

FROM THE BANAL TO THE INDISPENSABLE: PORNOCHANCHADA AND CINEMA NOVO DURING THE BRAZILIAN DICTATORSHIP (1964-1985)

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EROTICISM VERSUS SOCIAL PROTEST: THE TWO FACES OF BRAZILIAN CINEMA UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP

Magnífica 70 (Cláudio Torres, Conspiração Filmes and HBO: 2015-) is the name given to the television series that has become Brazil's latest on-screen phenomenon. The series offers a portrayal of Brazil's film industry in the early 1970s, the so-called "Years of Lead" of the dictatorship that held power from the coup of 1964 until the election of Tancredo Neves as president in 1985. This production, with its meticulously crafted aesthetic, large doses of black humour and a contemporary filming style, is one of the more successful products currently being offered by the HBO Latino network.

Over the course of three episodes, *Magnífica 70* uses the world of 1970s São Paulo's Boca do Lixo neighbourhood, the cradle of Brazil's erotic cinema movement, which was one of the most

commercially popular film genres in the country during the dictatorship. Concealed beneath this supposedly frivolous reality is a script with constant references to repression, freedom and censorship. The program's protagonist is a stereotype of the Brazilian of the era; a man full of contradictions, married to the daughter of a general close to the regime, working at the Federal Censorship Office and obsessed with one of those actresses whose voluptuous physiques made them a perfect candidate for stardom in the sub-genre which in Brazil was graphically referred to as *pornochanchada*. Using the backdrop of a country superficially dedicated to commercial cinema, this production shows a whole social reality marked by state control of all creation, including the film industry.

Magnífica 70 is an entertaining product that is at the same time a merciless social critique of the regime in power at the time, but with a focus on the recreation of a world of unscrupulous produc-



Magnífica 70 (C. Torres, 2015)



ers with absolutely artistic (or, in theory, political) pretensions. The technical execution of the series is impeccable, and although the odd stereotype appears in the plot and character development, such defects are barely noticeable because of the fast-paced storyline and the constant succession of conflicts that arise.

Such meticulously crafted productions as this one are confirmation that Brazilian filmmaking is more relevant today than ever before. Reflecting the same fascination with Brazilian film production under the dictatorship, in 2011 the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid presented “*Cuando Brasil devoró el cine (1960-1970)*” [“When Brazil Devoured the Cinema (1960-1970)”], a review of the intense, revolutionary activity that took place in the Brazilian film world during the harshest years of the dictatorship, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and that tells us a lot about the interest that Brazilian cinema has aroused beyond its borders. These are films by directors as important as Hélio Oiticica, Neville d’Almeida, Raymundo Amado, Glauber Rocha, Eduardo Coutinho, and Rogerio Sganzerla, to name a few. They are audiovisual documents that are indispensable for understanding the cultural production related to the events in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s, and they portray the other side of the rebellion against censorship in the country that was also represented, in its own way,

by the purely erotic films of the *pornochanchada* and *Boca do Lixo*.

Today Brazil is experiencing a political moment that has little to do with the Years of Lead, when the most creative generation of Brazilian filmmakers of the twentieth century had to wrangle with the State and navigate the censorship restrictions to ensure their projects saw the light of day. However, the underlying social reality of many of the films made under the dictatorship has not changed all that much, including that persistent eroticism that appears to be an inherent feature of Brazilian society. There also continues to exist what could be called a “hunger for social justice”, proof of which is the work of a new generation of Brazilian directors. In 2014, the Spanish newspaper *El País* published an article titled “*El cine brasileño golea Nueva York*” (“Brazilian Cinema Scores a Goal in New York”). In this article, Marcela Goglio, director of *Latinbeat*, the Latin American film festival held at New York City’s Lincoln Center, suggested that Brazilian cinema “is an explosion because of both the production and the variety, ranging from highly experiment films to more conventional offerings, in every type of genre: there are erotic comedies, there are thrillers, there are personal portraits, there are a lot of documentaries; and they come from every corner of the country.” (CRESPO, 2014).

The above seems to suggest that we might be witnessing a new golden age of Brazilian cinema, an heir to *Cinema Novo* and/or to the erotic comedies of Boca do Lixo. There is also reason to speak of a new group or generation of filmmakers who are socially engaged or who approach eroticism and sex in terms similar to the approach of the Brazilian directors of the 1970s. All of this points to the fact that, although the influence of the filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s on current directors like Felipe Barbosa or Fernando Coimbra is undeniable, individualism and personal themes predominate in the films of today.

"I don't see myself as belonging to any group," explains Fernando Coimbra, "but I do have a lot of filmmaker friends who started with short films like me and now we've made our first feature-length films. We aren't an organised movement like *Cinema Novo* was in the 1960s, but we do belong to the same generation and we have things in common, like an interest in flirting with any genre, and not only addressing social issues, like poverty and violence, but also talking about love, relationships, the middle class" (CRESPO, 2014).

All these assertions, made mostly in the context of film festivals, should not deceive us; Brazilian cinema has been, and in a way still is, one of the great forgotten traditions on the international film scene, regardless of the quantity and quality of Brazilian films produced each year. When it comes to Brazilian cinema, productions like *City of God* (Cidade de Deus, Fernando Meirelles, 2002), *Central Station* (Central do Brasil, Walter Salles, 1998) and *Elite Squad* (Tropa de Elite, José Padilha, 2007) are some of the few titles known to the general public. These are films that have achieved wide recognition at festivals and that deal with issues like social protest, male chauvinism and sexual exploitation, issues that link them to the revolutionary and dissident directors who worked under the dictatorship and its system of censorship.

A study of the context and the historical reality in which the *pornochanchada* movement arose,

and an analysis, on the one hand, of the creative process of these films—script, filming, staging, editing—and, on the other, of the documents written about them by the censors with the Public Entertainment Censorship Service (DCDP, for its initials in Portuguese), points to the conclusion that concealed behind the eroticism and the sex there was also a furtive ideological revolution that not even the censors and the tools of repression could restrain. In their way, they succeeded in changing the social model, and began to liberate women from their role of erotic object to turn them into independent individuals capable of making their own decisions about pleasure and sexuality. However, the importance of erotic cinema in the creation of a collective consciousness that rejected the regime has been underestimated in comparison with social protest films.

Brazilian cinema during this period (1964–1985) thus went far beyond *Cinema Novo*, which was its most visible face, and which had the country's decline as its *leitmotif*: the hunger, the dictatorship, the massacres, the corruption. There was also a type of cinema under the dictatorship that was able to outwit the censors into tolerating most of the films produced in Boca do Lixo during the 1970s. Hiding behind the name *pornochanchada* were productions with erotic content and a coy sexual freedom, framed in genres like the police thriller or the horror film, which filled movie theatres and were a constant source of revenue for their producers.

CENSORSHIP OF PROTEST FILMS AND EROTIC FILMS: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1964, a dictatorship was established in Brazil and until 1985 all cultural activity in the country was marked by its presence. The cinema would be no exception, but when the coup d'état took place, the so-called *Cinema Novo* revolution had already begun and was unstoppable. Internationally, the prestige of Brazilian cinema had reached

unimaginable heights, and the new processes of film creation were as revolutionary and personal as the processes under way, for example, in France during those same years. In this context of repression, but also of intense creativity, the topic of sexuality was coming increasingly to the fore in Brazil, in both commercial and subversive productions. A version of erotic comedy emerged which until 1972 would give a much higher priority to humour than sexuality, which was barely more than suggested. This humour was based on everyday events experienced by actors and actresses known to general audiences through television, who engaged in puerile conversations filled with misunderstandings, and occasional erotic innuendo.

Some of these productions prior to 1972—directed, furthermore, by renowned filmmakers—had titles as suggestive as *Toda donzela tem um pai que é uma fera* [Every Damsel Has a Father Who Is a Beast] (Roberto Farias, 1966), *As cariocas* [The Girls from Rio] (Fernando de Barros, Roberto Santos and Walter Hugo Khouri, 1966) or *Adultério à brasileira* [Adultery Brazilian Style] (Pedro Carlos Rovai, 1969), among others. As Nuno Cesar Abreu (2006: 139) suggests, by bringing together sexuality and comedy, these films were able to maintain an effective dialogue with the audience and with a new generation of young people from all social classes, who listened to rock or pop music and belonged to anti-Establishment movements that rejected the dictatorship. Brazil's *porno-chanchada* movement could be compared to the “*destape*” films from the same period in Spain, which was also under a dictatorship, a genre consumed partly by a new generation for whom the comical approach to female nudity and sex offered an escape from the political repression.

At practically the same time that the *porno-chanchada* genre emerged, and coinciding with the rise of the dictatorship, alongside the mainstream films dealing with banal topics from which any political background or social struggle was ab-

sent, directors like Glauber Rocha, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Ruy Guerra and Carlos Diegues established the intellectual and cinematic foundations for *Cinema Novo*. When the new regime attempted to restrict the freedom of expression of these filmmakers, it was already too late. Although in Brazil freedom to express political opinions practically turned into an act of heroism and the political repression increased in the years that followed, forcing many of these artists into exile, Brazilian cinema had already triumphed at international festivals and had turned into an unstoppable phenomenon. It was an especially urban phenomenon, although not only centred in Rio and São Paulo, as there were also major creative centres in Minas Gerais, Brasília, Salvador and Recife. But there can be no doubt that the film library at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro and the Boca do Lixo neighbourhood in São Paulo were the focal points of activity that brought together the largest groups of filmmakers, intellectuals and screenwriters.

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This creative movement had two major currents: one marked by the genre of erotic comedy, produced mainly in Boca do Lixo, and the other characterised by originality, creativity and a sense of social struggle. This second current was irrevocably marked by the political situation in the country and by the Institutional Act No. 5 (AI



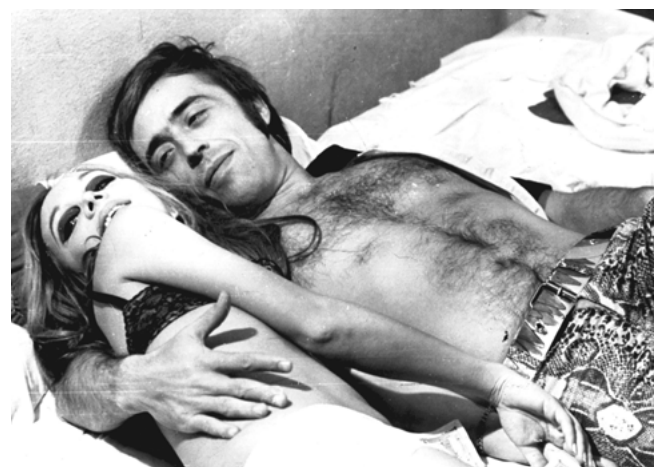
Up. Advertisement for *Adulterio à la brasileira* (P. C. Rovai, 1969)
Down. *Adulterio à la brasileira* (P. C. Rovai, 1969)

5) of 1968, known as the “coup within the coup”, which suspended constitutional guarantees: “The violent repressive apparatus was unleashed: disappearances, kidnappings, torture, exile and the activity of paramilitary groups under the authority of the Death Squads expanded the climate of terror, demoralisation and social breakdown that underlies many of the films. In this stifling atmosphere, with its ‘whoever is not with me is against me’ attitude, disseminated to the populace with the slogan *Brasil ame ou deije*, the identification of the artist or the filmmaker with the figure of the marginalised ‘other’, the rogue, outlaw or guerrilla was presented as an ethical imperative” (CARBALAS, 2011).

In many cases, and in spite of the existence of a law in Brazil that required part of the screen quota to be dedicated to Brazilian films, these

productions were kept out of circulation, either through the actions of the Public Entertainment Censorship Service (DCDP) or by an industry disinclined to distribute them. In the midst of this repressive atmosphere one exception occurred. *The Red Light Bandit* (*O Bandido da Luz Vermelha*, Rogério Sganzerla, 1968), an exponent of Brazil’s so-called marginal cinema, became a box office success in spite of its director’s profound political convictions against the dictatorship. If we compare this low-budget film, based on real events and belonging to the police genre, with some of the erotic comedy productions that were filling the theatres at the time, such as the aforementioned *Adulterio à brasileira* by Pedro Carlos Rovai, we will find some common ground between them, associated precisely with sex and eroticism. The presence of women as objects of male desire, subjugated to the man’s will and whose purpose is to satisfy him, either voluntarily or under duress, are constants in both films. In *The Red Light Bandit* this erotic connection is in most cases related to violence (non-consensual sex or the fascination that the criminal inspires in the woman, who allows herself to be seduced), while in *Adulterio à brasileira* sex is also something dangerous, but in this case associated with desire for the forbidden fruit, for other people’s partners; in short, with

The Red Light Bandit (R. Sganzerla, 1968)



that traditional context of adultery that has always been so intriguing to spectators.

The main difference between one and the other type of cinema from the perspective of censorship lies not so much in the treatment of eroticism as in the ideas put forward by their directors, which, with varying degrees of subtlety, they attempt to “hide” behind the presence of sex in their films. Almost all the directors and filmmakers of marginal cinema or *Cinema Novo*, regardless of how subversive their creations might have been, were targeted by the repressive apparatus for their political ideas. Proof of this is the declassified document delivered in 2014 by the National Truth Commission in Rio de Janeiro, which investigates human rights crimes and violations during the dictatorship (albeit without any judicial or punitive power), to Paloma Rocha, daughter of the filmmaker Glauber Rocha. The report, dating from 1971, was issued by the Air Force Intelligence Centre, the Brazilian government’s agency of repression, which detailed Glauber’s artistic relationships, the “leftist” characteristics of his aesthetic expressed in Brazilian *Cinema Novo*, as well as interviews that the filmmaker had given to the British press that were considered subversive.¹

In view of this context of a lack of creative freedom, it might well be wondered how, in spite of the repression and the censorship, this period came to be considered one of the richest, most varied and complex moments in Brazilian cinema, in which eroticism, so persecuted in other countries where it was deemed an enemy of traditional values, had such a prominent place. An analysis of the role of dictatorships in the repression of cinema reveals that Brazil constitutes an exception in the Latin American context, in which Spain and Portugal could also be included. While Brazilian cinema during the dictatorship, in the decade of the 1970s, benefited from certain government grants, particularly through Embrafilme, the selection criteria, bureaucracy and favouritism applied by this agency was in fact a

form of government control over film production. But that control was based more on political than cultural or moral censorship. The most conclusive evidence of this is the extensive production with tacit State approval of films with erotic and even almost pornographic elements, sometimes with high doses of violence, but lacking any kind of political or social content that might have harmed the image of the regime. In a way, the filmmakers working with government grants were steered away from political issues to work on commercial products that would fill the theatres, but that lacked any social message, although the topic of sexual freedom was present to varying degrees. On the other hand, independent filmmakers, often with support from other countries or even working in exile, were kept out of this commercial film distribution circuit, but were also free in a way to make films according to their own criteria. The direct consequence was that many of the best cinematic creations of this time were not released in Brazil until after the collapse of the dictatorship and the end of the censorship.

A space free from control was thus left open which, from exile or in secret, the Brazilian filmmakers who had been revolutionising the way of making films since the early 1960s decided to fill. The repression of the dictatorship could do nothing to them internationally, and the revolutionary narrative methods of many of these films allowed them to achieve worldwide renown and take away numerous awards at film festivals. These were films that spoke of struggles for social reform and nationalist projects like *Black God, White Devil* (Deus e o diabo na terra do sol, Glauber Rocha, 1964), nominated for the Palme D’Or at Cannes; *The Guns* (Os fuzis, Ruy Guerra, 1964), winner of the Silver Bear at the Berlin Festival; *The Dare* (O desafio, Pablo César Saraceni, 1965); and *Macunaima* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1969), winner at the Mar del Plata Festival. Ultimately, they were still successful products whose directors had to be controlled or at least monitored by the cen-

THE EROTIC COMEDY FILMS PRODUCED IN THE MID-1960S CONTAINED AN IMPLICIT PROTEST AGAINST OR REJECTION OF VIRGINITY, CHASTITY AND THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY MODEL

sors, and, indeed, many were persecuted, jailed or forced into exile. However, as their creations were screened mostly outside Brazil, they did little or nothing to harm the creation of a national social consciousness in keeping with the new political direction led by the dictatorship. In any case, it is important to remember that in nearly all of these films, just as in commercial erotic cinema, sex and nudity were used as tools of freedom and opposition to traditional society.

This analysis on the particular features of the two movements that led film production under the dictatorship in Brazil, the *pornochanchada* movement and protest cinema, requires a consideration of other aspects of life in the country to understand how Brazilian filmmakers outwitted the censors. The way in which politically bleak periods, when freedom is limited and repression is rife, have the effect of inciting filmmakers to develop their creativity and fill it with social content, in Brazil also had an erotic current of false liberalisation. Filmmakers, but also writers, journalists and even historians, seemed to understand that the cinema was the only creative space left to occupy, a place where it was possible to find formulas to conceal and reveal freedom of expression with all its power in the society that it reflected and defended: “That kind of protest cinema addressed the most burning issues of the era. It was a cinematic form outside the system, the conventions and standards, sometimes a cinematic form outside the law. It was a transgressive cinematic form committed to the issues and with an atypical visual language in its narrative styles. There is no

narration at all; sometimes the experience or the event comes to form part of the film, incorporated into it, breaking the spectator’s passive response to the film” (CARBALLAS, 2011).

With reference to filmmaking in Brazil under the dictatorship, Danielle Parfantieff de Noronha suggests that “discussions of memory and dictatorship include diverse tensions brought out by the representations of censorship, erasure and truth, turned into political and polemical categories, even of the way in which society shares the sense of nation both in that period and in the present” (PARFANTIEFF, 2013: 235).

However, while in countries in Latin America and even in Europe, like Spain and Portugal, dictatorships were characterised by their efforts to forge an image of cinema that bordered on propaganda, that also sustained the regime in power, in Brazil film production developed into two movements that were theoretically opposed in their message, but that used the audiovisual form as a vehicle for social and/or sexual liberation, and that had nothing to do with the parameters set by the political authorities. The censors thus tolerated a certain licence in film productions, characterised by the more or less explicit presence of sex, but were inflexible with clearly social or subversive messages. This type of cinema was represented by productions made in Boca do Lixo that chiefly involved films with banal themes, filled with eroticism, humour and misunderstandings. The other movement, outside the Brazilian mainstream, was led by the proponents of *Cinema Novo* and new filmmakers associated with it, who continued to work with low budgets, revolutionising film narration, and also portraying sex and eroticism, but with parameters that were completely different from those applied in the *pornochanchada* films. The impact of these films on Brazilians was limited in the short term because, apart from a few exceptional cases, they were not distributed commercially until the end of the dictatorship.

By controlling the movie theatres, the dictatorship ensured the repression of revolutionary and leftist ideas without the need to be constantly wielding the censor's knife. To do this it used effective methods which nevertheless were not clearly traceable to the regime. One of the most common strategies was to leave it to theoretically independent grassroots organisations to storm theatres where *Cinema Novo* films were being screened. One of the most prominent of such cases took place the same year as the establishment of the dictatorship, in 1964. Carlos Diegues, one of the most important ideologues of Brazilian cinema, had just released *Ganga Zumba*, the story of a slave uprising in colonial Brazil. In spite of the fact that the film's plot referred to events that had occurred three centuries earlier, terrorists from anti-communist movements stormed the theatres in the absence of repressive action by the authorities. The riot led to the government banning the film and removing it from theatres.

The Brazilian film revolution was under way, but in the cinemas most Brazilians could only see the part of it that dealt with sexual liberation and eroticism. Only after the collapse of the dictatorship in 1985 did Brazilians become aware of its full scope and dimensions.

THE BRAZILIAN EROTIC CINEMA THAT GOT PAST THE CENSORS

Both producers and distributors in Brazil were aware that films, when they passed through the hands of the Public Entertainment Censorship Services, would undergo some form of partial or total censorship. Through the application of the complex system of unwritten rules about what would or would not be likely to be censored, producers sought to mitigate the damage from the beginning, to keep whenever they could to avoid having to shoot part of the film again, and the costs associated with it, due to an excess of zeal on the part of the censors in the editing stage. Par-

tial censorship, referred to as *cortes*, eliminated whole sequences or parts thereof from the footage when the censor determined that there were gestures, postures or conversations that were not in keeping with the moral standards or message of the dictatorship, or as the censors generally put it, "that offend morality and public decorum". The censors also set age restrictions on a film's potential audience, and issued the so-called "Good Quality" and "Free for Export" classifications. However, if a film was censored completely, this was understood to be a de facto ban on its exhibition anywhere in Brazil.

The criteria for censorship could be divided into two main groups. The first, with more serious consequences for the film and its director, referred to incitements against authority, and attacks against public order or individual rights and guarantees. In the other group the criteria were somewhat more ambiguous, such as the presence of elements with the potential to cause distress or that were offensive to a particular religion.

Although they refer to the capacity of the censors under the dictatorship in Portugal, the reasons argued by Piçarra Ramos (2013: 91) are equally applicable to cinema in Brazil in this period: "It is undeniable that a new aesthetic is an interrogative gaze towards new themes. It is important to analyse this gaze because in many of these films the Censors, incapable of understanding the new language, found no reason to amputate."

Many of the filmmakers of this period were targeted by the military, subjected to searches and threatened. Film reels were often confiscated, and some directors were arrested while others were exiled from Brazil, such as Rogério Sganzerla. Some had the good fortune, if it could be called such, of holding onto the footage they had filmed for years, albeit unable to edit it. This was the case of the director Sérgio Muniz, who in 1971 secretly filmed a documentary on the crimes of the Death Squad, *Voce também pode dar um presunto legal* (whose literal translation would be "You Too Can

Be a Cool Corpse”), which had to wait until 2006—no less than thirty-five years—for its release.

Sganzerla himself, who together with Julio Bressane created the legendary Belair production company in Rio de Janeiro in 1970, had a view of the repression suffered by independent creators in Brazil that might almost be described as “romantic”: “In my view, it is no surprise if the modern artist is called an outlaw [...]. In reality, the charm of that has worn off, but not the conditions that lead us to knock down the values of a society that oppresses us [...]. I, for example, marginalise myself by declaring the shame I feel about Brazil today” (SGANZERLA, 2007: 11).

In general, the censors were rather more magnanimous with *pornochanchada* than with *Cinema Novo*, in spite of the fact that certain sectors of the repressive apparatus advocated firmer action against the erotic comedies. These films generally received approval from the censors with a few small cuts to scenes where a naked female body appeared, and with the “adults aged 18 and over” rating. This was due largely to the economic significance of these productions as generators of revenues which, directly or indirectly, reached the coffers of the State, to the point where the dictatorship allowed the producers and distributors of Boca do Lixo to determine the erotic or semi-pornographic nature of the films based on criteria of profits and box-office success. This was a rare strain of freedom within Brazilian cinema, as the dictatorship was thoroughly oppressive with all other film productions.

Films were thus made for which producers and directors tried to reach an agreement with the censors prior to the final cut. To do this they examined aspects such as how female bodies should be framed in the film, or what role police and military officers could play in the story. There was constant negotiation on dialogues, nudity and bed scenes that would be filmed several times until the censor was satisfied with the result. Even before

the film was submitted to the censorship body, it would be screened unofficially for “friendly” censors for the purpose of obtaining their opinions (SIMÕES, 1999:168).

The erotic comedies produced in the mid-1960s contained an implicit protest against or rejection of virginity, chastity and the traditional family model, although many of them concluded with happy endings with a wedding and the triumph of virtue. In this way, the productions became increasingly critical of a model of sexuality imposed by the authorities, a model which the producers and distributors tried to circumvent by achieving commercial success. But ultimately what they sought to do was to please audiences who were increasingly unhappy with the morality imposed by the regime, and who were looking for ways to escape the oppressive atmosphere through film fantasies filled with sex and eroticism. This attempt to find a way of showing certain freedoms that could reach audiences concealed under a surface layer of eroticism did not always go unnoticed by the censors, as can be observed in the notes taken by one censor on the film *Jardim de Guerra* [War Garden] (Neville D’Almeida, 1970): “It is intellectualised, aimed at a pseudo-intellectual audience, and therefore from our point of view it will not please a larger audience due to its distant, intellectual and impractical language [...]. The director mixes politics with sex with the intention of attracting attention to the film. I believe that it should be restricted to adults aged 18 and over and released with the cuts already requested” (PINTO, 2001: 376).

Although the censorship criteria varied depending on the case and the context, there was never any tolerance of visible sex organs or pubic hair, explicit sexual relations or insinuations of homosexuality or other behaviour deemed “deviant” unless addressed in a humorous manner. Sexually active and independent women were also frowned upon. The presence of a lecherous male figure, however, was a constant in these films and,

in a thoroughly male chauvinist environment, was nearly always tolerated. Erotic comedy producers in general tried to avoid any moral issue or idea that might potentially overstep the limits of the censors. Even so, there were constant protests made to the Ministry of Justice by an ultra-conservative segment of society who called for these “pornographic, immoral and violent” productions to be banned completely.

In this climate of persecution and repression of the film industry, the censors themselves worked in a constant state of tension, terrified by the possibility that, amid so many erotic scenes, the director might have slipped in some subversive message that would escape their attention. With this in mind, the censorship agency carried out what might be called “quick refresher courses” to develop the censoring capacities of their personnel, but which in reality left them even more perplexed about how to do their jobs: “If juxtaposed messages are everywhere and arise at any time, they may go unnoticed. In such a situation, what should the censor examining the film who is unable to detect any message do? Speak to a supervisor [...]. He is sufficiently attentive and prepared to identify alleged moments when the ‘red’ ideology has been concealed between the lines in a film.” (SIMÕES, 1999: 153).

The censors in Brazil never allowed films that promoted a questioning of the established order. This is why directors like Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and Nelson Pereira dos Santos would be deemed by the federal agency to be a potential source of danger to the public, which was considered vulnerable and in need of State protection.

To understand exactly how censorship was used in Brazil to control the dozens of erotic films released into the theatres every year, I have analysed the script, mise en scène and editing of the film *Amadas e violentadas* [Love and Raped] (Jean Garret, 1976), as well as the censorship process imposed to which it was subjected. This film is a *pornochanchada* that belongs, according to Abreu

(2006), to the second period of the Boca do Lixo era (1976-1982), a period of mass-production of films in a wide range of genres, but always with sex and eroticism at front and centre, directed and produced by recognised professionals and enjoying considerable box office success. Indeed, this police film, produced and starring David Cardoso, was one of the ten biggest box office hits of that year in Brazil.

THE CENSORS THEMSELVES WORKED IN A CONSTANT STATE OF TENSION, TERRIFIED BY THE POSSIBILITY THAT, AMID SO MANY EROTIC SCENES, THE DIRECTOR MIGHT HAVE SLIPPED IN SOME SUBVERSIVE MESSAGE THAT WOULD ESCAPE THEIR ATTENTION

The protagonist in *Amadas e violentadas*, Leandro Kopezky, is a rich young man traumatised by the violent deaths of his parents who is unable to relate normally to women. As a result, he kills his partners and writes about the killings in novels that become best-sellers, until a police officer and a journalist begin to suspect him.

The censors, after analysing not only the film as a whole and scene-by-scene in minute detail, but also the entire film crew and the actors in order to determine whether they could be deemed subversives, issued their certificate of approval, valid from February 1976 to February 1981, as well as the Good Quality and Free for Export classifications. The documents prepared by the censors on the film, analysed in detail by Lamas (2013: 162-174), show that three experts approved it, requesting the classification of “not suitable for children under 18, without cuts.” It was normal for every film to have to receive the approval of three censors, but in addition, *Amadas e violentadas* also had to be reviewed by the Director of the Public

Entertainment Censorship Service. One of the censors wrote in his detailed report: “It belongs to the modern police film genre, with sex-related killings, but the film steers clear of presenting obscene content, managing to maintain a good plot, evidently with the objective of offering the public a serious movie, with the mistakes typical of an insane character, but without showing any gruesome scenes or situations” (LAMAS, 2013: 173).

Killings, scenes of violence and sex, at times bordering on sadism, do not appear to have troubled the censor because they are the acts of a *personagem insana*. It appears that the disturbed mind of the protagonist—and the fact that his actions were attributed to madness, although they included Satanic practices mixing equal parts of sex and violence—excused the film in the eyes of the censor, for whom only the scenes of naked women gave grounds for classifying it for viewers over eighteen, as “all of the scenes showing female and male bodies fall within acceptable limits for the DCDP, and the narrative procedures used in these sequences are effective in this respect” (LAMAS, 2013: 1273).

Amadas e violentadas is an example of what was quite a common tendency in the *modus operandi* of the censors for the vast majority of the erotic films produced in Boca do Lixo. In this specific case, the film got past the censors practically uncut, only with the requirement of an adults-only film rating. In the absence of a subversive or dissident message, the sole concern for the censors was to place certain limits on the exposure of the body, particularly the female body.

Erotic films, with care taken in how they were shot, could thus break through the barriers set by a censorship procedure that accepted nudity and sex on the basis of the needs of the story. As long the scenes did not contain any social message—women’s liberation, equality between the sexes, injustice, the class struggle—such films were rarely subject to cuts. This allowed the rise of an erotic cinema movement, which from 1964 to 1985 was



Amadas e violentadas (J. Garret, 1976)

extremely popular with Brazilian audiences, and which became increasingly daring in its erotic content to the point of bordering on pornography in films like *Mulher Objeto* [Object Woman] (Silvio de Abreu, 1981).

The censors operated on the basis of a model of sexual and erotic norms, separating attitudes deemed normal from those considered deviant, such as homosexuality. And it was the self-censorship carried out by producers and directors to avoid cuts or the banning of the film that acted as a veritable cleansing mechanism based on what the dictatorship deemed acceptable or worthy of censorship.

CONCLUSIONS ON A PHENOMENON THAT BROKE THROUGH THE CENSORSHIP

Erotic Brazilian cinema, or *porno-chanchada*, in terms of its message, could therefore not be classified as original or revolutionary in its confrontation with censorship, but it could be classified as such in its ability to break through formal barriers and show much more than was theoretically permitted. The Brazilian film revolution broke out in the context of social conflicts and the polarisation of a country that moved from one period of political upheaval to another of dictatorial atrophy that paralysed or expelled filmmaking with any hint of social conscience or protest. It was that era of struggles for social reform that created the context for films that would receive worldwide acclaim, like Glauber Rocha's *Black God, White Devil*, but which, on the other hand, were banned in Brazil for many years.

It is important to remember the international historical and social context of the Brazilian productions belonging to both the *Cinema Novo* and *Boca do Lixo* traditions. On the one hand, there were revolutionary phenomena like the events of May 1968 in Paris, with slogans like "it is forbidden to forbid" or "imagination to power", led by youths and marked by a profound sense of social change that was not lost on the more dissenting Brazilian filmmakers. But at the same time, a freer attitude towards sexuality began to take root: the appearance of the contraceptive pill in the early 1960s allowed the woman gradually to take a more active part in the sexual revolution, questioning her role of subordination to the man and claiming her own right to physical pleasure. In view of this larger historical and social context, it is no surprise that the Brazilian censors would try to be more lenient with films that had erotic content than with films that contained a social message. It was also those films in which the naked body appeared in a symbolic and dream-like context, with a message far removed from a merely

sexual reality, that were the most successful in getting through the censors. The DCDP also used the "adults aged 18 and over" restriction to avoid more drastic cuts to erotic scenes and to allow a form of public entertainment that the authorities viewed as much less dangerous than what films with subversive social content might provoke.

It can therefore be concluded that *porno-chanchada* was tolerated because the producers nearly always acted on the basis of their knowledge of what could and could not be presented on screen. Self-censorship was present in the way that the body was shown, using resources like caricaturing characters or psychological deviations to justify the presence of nudity or of sex scenes. Moreover, the institution of the family was generally respected, as any adultery, except when presented humorously, almost never went unpunished. The characters who committed acts of violence or sexual excesses did so due to the needs of a script that presented them, for one reason or another, as abnormal. And finally, the directors imposed maximum limitations on the exposure of the female body on screen to avoid cuts to their films and thereby save on production costs.

In Brazil the dictatorship favoured erotic cinema not for its narrative qualities, but for its box-office returns and for the false image of ideological openness it conveyed, which allowed the regime to conceal other repressive excesses affecting parts of Brazilian society behind its permissive attitude towards eroticism. But the censors only partly achieved their objective to keep subversive messages out of erotic films, as every naked body that passed the censors' knife, every uncut sex scene that showed female physical pleasure, represented a subtle step forward for Brazilian society in its fight for individual and collective freedoms.

In short, the generation of Brazilian filmmakers working during the Years of Lead managed to make a language out of repression, and gave Brazil a vibrant and active cinematic tradition in anticipation of the end of the military dictatorship. ■

NOTES

- 1 Retrieved from <<http://www.laizquierdadiario.com/La-dictadura-brasileña-persiguió-al-cineasta-Glauber-Rocha>> [20/12/2015]

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FROM THE BANAL TO THE INDISPENSABLE: PORNOCHANCHADA AND CINEMA NOVO DURING THE BRAZILIAN DICTATORSHIP (1964-1985)

Abstract

The period of the dictatorship in Brazil was marked by the convergence of two cinematic movements: on the one hand, the erotic films produced in the Boca do Lixo neighbourhood in São Paulo, which gave rise to the *pornochanchada*; and on the other, *Cinema Novo*, which turned Brazilian cinema into an international intellectual phenomenon. An analysis of Brazilian cinema during the dictatorship from a historical perspective reveals that both these movements brought about a revolution of ideology and of form that neither the censors nor their tools of repression could restrain. However, the importance of erotic cinema in the creation of a collective consciousness that rejected the regime has been underestimated in comparison with *Cinema Novo*. Concealed behind the eroticism of these productions there was also a struggle based on the affirmation of sexuality as a path towards freedom that often succeeded in outwitting the censors, constituting a cinematic process that is indispensable today for the construction of the memory of those years.

Key words

Cinema Novo; *pornochanchada*; Boca do Lixo; protest films; censorship; revolution.

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DE LO BANAL A LO INDISPENSABLE. PORNOCHANCHADA Y CINEMA NOVO DURANTE LA DICTADURA BRASILEÑA (1964-1985)

Resumen

Durante la Dictadura en Brasil convergen, por un lado, el cine erótico de las producciones del barrio de Boca do Lixo, en São Paulo, que dio lugar a la *pornochanchada* y, por otro, el *Cinema Novo* que convirtió al cine brasileño en un fenómeno intelectual internacional. Al reflexionar desde una perspectiva histórica sobre el cine brasileño durante la dictadura, la conclusión es que ambos modos de hacer cine conllevaban una revolución ideológica y formal que ni siquiera la censura y sus herramientas de represión pudieron frenar. La importancia de ese cine erótico en la creación de una conciencia colectiva de rechazo al régimen ha sido infravalorada en comparación con el *Cinema Novo*. Bajo el erotismo de estas producciones se escondía también una lucha basada en la afirmación de la sexualidad como camino hacia la libertad que consiguió burlar a menudo a los censores. Un proceso cinematográfico que hoy resulta indispensable para conformar la memoria de aquellos años.

Palabras clave

Cinema Novo; *pornochanchada*; Boca do Lixo; cine social; censura; revolución.

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