, a furniture depot, and various other facilities, were preserved. Although the movie still maintained a hierarchy and a role separation in its making, with the director being on the top of it, it opened itself to collaborative practices that profoundly altered the final result. All this collaborative work is visible in the movie. It points to possible ways of *living* and *working together*, showing how different participants of an heterogenous group can engage in common projects.

7.4. Conclusion

Era o Hotel Cambridge aimed at social change by presenting in a non-stereotypical way marginalized groups that generally do not receive positive media coverage. In this way, it fulfills the task of demystifying both the stereotypical figure of the refugee and of the housing movement. It shows to viewers unfamiliar with these issues that these are ordinary people, families, workers, kids, united by the fact that they have no place to live because they are denied basic rights. The film focuses on how the squatters live together, in a proximity that is intensified on the one hand by the precariousness of their living conditions, and on the other by the urgency of collective action. It draws its power from the collaboration involved in the process of its making.

As Consuelo Lins and Caio Bortolotti Batista notice, “if capital today finds highly favourable ecosystems for its reproduction in the megalopolises of the global South, it is also there that it

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

may encounter an unprecedented potential for activism and confrontation”²¹². Central to the project of the film is the idea that the collective creation of art can change reality. As Eliane states:

“Increasingly, I realize that zones of human conflict, whether in the countryside or the city, are often very fruitful places for art production. By ‘zone of conflict’ I mean any area or territory of manifest dispute between social classes or segments. These areas seem to convene and mobilize more intensely the cooperative spirit and, in most cases, welcome enthusiastically the idea of the cinema of resistance”²¹³.

As discussed, the narrative does not only address political dimensions of living together, but also the making of the movie tried to deal with these political aspects by focusing on processes that value collective action. The final result of the film was only possible through the collective work of all the professional and non-professional actors involved. Moreover, the film triggered improvement processes that have continued, transforming the lives of its participants.

²¹² Consuelo Lins/Caio Bortolotti Batista, “Era o Hotel Cambridge. Quando o Documentário Ocupa a Ficção” *Contemporanea Comunicação e Cultura* 18-2, , mai-ago 2020, 6-24, here p. 10.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

8. Conclusion: *Living together in an unequal world*

The films analyzed in this work are just a sample of the diverse production of women in Brazilian cinema today. They exemplify how female directors are currently translating Brazilian political agendas into audiovisual form. I have tried to show that the films translate these issues by portraying everyday interactions - issues of gender, class, ethnicity and race are addressed by means of concrete situations. Although the films differ considerably from one another, they share a look at the “ordinary”. Whether in a housing movement, a metropolis, an indigenous village, an indigenous health center, a posh house in a large capital or in a middle-class neighborhood in the same city, the observation of everyday life is at the heart of these stories. In all cases, they offer portraits of the country that break away from the predominant cinema mentioned in the second chapter, in which most of the directors, producers and screenwriters are white men - the same applying to the characters (and protagonists) on the screen.

I started out with a historical overview of female cinema in Brazil. The aim of this part was to condense dispersed information, since, as mentioned, there is still no contemporary publication on a comprehensive history of this topic. However, it was not the aim of this work to affirm the existence of a female gaze. Rather, the chapter two sought to highlight the difficulty women have encountered in getting ahead in audiovisual productions, and in receiving attention from critics and academia. Therefore, I also intended to contribute to research done in this field, both by analyzing the films themselves and by investigating the context and history of these productions.

The question that guided this work was how the selected films represent the political dimensions of *living together*. After having analyzed these movies, it is possible to identify some common strategies they employ. The first is the one just mentioned: all the narratives depict how both oppression and resistance manifest themselves in situations of seemingly minor importance. In the third chapter, I have tried to reflect on some contemporary discussions that seem to be in dialogue with this research question. Attention was given to Donna Haraway's ideas. Her emphasis on partiality, on the idea that things happen in a situated way (and that this concreteness matters and cannot be ignored in analyses) can be connected with the films' emphasis on everyday situations. These stories focus on details, in Haraway's words:

“(T)he details matter. The details link actual beings to actual response-abilities. Each time a story helps me remember what I thought I knew, or introduces me to new knowledge, a muscle critical for caring about flourishing gets some aerobic exercise. Such exercise enhances collective thinking and movement too. Each time I trace a tangle and add a few threads that first seemed whimsical but turned out to be essential to the fabric, I get a bit straighter that staying with the trouble of complex worlding is the name of the game of living and dying well together on terra.”²¹⁴

Therefore, despite their differences, the films are united in their concern with details and its relations to the collective. They explore ways of *living together*. They also have in common the attempt to understand the specific and combined ways in which oppressions operate. In the third chapter, I have also tried to discuss the concept of intersectionality and mentioned its connections with currents such as Brazilian black feminism, which do not always use the same terminology, but have similar concerns. I have tried to connect these concepts with the films. In particular, *Um dia Com Jerusa* and *Que horas ela volta* allow for intersectional analyses in my opinion. The creation of these movies itself was probably already influenced by intersectional feminism and Brazilian black feminism, since both of them deal with issues that are at the forefront of contemporary Brazilian feminist debates. Both films focus on revealing the differences that exist under the unifying category of “women”, exploring the multiple existences that this term often hides. Moreover, both movies explore how gender is experienced in relation to other social markers. *Um dia Com Jerusa* highlights its characters' race, gender, sexuality, class, religion and age. Jerusa and Silvia's experiences are told from a perspective that considers the whole spectrum, i.e. the specific ways in which the oppressions or challenges they face are constituted. The characters are not defined exclusively by they being women, or black, or queer, or lower middle class, but by the totality of these experiences. *Que horas ela volta*, on the other hand, focuses on the intersection between class and gender, which in turn generates a reflection on motherhood and care work.

By comparison, *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* has perhaps a less intersectional approach. However, we could say that the movie deals with the intersection between being indigenous on the one hand and depending on the Brazilian State on the other. This becomes obvious when Ihjãc seeks help in the city, where he is misunderstood and left alone.

The film *Era o hotel Cambridge*, on the other hand, contemplates the challenges of coexistence. The movie depicts how different individuals, with their histories and social positions, with their specificities, manage to *live together* and at the same time fight for a

²¹⁴ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, here p. 115.

collective ideal. The film explores how this happens in concrete, everyday life, focusing on how the intersections between the characters' identities interact and shape their relationships.

In this way, the films can be related to Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Birge's definition of intersectionality, quoted in chapter three. In their terms, the movies explore "how intersecting power relations influence social relations", as well as the characters' "individual experiences in everyday life"²¹⁵. The films also depict markers such as "race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity and age - among others - as interconnected and mutually shaping one another"²¹⁶.

Another idea presented in chapter three was the one of *sympoiesis*, a term that means *making with* and opposes the idea of *autopoiesis*. Most of the films analyzed focus on partnerships created between characters. I believe "*with*" applies very well to the movies analyzed here. They tell stories about *thinking with*, *acting with*, *living with*, *dying with*, *resisting with*. I have tried to show how *Um dia com Jerusa*, for example, could be seen as a film about a young woman (Silvia) discovering a collective dimension of her life when her path crosses that of a wise, older black woman. Thus, Silvia *becomes with* Jerusa. Part of this process is the recognition that they have a shared ancestry that connects them in the present, that is, a common ongoingness. On the other hand, the film can also be seen as a reflection on ways of *dying together*, since it deals with the violence of the Brazilian state toward its black population. In this sense, the testimony of director Viviane Ferreira is very moving:

"It's desperate how they're killing us, how they're threatening our possibility to age. Black youth are being prevented from growing old, and it seems that nobody is seeing, it seems that everything is fine. (...) So death, reflection on death or on ways of dying, is given a lot of space in the film. And it's not that we don't want to deal with this certain and human fact that is death in the life of every individual. But we want to be able to die without haste, you know? We want to die without haste, we want to be able to die in peace, in a quiet way."²¹⁷

Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos also deals with the theme of death. The Mẽhĩ have thoughts on this subject that are widely unknown to people outside their culture. The movie

²¹⁵ Sirma Bilge, Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016, p. 20.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ [Trans. M. C. L.] See Juliana Costa, "Transitar e pertencer: uma conversa sobre Um Dia com Jerusa", Cine Festivais, <https://cinefestivais.com.br/transitar-e-pertencer-uma-conversa-sobre-um-dia-com-jerusa/>, 23. 09. 2023.

does not didactically explain these rituals while it enacts them, but rather lets the spectator be affected by its (sometimes documentary, sometimes fictional) images and sounds. Apart from the different significances death and life have in Mêhĩ culture, the film allows for a reflection on how indigenous lives in Brazil are under constant threat of death, caught up in the middle of disputes over land and money. Therefore, Viviane Ferreira's words also resonate here. Summing up, both films allow us to reflect on ways of *dying* and *living together*, and on who is allowed to do so in a dignified way and who is not.

In my view, the films analysed also differ from the narrative model of the hero criticised by Haraway and Le Gun, because their stories are not about *one* individual hero. To quote Haraway, we could say that they "are not the tales of heroes; they are the tales of the ongoing"²¹⁸. In *Era o hotel Cambridge*, for example, the focus is clearly on the collective, although some characters stand out. However, more interesting than the individual characters themselves is the relationship established between them in the movie. The same applies to *Que horas ela volta?*. In this film, the focus of the story is on how the relationship between Val and Jessica empowers and transform both of their lives.

In *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos*, the narrative is marked by the Krahô understanding of the collective and of nature. Nevertheless, we can say that the film tells the story of a separation (a disconnection) caused by a new connection: Ihjã connects himself with another dimension that allows him to contact different entities. Therefore, his process of dissociation does not end in isolation, but on the contrary, it is a step towards a new life. *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* also has an important "other than human" character, the macaw. It is the only one among the movies analyzed that does not focus exclusively on human characters - the only one which thinks with other actors, other than humans ones, who also "keep the story going"²¹⁹. Therefore, although the films tell stories that differ from the lonely hero narrative criticized by Haraway and Le Guin, with the exception of *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* they are very "human centered". In this sense, they clearly distance themselves from Haraway, who criticizes a philosophy that postulates a deep separation between humans and the "rest of the world".

²¹⁸ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, here p. 76.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 40.

However, the films analyzed deal with complicated social realities, seeking ways of depicting those who *stay with the trouble*, without offering magical solutions. In most cases, they show possible ways of *living with* and how the characters can *render themselves capable* collectively. The movies definitely tell stories about *becoming-with* and *living together* (from a human centered perspective). Therefore, we can relate them to what Haraway says in her own stories about a *compost community*: “Living-with was the only possible way to live-well”²²⁰. They do not aim for happy endings, but they point to paths of partial recuperation. The focus is on possibilities for recovery and responsiveness. After analysing the films and the stories they tell, the question arises if *staying with the trouble* is just a matter of choice - for many, it seems to be rather a necessity, the only possible option. All in all, I would say they address the challenges - and sometimes the successes and failures - of *living together*.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 162.

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Abstract

Women's participation in cinema is still understudied in Brazil. They are a minority among producers, screenwriters and directors. Their films receive less attention from audiences and critics in comparison to the work of their male colleagues. This master thesis aims to contribute to the change of the current situation by analyzing four films directed by women in recent years. The movies are: *Um dia com Jerusa* (D.: Viviane Ferreira, Brazil, 2020), *Que horas ela volta?* (D.: Anna Muylaert, Brazil, 2015), *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* (D.: Renée Nader Messoria and João Salaviza, Brazil/Portugal, 2018) and *Era o hotel Cambridge* (D.: Eliane Caffé, Brazil, 2016). The focus of the analyses is on how the films stage tensions that arise in *living together*, through stressing political aspects of everyday life. In the first part, an overview on the history of Brazilian female cinema is offered, from the silent period to contemporaneity. My work includes reflections based on Donna Haraway's ideas, such as the concept of *sympoiesis* or of *staying with the trouble*. Moreover, concepts of intersectionality and Brazilian black feminism are looked into. In each analysis I contextualize current Brazilian issues addressed in the movies. The analyses show that the films are concerned with the political dimensions of *living together*. Their stories are tuned to intersectional approaches and portray episodes of resistance, disputes and partnerships in everyday life.

Zusammenfassung

Die Beteiligung von Frauen am Film ist in Brasilien immer noch wenig erforscht. Sie sind eine Minderheit unter den Produzenten, Drehbuchautoren und Regisseuren. Ihre Filme werden von Publikum und Kritikern weniger beachtet als die ihrer männlichen Kollegen. Diese Masterarbeit soll dazu beitragen, diese Situation zu ändern, indem sie vier Filme analysiert, die in den letzten Jahren von Frauen gedreht wurden. Die Filme sind: *Um dia com Jerusa* (D.: Viviane Ferreira, Brazil, 2020), *Que horas ela volta?* (D.: Anna Muylaert, Brazil, 2015), *Chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* (D.: Renée Nader Messoria and João Salaviza, Brazil/Portugal, 2018) und *Era o hotel Cambridge* (D.: Eliane Caffé, Brazil, 2016). Im Mittelpunkt der Analysen steht die Frage, wie die Filme Spannungen im Zusammenleben inszenieren, indem sie politische Aspekte des Alltagslebens betonen. Im zweiten Kapitel wird ein Überblick über die Geschichte des brasilianischen Frauenkinos gegeben, von der Stummfilmzeit bis hin zur Gegenwart. Meine Arbeit beinhaltet Überlegungen, die auf den Ideen von Donna Haraway basieren, wie das Konzept der *Sympoiesis* oder des “staying with the trouble”. Außerdem werden Konzepte der Intersektionalität und des brasilianischen schwarzen Feminismus untersucht. In jeder Analyse kontextualisiere ich aktuelle brasilianische Themen, die in den Filmen angesprochen werden. Die Analysen zeigen, dass sich die Filme mit den politischen Dimensionen des Zusammenlebens beschäftigen. Ihre Geschichten sind auf intersektionale Ansätze abgestimmt und schildern Episoden von Widerstand, Auseinandersetzungen und Partnerschaften im Alltag.