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**Amid the debris: ruins of underdevelopment in
contemporary Brazilian documentary**

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Abstract

This thesis defines an aesthetics of ruins in contemporary Brazilian documentary. It examines strategies of spatial representation employed by present-day documentary-makers and places their films into three groups. The first focuses on the federal capital, Brasília (*The Age of Stone* (2013) and *White Out, Black In* (2014)); the second investigates the former federal capital, Rio de Janeiro (*ExPerimetral* (2016), *The Harbour* (2013), *Tropical Curse* (2016), and *HU Enigma* (2011)); and the third explores Native territories (*Corumbiara: They Shoot Indians, Don't They?* (2009), *Tava*, *The House of Stone* (2012), *Two Villages*, *One Path* (2008), and *Guarani Exile* (2011)). In portraying ruinscapes in different ways, the thesis argues that these unconventional films articulate critiques of the notions of progress and (under)development in the Brazilian nation. It addresses this body of contemporary films in relation to the legacies of Cinema Novo, Tropicália and Cinema Marginal, asking how the present-day films dialogue with or depart from this precedent. In exploring this dialogue, the selected films challenge not only documentary-making conventions but also the country's official narrative. In this regard, the thesis argues that the ruins of Brazil are the *ruins of underdevelopment*, as framed by this particular body of films.

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I hereby declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Guilherme Carréra

Whether Armilla is like this because it is unfinished or because it has been demolished, whether the cause is enchantment or only a whim, I do not know. The fact remains that it has no walls, no ceilings, no floors: it has nothing that makes it seem a city, except the water pipes that rise vertically where the houses should be and spread out horizontally where the floors should be: a forest of pipes that end in taps, showers, spouts, overflows. Against the sky a lavabo's white stands out, or a bathtub, or some other porcelain, like late fruit still hanging from the boughs. You would think the plumbers had finished their job and gone away before the bricklayers arrived; or else their hydraulic systems, indestructible, had survived a catastrophe, an earthquake, or the corrosion of termites.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Eu queria construir uma ruína. Embora eu saiba que ruína é uma desconstrução. Minha ideia era de fazer alguma coisa ao jeito de tapera. Alguma coisa que servisse para abrigar o abandono, como as taperas abrigam.

Manoel de Barros, *Ruína*

1. Prologue: in search of Brazilian ruins

This study aims to define an aesthetics of ruins within the contemporary Brazilian documentary. More specifically, it seeks to investigate the strategies used by present-day filmmakers to depict ruins and why these filmmakers have decided to focus their attention on them. That is, it sets out to be an investigation about the visual elaboration of ruins within the national context. In order to do this, I look at three unconventional groups of documentary films focusing on three different, yet complementary, spaces: the Brasília of *The Age of Stone* (A Idade da Pedra, 2013) and *White Out, Black In* (Branco Sai, Preto Fica, 2014); the Rio de Janeiro of *ExPerimetral* (2016), *The Harbour* (O Porto, 2013), *Tropical Curse* (A Maldição Tropical, 2016), and *HU Enigma* (HU, 2011); and the indigenous territories of *Corumbiara: They Shoot Indians, Don't They?* (Corumbiara, 2009), *Tava, The House of Stone* (Tava, A Casa de Pedra, 2012), *Two Villages, One Path* (Duas Aldeias, Uma Single Walk, 2008), and *Guarani Exile* (Desterro Guarani, 2011). I argue that the ruins in Brazil are the *ruins of underdevelopment* as framed by this particular corpus of films. On that note, I draw on the notion of underdevelopment discussed by Celso Furtado (2009), expanded to the film domain by Paulo Emílio Sales Gomes (1996) and central to the influential analyses made by Ismail Xavier (2012).

Though resorting to distinct cinematic strategies, as will be discussed throughout the thesis, these films seem to share a common sensibility in gazing upon the federal capital, the former federal capital, and the Native territories that allows them to turn these emblematic spaces into ruinscapes. My hypothesis is that, in bringing images of ruins to the fore, these documentaries articulate a critique of the controversial notions of progress and (under)development in the context of Brazil. Brazilian cinema first delved into such issues when the Cinema Novo movement emerged in the 1960s, followed by the Tropicália and Cinema Marginal's remarkable contributions. With this in mind, this thesis also considers their legacy and discusses to what extent contemporary production relates to it. In methodological terms, each of the analytical chapters reflects on that tradition in a

different way. Chapter 3 engages with the explosive rhetoric of Rogério Sganzerla's debut film, *The Red Light Bandit* (*O Bandido da Luz Vermelha*, 1968) and Glauber Rocha's last film, *The Age of the Earth* (*A Idade da Terra*, 1980); chapter 4 deals with tropicalist-like values, mainly intermediality, through the contributions of Caetano Veloso and Hélio Oiticica; and chapter 5 analyses the damaged indigenous territory representation in *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1969), *Brazil Year 2000* (*Brasil Ano 2000*, Walter Lima Jr., 1969), and *Iracema* (*Iracema – Uma Transa Amazônica*, Jorge Bodanzky and Orlando Senna, 1974-1981). In opening a fruitful yet sometimes conflicting dialogue with that past, the selected corpus illustrates how the conventions of documentary-making could be redefined, either by the radically blurring of the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction or by the pioneering assimilation of the indigenous perspective as well. Ultimately, in expanding the limits of traditional filmmaking, the documentarists also expand the viewers' understanding of the country by challenging its official narrative precisely through images of ruins. But, after all, what ruins are these?

In 2014, Tate Britain put on an exhibition entitled *Ruin Lust*. Curated by Brian Dillon, Emma Chambers and Amy Concannon, *Ruin Lust* offered “a guide to the mournful, thrilling, comic and perverse uses of ruins in art from the seventeenth century to the present day” (Tate, no date). The show included more than one hundred works from J.M.W. Turner, John Constable, Rachel Whiteread, Tacita Dean, and many others. It played with the prolific imagery of ruins in artistic practice throughout history, and how that imagery ended up foregrounding an imaginary of ruins in our world. Most importantly, *Ruin Lust* seemed to enquire into the roles played by ruins, what they mean, and why we care about them. Dillon claims that the ruin continuously encapsulates a “radical potential” (2011, p18), demanding the ruin-gazer to take account of its possibilities. As a fusion of the past, present and future, the ruin summons one to wonder what was there before the collapse, what to do with the remains and what vision is yet to come. At the same time that it is the final end of something, it stands out as the very beginning of something else. While I was at the Tate Britain exhibition, wandering through the wreckage, I caught myself wondering what would be on those walls if Brazil was depicted there? If ruins are usually associated with the

debris of the so-called Old World (the imperial ruins of Greece and Rome, the bombed-out buildings of the First and Second World Wars, the crumbling of the Berlin Wall), how can one associate ruins with such a young Latin American nation? If not the classical, romantic ruins of Europe, what then accounts for an imaginary of ruins in Brazil?

To start with, there are no walls. There are no walls for one to hang still images or project moving images on. On the 2nd of September, 2018, five days prior to the traditional celebration of Brazilian Independence Day, the National Museum was no more. Located in Rio de Janeiro, one of the country's leading museums, Brazil's oldest historical and scientific institution, home of the Portuguese Royal Family in the 19th century, the National Museum collapsed under a large scale fire that ruined the buildings within an area of 13,600 m² – 122 rooms in all. It is believed that 90% of the archive of 20 million items was destroyed. The National Museum was 200 years old but its collapse had nothing to do with the passage of time. Museum Deputy Director, Luiz Fernando Dias Duarte, pointed to neglect by successive governments as the cause of the fire. He argued that many curators had fought with different governments for adequate resources to preserve what has now been completely destroyed (G1 Rio, 2018a). Even more tragic, Rio's Fire Chief, Colonel Roberto Robadey, said the firefighters did not have enough water because two hydrants were dry. Water trucks were brought in and water used from a nearby lake (G1 Rio, 2018b). Months later, the federal police found that the fire had started from a poorly maintained air conditioner (Silveira, 2019). The images of the fire, the flames, and the smoke over the roofless building went viral. They became a sort of metaphor for the country's chaotic present, to say the least – corruption scandals, a deep recession, a controversial impeachment, increasing unemployment and criminal violence. As Bernardo Mello Franco (2018), one of Brazil's best-known journalists, put it: "The tragedy this Sunday is a sort of national suicide. A crime against our past and future generations".

The link between the Tate Britain exhibition in London and the National Museum fire in Brazil is more than a narrative arc – it helps me situate this doctoral research in time and space. When I embarked on this journey, to some measure still lured by *Ruin Lust*'s radical potential, I had no means of foreseeing the

ruination of Brazil's most important museum. While this study was being conducted between 2015 and 2019, there were many hints at the state of a country literally in collapse. We witnessed, not one, but two of the most dreadful world environmental catastrophes in the state of Minas Gerais: the Mariana tailing dam collapse on November 5th 2015 was considered the greatest environmental disaster in Brazilian history with 19 dead (Dieguez, 2016) until the Brumadinho tailing dam collapse unbelievably left 240 fatality victims and a second river of mud on January 25th 2019 (G1 Minas, 2019). If nature was being punished by the Brazilian State and the mining companies, the built environment brought about by the highly anticipated 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games lacked preservation or purpose after each of these events had taken place. Apart from bribery scandals and forced human displacement, major venues like the Maracanã stadium and the Olympic golf course were already in state of disrepair just six months after the Paralympics closing ceremony (Guardian sport and agencies, 2017). Those circumstances are evidence of rural and urban post-apocalyptic scenarios resulting in a country stuck and yet crumbling.

Running in parallel with the destruction of the National Museum, the largest Brazilian environmental disasters, and the complete obsolescence of a failed architecture was the socio-economic chaos. While Brazil was among the fastest growing economies in the first decade of this century, today, it finds itself in a deep recession and uncertain times (Carvalho, 2018). In 2016, the controversial impeachment of the then President, Dilma Rousseff, was a process that many believed had been articulated by the Vice-President, Michel Temer, who took over the office of President until the end of 2018. The extremely polarised political environment divided the country down in the middle and gave room for the election of far-right candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, whose mandate started in January 2019. Resorting to a nationalist, military, conservative and neoliberal discourse, Bolsonaro defends, for instance, the flexibility of the gun control law and the interruption of public policies aimed at black and LGBT communities. Long before that, however, two of the covers of the influential *The Economist* (Nov 12th 2009 and Sep 27th 2013) magazine had helped us acknowledge the sense of economic ruination taking place – though by no means a novelty in a country historically accustomed to ups and downs. In 2009, Christ the Redeemer

was portrayed as a powerful rocket on the cover with “Brazil takes off” as the headline; in 2013, the magazine presented that same rocket-Christ, but this time out of control and asked “Has Brazil blown it?”.

Analysts have also been taking account of the chaos depicted in a variety of news articles, such as The New York Times’ “The End of the World? In Brazil, It’s Already Here” (Barbara, 2017), Nexo’s “The End of Brazil”¹ (Burgierman, 2017), and Folha de S. Paulo’s “Descent into Decay” (Conti, 2019), to name but a few. In the latter, renowned journalist, Mario Sergio Conti sees “a present of ‘inadequate things’, of decadence, of production not of the future, but of ruins”. Moreover, one wonders if the ongoing reality is being documented accordingly, as it seems like the “real Brazil is in disarray with idyllic self-images, widespread for decades” (ibid). In an attempt not to disregard a present that produces ruins, not futures, anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro aims, in fact, to preserve the debris of the National Museum. In an interview with Prado Coelho, he claims that the debris should neither be restored nor turned into something else. “My will (...) is to leave that ruin as *memento mori*, as memory of the dead, of dead things, of dead people, of dead archives, destroyed in that fire. (...) I would like the ashes to remain, the ruins, with only the facade standing, so that everyone could see and remember” (2018). His discourse values the potential significance of those ruins for a country like Brazil, as “this is the destruction of *ground zero*, the central place that was the symbol of the genesis of the country as an independent nation”. Viveiros de Castro’s reasoning is mostly underpinned by the imbrication between neglect and catastrophe, a dynamic that has been shaping the country for a long time. “Brazil is a country where governing it creates deserts. Natural deserts, in space, with the devastation of the savanna, of the Amazon. Nature is destroyed and now culture is being destroyed, creating deserts in time” (ibid).

It is within this context that this thesis studies the cinematic presentation of ruins. More specifically, I am interested in how an imaginary of Brazilian ruins is constructed via imagery. That is, how contemporary documentary-makers frame the ruinous reality. In this sense, it is important to stress that the ruinous reality

¹ All translations from Portuguese to English are mine, unless stated otherwise.

not only refers to the present but, perhaps, most importantly, it epitomises the trajectory of a nation put together from colonisation, post-Independence neocolonisation and post-dictatorship neoliberalisation. As mentioned above, I argue that the ruins in Brazil are the ruins of underdevelopment – and that contemporary Brazilian documentary production renders these ruins visible on screen. They are the marriage of a rotten process of modernisation that was never fulfilled with a savage neoliberal agenda that continues to deepen the social-economic abyss. The sloppiness and abandonment present in the majority of Brazilian cities are the symptoms of a longstanding colonial mindset: forever devoted to an extractive economy, Brazil has always lacked long-term planning. Here, Latin America shies away from touristic ruins, such as those of Machu Picchu in Peru or the Mayan pyramids in Mexico. The ruins of underdevelopment as a peripheral, precarious branch of what Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (2010) refer to as the *ruins of modernity*. As Dillon (2011) claims, the ruin can be the final end of something as well as the very beginning of something else. In exposing Brazilian present-day ruins, the selected documentaries might be envisioning a future that, regrettably, the fire, the flames and the smoke over the National Museum still prevent us from seeing.

1.1. Documenting the ruins: the Angel-documentarist

When I started to look at images of ruins framed by contemporary Brazilian documentarists, it was not rare for me to come across people wondering what I meant by ruins. It was almost like a ritual: they would double-check to make sure I really had said the word *ruins*, then make sure if I meant physical, concrete ruins, and, finally, would seem intrigued by the potential presence of ruins in the South-American tropics. Of course, that was a common-sense, general reaction and interaction, but also a reminder of the fact that I was conducting this doctoral research at a British Higher Education institution on the other side of the Atlantic. Furthermore, it was a reminder of the tradition of European literature on this topic. Indeed, a particular branch that could range from the Comte de Volney (1853), the eighteenth-century French philosopher whose meditation on ruins projected what he saw as the inevitable fate of all cities, becoming rubble, to Rose

Macaulay (1966), the English novelist who wrote about the history of aesthetic appreciation of ruins and wondered if this was still possible in the wake of the Second World War bombings. These are but two of an endless list of authors who have considered the ruin either as an object, a method, a theme, or a metaphor within the European context. Possibly no one, however, has left an imprint as meaningful and reverberating as that of Walter Benjamin (1968, 1977, 1979).

Inspired by Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus*, his famous description of the Angel of History is mentioned in numerous essays and books as an emblem of his thought about history as catastrophe, a thought that will implicitly hover throughout the thesis. "His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet" (1968, p257), as Benjamin puts it. In the meantime, there is a storm coming from paradise. "This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress" (ibid, p258), he concludes. This antipositivist idea of history being dialectical was encapsulated in his "*modern critique of (capitalist/industrial) modernity*" (2005, p3) as Michael Löwy declares. From Löwy's perspective, he feels Benjamin's "Angel of History would like to halt, to bind the wounds of the victims crushed beneath the pile of ruins, but the storm carries it on inexorably towards the repetition of the past (...)" (ibid, p16), which Löwy considers to be Benjamin's definition of hell. On the other hand, when Benjamin says "there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (1968, p256), a whole range of possibilities seem to emerge for one to redeem the past while under the yoke of the present.

That present was to be addressed through allegories rather than symbols. "Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (1977, p178), says Benjamin interrelating allegories with ruins. In this regard, the allegorical mode became more than an aesthetic device; it allows "to make visibly palpable the experience of a world in fragments, in which the passing of time means not progress but disintegration" (1995, p18), as Susan Buck-Morss remarks. In contrast to the symbol (attached to nature in an organic way and

leaving no room for alternative meanings), the allegory turns history into a petrified, decayed nature, made of fragments claiming multiple interpretations, as she explains in her monumental research on Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. When scrutinising both Charles Baudelaire's poetry and *flânerie* instinct, Buck-Morss underlines how Benjamin enhanced his critique of modernity turning the Parisian environment into the petrified, decayed nature itself. In exploring this resonance, she wisely questions "why does the most modern face of Paris remind him of a city already in ruins?" (ibid, p179), touching on the wreckage upon wreckage that the Angel of History associates with progress. Taken as modern allegories, the commodification of nineteenth-century objects, places and customs played a major role in Benjamin's investigation of the decadence of the present. "The image of the 'ruin,' as an emblem not only of the transitoriness and fragility of capitalist culture, but also its destructiveness" (ibid, p164).

More recently, studies carried out by André Habib (2008) and Johannes von Moltke (2010) continued the theoretical debate, particularly by focusing on the links between ruins and moving images, though to a certain extent, tailored to the specificities of the European context. Although I touch on their contributions in chapter 2, my approach rather sides with and extends Rodrigo Lopes de Barros' (2013) Third-World ruins discussion, one that privileges the notion of ruins in the Latin American artistic environment. Barros' view of Glauber Rocha's *Entranced Earth* (Terra em Transe, 1967) and Sganzerla's *The Red Light Bandit* sets the ground for an exploration of Brazilian cinema in light of the ruins aesthetics. At the same time, Barros claims the importance of documentary strategies in cinematic production is that revolutionary cinema "is nothing but an invasion of the documentary into fictional work" (2013, p29). His rumination is much inspired by Xavier's (2012) watershed analysis of the allegories of underdevelopment in Brazilian Cinema Novo, Tropicália and Cinema Marginal. It is no coincidence that Xavier will also find a link between the strength of the 1960s and 1970s production and the boldness of contemporary documentary films, especially those experimenting with "new frictions with the real" (ibid, p27). Inescapably, the relationship between present-day documentaries and Cinema Novo (as well as Tropicália and Cinema Marginal) is a pivotal element to

be explored, as they are all devoted to questioning controversial notions of progress and (under)development via their imagery.

Central to this discussion, Paula Rabinowitz (1993) brought the wreckage upon wreckage of the Angel of History closer to the documentary field. For her, the figure of the Benjaminian *Angelus Novus* “might also represent the documentary filmmaker who can only make a film within the historical present, even as it evokes the historical past” (ibid, p119). Avoiding the perception of the documentary as being a true reflection of reality, Rabinowitz is more interested in how far cinematic apparatus can intervene in the historical world – an attempt bravely carried forward, for instance, by New Latin American Cinema filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino. “The historical documentary not only tells us about the past, but asks us to do something about it as well – to act as the Angel of History and redeem the present through the past” (ibid, p132). While intervening in reality, documentary films may end up blurring the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction. In this sense, “the questions documentary films raise about the transparency of the cinematic image and the status of truth imbedded in it seem particularly urgent (...)” (ibid, p127). Instead of depicting reality in a conventional way, the dialectical approach unfolds a multi-faceted historical world to the viewer. “In the deconstructionist documentary (...), the object of the film is to produce a new and disturbing knowledge of history and of its rhetoric – of both its content and its form” (ibid, p136), much like the group of documentaries comprising the corpus of this thesis.

The assumption that the documentary can lead to the eruption of other (hi)stories and therefore expand the understanding of the world can be prompted by its boundary with artistic strategies. Rabinowitz suggests “this desire to dream, to provoke imagination, seems to lead the documentary away from the realm of history and truth into the realm of art and artifice” (ibid, p136). In fact, the overlap between documentary and avant-garde led to the strengthening of the former in the first decades of the twentieth century. “Without the capacity to disrupt and make new, documentary filmmaking would not have been possible as a discrete rhetorical practice. It is the modernist avant-garde that fulfills Grierson’s own call for the ‘creative treatment of actuality’ most relentlessly” (2001, p592), as

Nichols points out. For him, “modernist experimentation favored an open-ended, ambiguous play with time and space that did less to resolve real issues than to challenge the definition and priority of an issue per se” (ibid, p594). Furthermore, this formal innovation regularly finds some correspondence in what Bill Nichols (1991) calls political reflexivity, bringing different aspects of the historical world to the surface. “What provides the litmus test for political reflexivity is the specific form of the representation, the extent to which it does not reinforce existing categories of consciousness, structures of feeling, ways of seeing”, that is, it is “the degree to which it rejects a narrative sense of closure and completeness” (ibid, p68).

When exploring the influence of the avant-garde on documentary-making in her conceptualisation of experimental ethnography, Catherine Russell (1999) returns to Benjamin to connect his allegorical thinking to film studies once again. For Russell, his perspective “suggests that allegory itself is a means of articulating utopian desires for historical transformation within a nonteleological critique of modernist progress” (ibid, p6). With the advent of the cinema, “mechanical reproduction broke history down into discrete fragmentary moments, generating a discontinuity that Benjamin saw as having revolutionary dialectical possibilities” (ibid, p9). In Benjamin’s words, “our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly”. Nevertheless, “then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling” (Benjamin, 1968, p236). In travelling amid the debris, documentary-makers – the Angels of History of cinema – indeed do seem to find in the ruins, *revolutionary dialectical possibilities*. “If the ruin contains the trace of original form, it is a model of representation that is in constant flux, bearing a shifting relation to a prior site of authenticity” (Russell, 1999, pp9-10), as will be discussed in the thesis.

1.2. Towards a cartography of ruins: thesis outline

As mentioned above, this thesis draws upon three groups of documentaries centred on Brasília, Rio de Janeiro and indigenous territories as ruinscapes. In mapping the images that mirror these spaces, the geographical axes have engendered a cartography of ruins for the reader to navigate. Conducting an in-depth film analysis, I will take account of both the mode of production and the cultural context in which the documentaries were made, as well as the narrative structure and the visual elaboration deployed in them. More specifically, I will focus on the formal aspects of portraying ruinscapes on screen through: the elaboration of science-fiction documentaries in chapter 3; the tropicalist intermedial aesthetics in chapter 4; and the *Vídeo nas Aldeias* pro-indigenous filmmaking in chapter 5. In addition, I will relate present-day imagery to the revolutionary artistic contributions of the 1960s and 1970s. Apart from that, I interviewed the following directors: Ana Vaz, Adirley Queirós, Daniel Santos, Ricardo Pretti, Luisa Marques, Pedro Urano, Joana Traub Csekö, Ariel Ortega, and Vincent Carelli. The interviews were carried by e-mail, WhatsApp or Skype, and were essential to the development of the concept of the ruins of underdevelopment starting from the images created by these filmmakers.² The film analysis and the interviews together enabled me to attempt to the discussion of how present-day directors articulate a critique of progress and (under)development precisely through images of ruins. The thesis cartography sketched below was conceived as a route to that end.

Chapter 1 sets the aims, the context and the outline of the thesis, as seen in this prologue. Chapter 2 will lay the groundwork for the theoretical debate, which follows major frameworks providing the basis for the discussion of how contemporary Brazilian documentary-makers use images of ruins to articulate a critique of progress and (under)development. It will survey key writings on ruins in contemporary Latin American/Brazilian culture in order to frame the ruin debate through the lens of underdevelopment by discussing the valuable inputs from Furtado (2009) to Lévi-Strauss (1973). In addition, it will bring the debate on ruins closer to the cinematic domain, also putting emphasis on Barros' (2013) particular interest in the 1960s Brazilian cinema. Following that, I will explore the

² Extended version of the interviews can be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

pioneering contribution of Cinema Novo filmmakers in visually articulating discussions on progress and (under)development. Most importantly, I will draw on the sense of catastrophe developed by Xavier (2012) when he famously looked at Cinema Novo, Tropicália and Cinema Marginal's outputs.

The discussion centred on Cinema Novo will also consider its overlap with documentary strategies as an essential means of depicting the precarious reality of that time. With this in mind, I will delve into the emergence of contemporary Brazilian documentary in the wake of Cinema da Retomada, and then consider the context of that emergence through the timely concept of *unviable nation* developed by Fernão Pessoa Ramos (2003). The basis of the present-day documentary will also welcome the debate on the multiple aesthetics and narrative possibilities of this particular mode of (hi)storytelling. In this sense, Cezar Migliorin's (2011) concept of *post-industrial cinema* and Dellani Lima and Marcelo Ikeda's (2011) *garage cinema* notion help to locate the growth and the experimentation of contemporary Brazilian documentary in today's society.

Chapter 3 will focus on the Brasília of Ana Vaz's *The Age of Stone* and Adirley Queirós' *White Out, Black In* as the other side – or the underside – of progress. In order to cinematically (re)construct the federal capital, both directors conceived what they call sci-fi documentaries. Their outputs question the official narrative by exploring the multifaceted condition of underdevelopment through images of ruins. Brasília as a ruinscape also resonates with the legacy of Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal, as *The Age of Stone* opens a direct dialogue with Rocha's *The Age of the Earth*, whereas *White Out, Black In* seems to echo, to a certain degree, Sganzerla's *The Red Light Bandit*. The chapter will discuss the invention of Brasília as a grand yet controversial project led by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, as scrutinised by James Holston (1989) and poetically addressed by writer Clarice Lispector (1999a, 1999b). In parallel, I will examine the current trend in Brazilian cinema that seems skeptical of realism as the most appropriate means of depicting national issues, as suggested by Angela Prysthon's (2015) notion of *realism under erasure*. Subsequently, discussions of the science-fiction genre carried on by Fredric Jameson (2005), Vivian Sobchack (2016) and Alfredo

Suppia (2007) will help me relate the documentary impulse to the codes of sci-fi in both films.

Inspired by the rhizomatic thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2005), Vaz's film is a sci-fi documentary centred on a CGI monument-ruin that is an allegory for Brasília – whether under construction or about to collapse. In it, the monument is a ruin that comes from the future, shifting our perceptions of time and space. I argue that she has constructed a science-*friction* documentary, as the film plays with the structure of reality itself. On the other hand, Queirós' film looks at Brasília from Ceilândia, a satellite city on the outskirts, through two of its inhabitants, Marquim and Shokito. I suggest that the city, the houses where the characters live and the characters' own bodies are marked by a sense of ruination. Here, I argue that *White Out, Black In* is a science-*nonfiction* documentary, as its plot is derived from an actual violent police episode that harmed both characters during a night out in 1986. In a vengeful yet redemptive move, they both plan to drop a sonic-atomic bomb on Brasília to leave its white and wealthy Pilot Plan in ruins.

Aimed at exploring an intermedial visualisation of failing projects in Rio de Janeiro, chapter 4 will investigate the relationship between contemporary experimental documentaries and the legacy of Tropicália. More specifically, how present-day documentarists hint at tropicalist-like values through the execution of intermedial aesthetics in the documentary mode in order to visualise the ruins of underdevelopment in Rio. The chapter will discuss the intermedial aspects of Tropicália linked to the modernist anthropophagy, as explored by Stefan Solomon (2017), and it will take account of the risk that countercultural motifs become commodified through the neoliberalisation of artistic creation, as argued by Suely Rolnik (2006, 2011). In this sense, I suggest that the films selected seem to react against the loss of the radical power of art precisely by exposing the architectonic failures nurtured by the neoliberal regime, what Idelber Avelar (2009) calls the *neoliberal ruin*.

Following that argument, the chapter introduces the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games (de)construction works as emblematic images of the

present-day dynamic of capitalist extraction. Experimental short documentaries like Daniel Santos' *ExPerimetral* and Clarissa Campolina, Julia de Simone, Luiz Pretti, and Ricardo Pretti's *The Harbour* comment on this scenario by creatively elaborating on the debris of the Elevado da Perimetral, a 5.5-km elevated highway located in Rio's harbour zone, using intermedial tactics. By looking at the abandoned Carmen Miranda Museum, Luisa Marques' *Tropical Curse* goes in a similar direction. It questions national modernity through the two Mirandas: the commodified Portuguese-Brazilian artist and the decaying, modernist building. Visual arts, performance and literature are fused in Marques' meditation on the ruinous spaceship-like museum. Finally, I will examine Pedro Urano and Joana Traub Csekö's *HU Enigma*, a documentary feature about the university hospital of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro – half of it being a hospital per se, while the other half is in state of complete disrepair. Apart from drawing on photography, architecture and installation art, the conception of the project lies in the theoretical contribution of Glauber Rocha (2017) and Hélio Oiticica (1999a, 1999b), as explained by Csekö (2008).

After Brasília and Rio de Janeiro, chapter 5 will look at indigenous territories as damaged territories, the final geographical axis in this investigation of an aesthetics of the ruins of underdevelopment in contemporary Brazilian documentary. In discussing a territory in constant dispute, I will argue that that dispute is rendered visible through images of ruins present in NGO Vídeo nas Aldeias documentaries. Before that, however, I will shed light on the Cinema Novo films framing the indigenous territory as damaged territory – a critique of the so-called progress and (under)development under the military coup d'état. I will briefly discuss the specificities of *Macunaíma*, *Brazil Year 2000*, and *Iracema*, as well as their use of allegorical Indian figures to address the imminent destruction of the nation itself. Next, I will introduce Vídeo nas Aldeias (within the context of the emergence of indigenous media elsewhere) and its strong link to reclaiming land through documentary-making, as discussed by Freya Schiwy (2009), Charlotte Gleghorn (2017) and Faye Ginsburg (2002). Although very different from each other, I will argue that VNA comes closer to Cinema Novo in its willingness to take over the critique of progress in relation to the indigenous territory and the understanding of film as a militant tool to change society.

With this in mind, the chapter will analyse Carelli's *Corumbiara: They Shoot Indians, Don't They?* as the epitome of the visualisation of indigenous territory as damaged territory – an imaginary foregrounded by Cinema Novo in the past. The documentary follows Carelli from 1986 to 2006 in his effort to gather evidence of the existence of the Kanoê and Akuntsu groups in the Corumbiara territory, North of Brazil, after the attacks of farmers and agribusiness men. I will discuss in greater detail four sequences that build a sense of ruination in the documentary. In addition, the chapter will dive into three VNA collaborative documentaries interested in framing indigenous ruins as evidence of territorial disputes: Ariel Ortega, Jorge Morinico and Germano Beñites' *Two Villages, One Path*, and Ariel Ortega, Patrícia Ferreira, Ernesto de Carvalho and Vincent Carelli's *Guarani Exile* and *Tava, The House of Stone*. Ruben Caixeta de Queiroz (2008) and Philipi Bandeira (2017) emphasise the role played by these collaborative film projects, with the participation of the Indian at last, as co-author. Most importantly, in telling their own story, the Guarani people contest the way white narratology addresses their history.

Chapter 6 will invite the reader to take a walk amid the documentary ruins, as will be seen in the epilogue. Drawing on Xavier's (2012) *allegories of underdevelopment* and Barros' (2013) *Third World ruins*, chapter 6 will mobilise these two main notions when returning to specific points discussed throughout the thesis. It will indicate the differences and similarities between the selected ruin-gazers (that is, the documentary-makers). Furthermore, it will connect the ruinscapes of Brasília, Rio de Janeiro and indigenous territories: the sci-fi documentaries in dialogue with Rocha and Sganzerla, the tropicalist intermediality in Rio's experimental documentary films, and Vídeo nas Aldeias' pro-indigenous film projects updating Cinema Novo's depiction of damaged indigenous territory. Lastly, the chapter will work towards expanding the map of ruins, suggesting alternative routes – and different artistic practices – to consider in future research. In looking at the country's recent past and facing its failures, the three groups of documentaries under analysis have not only created thought-provoking moving images, but also appeal to critical thinking to investigate perceptions of the world.

2. Framing the ruins through underdevelopment: from Cinema Novo to contemporary Brazilian documentary

This chapter surveys the three major frameworks underpinning the discussion of how contemporary Brazilian documentaries make use of images of ruins to visually articulate a critique of progress and (under)development. The opening section surveys key writings on ruins in contemporary culture and, more importantly, their connection to the notion of underdevelopment in Brazil/Latin America as postulated by Furtado (2009). After that, I shed light on the unique contribution of French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1973), to the development of a sense of Brazilianness informed by the idea of decadence. Lastly, I dwell on theoretical notes concerning the imbrication between the cinema and ruins, especially the cinematic sense of ruination recently developed by Barros (2013).

The second section explores the pioneering contribution of Cinema Novo in foregrounding progress and (under)development in its discourse, aesthetics, and mode of production. The sense of catastrophe (Xavier, 2012) present in many films is a pivotal point of departure for defining an aesthetics of ruins in present-day Brazilian documentary films. Gomes' (1996) analysis of Brazilian cinema's trajectory within underdevelopment is also key. In addition, I underline the dialogue that *cinemanovistas* established with documentary strategies as a means of depicting the precarious reality, and with Tropicália and Cinema Marginal branches.

Finally, the third section delves into the emergence of Cinema da Retomada to discuss the rise of the contemporary Brazilian documentary. I look at the efforts of contemporary documentary-makers to come to terms with the *unviable nation* (Ramos, 2003), an attempt to re-evaluate the purpose of the documentary and its ability to make assertions about the historical world. In a *post-industrial cinema* context (Migliorin, 2011), I aim to lay the ground for analysing meaningful images of the ruins of underdevelopment in the chapters that follow.

2.1. A realm for the ruins of underdevelopment

According to Svetlana Boym, “the early 21st century exhibits a strange ruinophilia” (2011). By acknowledging the paradoxes of modernity, the physical (as well as the metaphorical) ruins seem to be a means of questioning the so-called progress and development that have profoundly defined the modern project of the twentieth century. It was a decisive historical moment marked by the urbanisation and industrialisation of the modern nation state in the belief that science and technology were the inevitable path to social progress and economic development. For Boym, ruins have the ability both to recall the initial utopia planned by the project and, at the same time, point out its utter failure. “The ruins of modernity as viewed from a 21st-century perspective point at possible futures that never came to be. But those futures do not necessarily inspire restorative nostalgia. Instead, they make us aware of the vagaries of progressive vision as such” (ibid).

In this sense, the contemporary obsession with analysing the failures of the past implies a sort of *reflective nostalgia*, to use a term coined by Boym (2001) herself, that is, one not the pursuance of restoring the past but reflecting upon it. Ruins, ruined as they inescapably are, can be a trigger for reflection. Embarking on the same journey, Andreas Huyssen argues that “we are nostalgic for the ruins of modernity because they still seem to hold a promise that has vanished from our own age: the promise of an alternative future” (2006, p8). For him, the nostalgia for ruins – that took artistic practices and academic studies by storm – concurs with the current emphasis on memory and trauma as key discourses for our times. When highlighting the catastrophic achievements of history, “our imaginary of ruins can be read as a palimpsest of multiple historical events and representations” (ibid).

Hell and Schönle argue that “the destruction of the world’s most famous symbolic icon of capitalist modernity on 9/11 brought to a climax the debate about how modernity, broadly conceived, seems to have invented, framed, and produced ruins” (2010, p5). The collapse of the World Trade Center, followed by the

invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, opened the new millennium bringing the imagery of ruins to the foreground with an unprecedented impact. Most importantly, not only the imagery but the meaning of ruins were put under scrutiny, considering both their spatial and temporal aspects. For Hell and Schönle, “the ruin is invoked in a critique of the spatial organization of the modern world and of its single-minded commitment to a progress that throws too many individuals and spaces into the trash” (ibid, p8). Albeit rooted in the here and now, the ruin has “a difficult relationship with the present, a disenchantment that encourages a leap into heterogeneous temporalities, often embodied in speculation about the future of the past” (ibid, p9). For that reason, Dillon believes that the ruin has, above all, a “radical potential” (2011, p18) that invites one to fulfil its fragmentary, unfinished and unexplored assets.

When one thinks of Latin American ruins, it is the far-away past that usually comes to mind. In her seminal work about *ruin lust*, Rose Macaulay’s³ few references to the region include the ruins of Machu Picchu, in Peru, and the pyramids of Chichen Itza, in Mexico, precisely because they “become part of that encroaching green, often to be no more found or seen, sometimes to be discovered by travellers of other races many centuries later” (1966, p266). Today, decay and dereliction have turned into touristic attractions, like the above-mentioned ruins of Machu Picchu and Chichen Itza. In this regard, editors Michael J. Lazzara and Vicky Unruh (2009) invested in *telling ruins in Latin America* (as the title of their book indicates) to scrutinise those clichéd ruin scenarios in a number of essays. More fundamentally, their ground-breaking contribution seems to problematise the (neo)colonial viewpoint frequently applied to the topic. In her essay, Regina Harrison (2009), for instance, unpacks the Machu Picchu ruin complex from the arrival of the North-American explorer, Hiram Bingham, to the impressions of poet, Pablo Neruda, Walter Salles’ film *Motorcycle Diaries*, travel magazines and virtual tourism promotions. In taking account of the multiple layers that shape such an iconic ruin, the author locates it as an element of narrative dispute whose trajectory and meaning are always under scrutiny.

³ Rose Macaulay is considered one of the first authors to have discussed the aesthetics of ruins in the wake of the Second World War. For more details see *Pleasure of Ruins* (1966).

Following on from that approach, what strikes one the most is the step further taken by the editors in expanding the debate to ruin scenarios engendered by the political environment and social-economic measures typical of Latin American countries. From the authoritarian modernisation led by dictatorial governments to the neoliberal policies implemented in the 1990s, such contexts might have propelled a shift in the way both artists and academics relate to the question of ruination. As Lazzara and Unruh point out, the “(...) ruin returns with fervent intensity at the turn of the millennium as a measure of the era’s own structure of feeling and as a new interpretive path for revisiting earlier manifestations of ruins in Latin American cultural discourse” (2009, p3). In so doing, the authors extrapolate from stereotypical, historical ruins and finally reach other spheres of present-day society making the reading of ruins in the subcontinent more complex. Marked by fiscal austerity and the privatisation of public assets, the turn of the millennium did not find in the political and socio-economic dynamics of neoliberalism a way to cope with problems nurtured by the utopias of the twentieth century. The rotten modernisation process and the savage neoliberal agenda that followed resulted not only in income concentration and high unemployment, but in neglect and, at times, destruction itself, as the documentaries under analysis demonstrate. Although not particularly focusing on the production of images linked to the phenomenon, Lazzara and Unruh shed light on a specific backdrop that enables current narratives of ruins to find common ground in which to flourish.

Interested in examining the effects of neoliberalism in Latin American society, Avelar (2009) coined the notion of *neoliberal ruin* in that context. Exploring post-dictatorship Argentinian literature, he came up with the term while analysing writer Gustavo Ferreyra’s *El Director*, as its protagonist is “a subject who has also been shaped by the savagely selfish logic of neoliberalism, imposed in Argentina by the Menem government in the 1990s and directly responsible for the 2001 economic collapse”. According to him, “the reworking of ruins, then, is an apt metaphor to describe not only the subject’s relation to his past, (...) but also the polis in which he operates” (ibid, p191). Even though he only dedicates a brief paragraph to the discussion (Avelar’s essay reaches that conclusion, but centres on the literary strategies employed by Ferreyra), the concept of *neoliberal ruin* is

successful in encapsulating the sense of ruination often present in contemporary society. “The destructive utopia of privatization” (ibid, p192), in Avelar’s own words, not only means the commodification of social life followed by economic and political collapse, but gives room to discuss how the polis itself is affected and transfigured. Worth mentioning, insights into the ruination of neoliberalism have recently been taken up by North-American political theorist, Wendy Brown (2019) in her *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, which seems to be the first attempt to investigate the phenomenon as leading to catastrophic right-wing populism.

Bearing this in mind, I argue that the *ruins of underdevelopment*, as framed by contemporary documentarists, render visible the modernisation that never came about and the neoliberal project that proved inoperable in Brazil. If neoliberalism as an ideology can be highly controversial in the context of developed nations, the inception of neoliberal policies in underdeveloped countries aggravates the picture even more. The term *underdevelopment* itself finds its official origins after the end of the Second World War, when in 1948, the United Nations created the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to encourage economic cooperation among peripheral nations – or Third World nations, considering the Cold War atmosphere. The peripheral nations were defined as those left behind in comparison with Western European nations that had fully completed the industrialisation process initiated in the eighteenth century. As Cristóbal Kay (1991) puts it, the *cepalista*⁴ school had a structuralist understanding of (under)development from a holistic-historical perspective, as the periphery’s issues were intrinsic to the capitalist world system, albeit the result of a very particular economic trajectory. With Argentine intellectual, Raúl Prebisch, as one of its foremost members, the *cepalista* school believed that a nation had to accomplish industrialisation in order to overcome its structural obstacles.

Many have argued, however, that underdevelopment has far more distant roots going back to the European colonisation characterised by an extractive economy and lack of long-term planning. According to Rodolfo Stavenhagen, “underdevelopment is the state of being of Latin American countries in modern

⁴ The term is derived from the Portuguese Comissão Econômica para a América Latina e o Caribe (Cepal).

times, just as ‘colonial society’ was its state of being during three centuries of Iberian domination” (1974, p125). Nevertheless, Steven Topik remarks that those colonial societies were not exactly recessive. “For most of the first three centuries of colonial rule, Latin America was still not considered economically backward. Indeed, the wealth of the silver mines of Potosí in Upper Peru, Guanajuato in Mexico, and Ouro Preto in Brazil was legendary” (1987, p548). Topik argues that things started to change when the Industrial Revolution came along in England and nearby countries. Inspired by the legacy of the Enlightenment, “with the idea of progress came the beginnings of the idea of evolution, the notion that societies went through the same stages as people: infancy, adolescence, adulthood and old age”. Bluntly put, “the colonies of Latin America”, therefore, “were not just different from Europe, as they had been perceived before; they stood at an earlier stage of development” (ibid, p550).

In Brazil, the debate about underdevelopment in the work of economist Celso Furtado is a watershed. Initially linked to the *cepalista* school, he also created the Superintendency for the Development of the Northeast in 1959, became the first Minister of Planning in 1962 (interrupted by the 1964 military coup) and later in his career, was appointed Minister of Culture in 1986 (in the first democratic government following the end of the dictatorship). Focusing on the Brazilian experience, Furtado’s main contribution lies in his understanding of underdevelopment as an autonomous historical process directly affected by the industrialisation of the Western European nations and the way those nations established a controversial network with peripheral countries. That is, underdevelopment as the underside of the capitalist world system benefited the advanced economies. According to Furtado, “underdevelopment is not a necessary stage in the process of the formation of modern capitalist economies”; rather, it is “a particular process resulting from the penetration of modern capitalist enterprises into archaic structures” (2009, p171). The dualism of relying on a pre-capitalist agrarian-exporting system and yet having to trade with capitalist industrial economies characterises the phenomenon of underdevelopment in Brazil. “The relations that exist between these two types of society involve forms of dependence that tend to self-perpetuate” (Furtado, 2014, p88). Other thinkers have also referred to this sort of relationship as dependency

capitalism (Sampaio Júnior, 1999) or the national-dependent society (Bresser-Pereira, 2012).

In a theoretical debate dominated by European and North-American perspectives, Furtado took account of the underdevelopment discussion from within. To solve the dualistic problem, he invested in a national-development mindset based on State intervention in the economy that would modernise the country and safeguard its internal market. That mindset was in tune with the country's political mood at that time, the creation of modernist Brasília being its most obvious example, as will be discussed in chapter 3. Regardless his industrialist-bourgeois viewpoint that never completely broke with the ideology of progress (Borja, 2013), Furtado identified with a leftist discourse whereby economic strategies had to be intrinsically attached to social criteria. For him, "the starting point of the study of development should not be the rate of investment, the capital-output ratio, nor the size of the market, but the horizon of aspirations of the collective in question" (Furtado, 1969, p19). In his view, technical progress in underdeveloped countries brings about social conflict that can only be mitigated by political measures and structural reforms. In this sense, Kay (1991) positions Furtado as a contributor to dependency theory,⁵ developed from the *cepalista* school framework of the 1950s. As soon as transnational capitalism imposed itself, Kay claims that Furtado would remark that "the control of technical progress and imposition of consumption patterns from the centre countries are the key factors which explain the perpetuation of underdevelopment and dependence in the periphery" (ibid, p47). In other words, not only do multinational interventions in the national economy accentuate the concentration of income and the surplus of labour, they also succeed in seducing the peripheral elite, which remains oblivious to the people's real needs.

Although successful in pointing out the specificities of underdevelopment within the Brazilian trajectory (from the colonial economy and slave labour to

⁵ Kay (1991) divides dependency theory into two major branches: reformist (that of Furtado, Sunkel, Cardoso and Faletto, and others) and Marxist or neo-Marxist (that of Ruy Mauro Marini, Theotônio dos Santos, André Gunder Frank, and others). Roughly speaking, whereas the former believes in the modernisation and industrialisation of dependent countries, the latter seeks to break with imperialism and even capitalism itself.

incomplete industrialisation), Furtado's structural-historical method and praxis did not result in the completion of the modernisation process, partly because of a continued dependency status. The twentieth-century modern project was mainly carried forward by the democratic presidential mandates of Getúlio Vargas (1951-1954), Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961), and João Goulart (1961-1964), and the military dictatorial mandates that followed. Apart from the building of Brasília, it could be said that the construction of the Perimetral Elevated Highway in Rio de Janeiro (inaugurated in 1960) and the Trans-Amazonian Highway (1972) stand as concrete translations of that mindset. Even more so, the controversies attached to their construction also expose their failures as modern projects, as I will discuss in chapters 3, 4 and 5 by looking at films such as *The Age of Stone* (A Idade da Pedra, 2013) and *White Out, Black In* (Branco Sai, Preto Fica, 2014) in relation to Brasília; *ExPerimetral* (2016) and *The Harbour* (O Porto, 2014) in relation to the Perimetral Elevated Highway; and *Iracema* (Iracema – Uma Transa Amazônica, 1974-1981) in relation to the Trans-Amazonian Highway.

2.1.1. The Cuban axis

As stated above, the phenomenon of underdevelopment and its concrete manifestations do not only impact on Brazil. In this sense, it should come as no surprise that the first Brazilian publication entirely dedicated to exploring the role played by ruins finds its theoretical axis in the Cuban experience, perhaps the most prominent case study in present-day Latin America. In *Ruinologias*, editors Ana Luiza Andrade, Rodrigo Lopes de Barros and Carlos Eduardo Schmidt Capela deliver an original intermingling of essays aiming to produce “a history forged from an investigative exercise and practice that contemplates, with the ruins, the opening of archives, images and other temporalities” (2016, p27), hence questioning the official version of history built upon traditional historicism. They are rather interested in the “(...) traces and symptoms of an inevitable transit towards a ruined modernity” (ibid, p26). In this regard, the decaying buildings of Havana pervade the book as the leading example of the editors' thesis, as it renders visible “the imbrication between economic vicissitudes and ruination” (ibid, p20).

Much of their argument draws on Antonio José Ponte's short story "An Art of Making Ruins", more specifically, the term *tugurización* that the author coined to refer to the deterioration of the Cuban capital. In it, he criticises what he calls the museification of Havana, that is, the conservation of its dereliction and desertification in the wake of the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959) and US economic embargo. "For Ponte, who defined himself as a ruinologist, Havana is mainly catastrophe and debris. Thus, the museification of the old city coexists with the ruins of its remaining part" (Barros, 2013, p118). Critical of Fidel Castro's regime, Ponte then invents Tuguria as a counteraction. Tuguria is a fictional city below the soil, the underground of the actual city, a sort of upside-down reflection of what happens on the surface: every collapsing building above the ground reappears in Tuguria, as if preserved by memory. "Havana is a bombarded city by a bombing that never took place. Thus, life goes underground. Tuguria, the submerged city, is however fully synchronized to the wasteland that grows on the surface" (ibid, p115). Ultimately, the notion of *tugurización* is "pertinent for reflecting on the degradation of urban space in the present time" (Andrade, Barros, and Capela, 2016, p23) and illuminates the book as a whole. Moreover, this insightful argument enables a reflection that "implies a deterritorialisation and a reterritorialisation which, in a joint operation, helps the configuration of a symbolic space" (ibid, p25).

In this sense, moving images would have a central role in that reconfiguration. In her film analysis of *Suite Habana* (2003), Salomé Aguilera Skvirsky (2013) highlights two characteristics of Havana's ruins framed by documentary-maker, Fernando Pérez, in his incursion into the daily life of residents. The first one has to do with the fact that Havana's ruins contradict the classical notion of ruins. "Conventionally, ruins are uninhabited. People don't live in them, and that is what makes them haunting or uncanny. But the majority of Cuba's so-called ruins are still inhabited" (ibid, p429). For Andrade, Barros, and Capela, this situation "reveals how, in Havana, the ruins occupied by the people acquire the power to suggest a decisive contradiction, and even a risk" (2016, p20). In this regard, the contradiction of living in ruins seems like a perfect metaphor for ruins in Latin

America, where “this dynamic between economic and social flourishing and its inevitable decline is recurrent” (ibid).

Secondly, and even more significantly, Skvirsky wisely points out that “the Cuban ruin does not stand as a reproach of modernity, but on the contrary, as a sign of an unfinished or sidetracked modernity” (2013, p430). Even though the Cuban failure refers to the failure of the socialist revolution, one could argue that this sign of incompleteness applies to other underdeveloped economies, including that of Brazil. To make her claim clearer, Skvirsky reminds us that the “post-war European ruin – as depicted in, for example, *Germany Year Zero* or *Paisá* – has never signified backwardness, belatedness, or an incomplete modernity”; rather, “it has signified overdevelopment, the kind of overdevelopment associated with modern warfare and mechanized death”. This sort of explanation allows the author to conclude that “the association of the ruin with *underdevelopment* is unique to the postcolonial context” (ibid, emphasis added), which is pivotal to my argument throughout this section.

Benjamin has also contributed to a sense of ruination that came to be associated with underdeveloped nations, even though not strictly related to the postcolonial context. In “Naples”, an essay conceived with his partner Asja Lacis, he tours the imperial ruins of Italy but writes instead about “a present-day process of decay”, as if “the structuring boundaries of modern capitalism (...) have not yet been established” (Buck-Morss, 1995, p26). Buck-Morss goes even further when claiming that, in their essay, “one sees neither an ancient society nor a modern one, but an improvisatory culture released, and even nourished, by the city’s rapid decay” (ibid, p27). In other words, it is as if Benjamin and Lacis had singled out “the specifically capitalist form of Naples’ underdevelopment” (ibid, pp26-27). Quite surprisingly, I find in Benjamin and Lacis’ “Naples” an element that lies at the core of the conceptualisation of the ruins of underdevelopment, primarily shaped by the connection between Caetano Veloso and Claude Lévi-Strauss. If the Brazilian musician once wrote “Here everything seems/It was still under construction/And is already a ruin”⁶ (Veloso, 1991) inspired by the French

⁶ In the original: “*Aqui tudo parece/Que era ainda construção/E já é ruína*”.

anthropologist view on the New World, Benjamin and Laci's reading of Naples strikes a similar note. "In such corners one can scarcely discern where building is still in progress and where dilapidation has already set in" (1979, p170). In addition, much like Brazil's lack of long-term planning, both authors also state that "porosity results not only from the indolence of the Southern artisan, but also, above all, from the passion for improvisation (...)" (ibid).

2.1.2. Pessimistic views of progress

Brazilian singer, composer, musician and writer, Caetano Veloso is the person who perhaps best synthesised ruins against the national backdrop. To a great extent, guided by Lévi-Strauss' "pessimistic view of progress" (Veloso, 2017, p29), the above-mentioned lyrics of *Fora da Ordem* (Out of Order), released in the album *Circuladô* (1991), seem to emphasise the chronic unfeasibility of Brazil being able to come to terms as a nation and thrive. The dialogue between the Brazilian singer and the French anthropologist animates many of the former's contributions to the national cultural debate, as will be addressed in chapter 4. Interestingly enough, *Tropical Truth*, the title of the singer's memoir, subtly refers to the anthropologist's classical work *Tristes Tropiques*, which had a great impact on the musician. Published in 1955, it was ground-breaking in the field of anthropology, and mandatory for anyone wishing to investigate the foundations of Brazilian identity in the light of Native cultures. During his visits to Brazil (between 1935 and 1939), he spent months travelling to Paraná, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul and Amazonas, Brazilian states far from São Paulo (where he first arrived as a visiting lecturer at the University of São Paulo), in pursuance of making a comparative study of particular indigenous tribes. However, I argue that it was while in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro that he came up with his seminal argument for the very idea of Brazilianness – his impressions of the fresh decadence, or decayed freshness, embedded in the country's DNA.

Wandering in downtown São Paulo, it was as if Lévi-Strauss (1973) was able to capture two opposing yet complementary aspects of Latin America's largest city. Firstly, he perceived a metropolis that strangely worshipped a past not of its own

making. “The Italian colony had erected a statue of Augustus Caesar (...)”, he writes. “It was a life-size bronze reproduction of an antique marble statue, of no great artistic significance, it is true, but deserving of some respect in a town where there was nothing to remind one of any historical event dating back to before the previous century” (ibid, p128). On the other hand, he found time to stare at Praça da Sé, in the very old town of São Paulo, as if realising that a degenerate past was unfolding right there in the present, a past that the city itself seemed unable to acknowledge. “There was the Praça da Sé, the cathedral square, *halfway between a building site and a ruin*” (ibid, p121, emphasis added), at once, an idiosyncratic embodiment of both construction and deconstruction.

The Brazilian sense of ruination suggested by Lévi-Strauss’ *pensée* was the understanding that it was the very basis of nation formation, a fundamental component of it. Shaped by countless economic booms and downfalls, hardcore exploitation and its subsequent contractions, cycles of construction and destruction, it was as if the nation was doomed to failure. That is, progress was conceptualised as conquering territories, exploiting their natural resources and human labour force, and then leaving in order to conquer and exploit somewhere and someone else. What Lévi-Strauss noticed in the fragile urbanisation of Brazilian metropolises was much in tune with that logic. Paying attention to architecture, he managed to understand what the spread of decaying buildings could reveal about a nation per se. For him, the towns of the New World, from the United States down to Brazil, “pass from freshness to decay without ever being simply old” because “the passing of years brings degeneration” to those towns, not enhancement, as is the case of most European ones. Instead, when new districts are created, “they are more like stands in a fairground or the pavilions of some international exhibition, built to last only a few months”. In the loop of rotten modernisation, “the original layout disappears through the demolitions caused by some new building fever”. Impressed by the distinction between the Old and New Worlds, he believes that while “certain European cities sink gently into a moribund torpor; those of the New World live feverishly in the grip of a *chronic disease*; they are perpetually young, yet never healthy” (ibid, pp118-119, emphasis added).

When he finally landed in Rio de Janeiro, Lévi-Strauss had an unexpected reaction to the then capital of Brazil. “The tropics are less exotic than out of date” (ibid, p106), he observed about its city centre. Not much impressed by the natural landscape that had made Rio internationally renowned, the scholar focused instead on the consequences of the unplanned urban fabric for social relations. “Perhaps the problem has now been solved by urbanization, but in 1935 the altimeter unfailingly indicated the place each individual occupied in the social scale: the higher you lived, the lower your status”, he wisely perceived. “The poor were perched high up on the hillsides, in favelas, where a population of Negroes clad in well-washed rags composed lively guitar-melodies which, at carnival time, came down from the hills and invaded the town, together with their inventors” (ibid, p107). Nothing has changed. In fact, *favelas* have continued to sprout in Rio’s hills as a confirmation of Lévi-Strauss’ appropriate “pessimistic view of progress” (Veloso, 2017, p 29), to complete this definition again.

Although Lévi-Strauss’ anthropological work seems decisive in establishing a theoretical approach to the topic, the sense of ruination within the national context had already been hinted at before. It is worth mentioning the ground-breaking sociological works: Gilberto Freyre’s *The Masters and the Slaves* (Casa-grande & Senzala, 1998), Sérgio Buarque de Holanda’s *Roots of Brazil* (Raízes do Brasil, 1995), and Caio Prado Júnior’s *The Colonial Background of Modern Brazil* (Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo, 1961) – all launched before Lévi-Strauss’ book, in 1933, 1936 and 1942, respectively. For Freyre, the very definition of luxury in Brazil, for instance, is contradictory as it contains its opposite within itself: a “morbid, sickly, incomplete luxury”, with “excess in a few things, and this excess at the expense of debts; deficiencies in others” (1998, p38). Holanda centres around the impression that deficiencies were, in fact, an expected outcome, as the “exploitation of the tropics was not really a methodical and rational enterprise, nor did it emanate from a constructive and energetic will: it was rather done with sloppiness and a certain abandonment” (1995, p43). As Prado Júnior points out, Brazil was thought to be put together as a nation “by cycles in time and space alternating between *prosperity and ruin*, which summarizes the economic history of colonial Brazil” (1961, p284, emphasis added). For instance, the monoculture of sugarcane in the Northeast, the

exploration of the gold mines in Minas Gerais state, and the coffee plantations in the São Paulo region are regarded as classical examples of extractivism devoid of long-term planning, relying on enslaved black workers and resulting in the longstanding ruination of indigenous territories, as will be discussed in chapter 5.

Furthermore, Capela (2016) also stresses the contribution of writer, Euclides da Cunha, widely known for the masterpiece *Os Sertões* published in 1902. Translated as *Rebellion in the Backlands*, it is a nonfiction book about the War of Canudos (1893-1897), which took place in the Canudos settlement, Bahia. Led by the messianic figure of Antonio the Counsellor, the community formed by local farmers, former slaves and indigenous peoples rebelled against oppressive Republican values. Although a remarkable historical deed, Capela highlights how the rapid construction of the settlement also foresaw the precariousness of the same project: “As for Canudos, the vertiginous process of growth of the ‘obscure settlement’ (...) is characterised by the absence of planning. It would have been ‘made at random’, so that ‘the new settlement would appear within a few weeks’, and, paradoxically, ‘it was already like ruins. Born old’” (ibid, p301, emphasis added). The imbrication between progress and ruination is also present in an array of his essays, including *Entre As Ruínas* (Amid the Ruins). In it, Cunha specifically comments on the decadence of the coffee plantations in the once thriving region of Vale do Paraíba, in São Paulo. For him, that geography encapsulates both triumph and degradation, and serves as a metaphor for the country as a whole. In analysing some excerpts, Capela gives a clear diagnosis about the apparent contradiction:

Faith in progress, however, did not prevent the acknowledgement that civilisational advancement, in a way that seems only at first glance to be paradoxical, almost always implies destruction. The expansion and conquest of territories, with which the very notion of advancement is materialised, sow ruins. (...) The catchphrase, therefore, demands to be translated: *progress means to overthrow*, it implies damage or a material rearrangement (ibid, p298, emphasis added).

The writings of Lévi-Strauss were very much a reflection of the suspicious notion of modernity that Brazil was emulating in the first decades of the twentieth century. In a sense, his keen perception sheds light on the paradox of having “an

exuberant modernism with a deficient modernization” (2005, p41), as Néstor García Canclini puts it. For Canclini, in Latin America, “modernity, then, is seen as a mask” (ibid, p7), as if it had never been fully achieved – at least from a Eurocentric perspective. In fact, it has to be said that the European experience of modernity is usually mistakenly mobilised when one approaches modernity outside Europe. In the specific case of Latin America, for instance, he famously suggests that modernity should be seen, above all, as the result of the multitemporal heterogeneity of each nation, a sort of peculiar *hybridity* that enables pre-industrial and modern technology, erudite and mass cultures, and indigenous, African and European heritages to chaotically co-exist (ibid). Drawing on Canclini’s influential considerations, Prysthon discusses modernity in Brazil as *peripheral modernity*, that is, a nation marked by “an adhesion (unequal, delayed, naive, but adhesion anyway) to modernity”⁷ (2002, p26).

Peripheral modernity would lie, therefore, in an in-between situation: at the same time as it is seduced by modern European achievements, it finds itself well rooted in a very specific cultural legacy, as Canclini (2005) remarks. Hence, “the inexorable Latin American experience: to be Other and Same, simultaneously, yet unable to fully be either” (Prysthon, 2002, p24). Although Brazilian modernism had São Paulo as its favourite backdrop, Rio de Janeiro was the very first city to be transformed, not just by modern urban planning, but by the modern mindset underpinning it. In other words, the then capital of Brazil proudly embodied the discourse of progress and development propagated at that time, even though it could not cope with the contradictions it entailed. After all, the *Belle Époque* Rio was “urban, sophisticated and, at the same time, *decadent*” (ibid, p35, emphasis added). The target of constant (de)construction, the rotten modernisation of Brazil rendered highly visible the failures of the country guided by a destructive, developmental approach to both the natural and the built environments. This is a mindset that has been updated by neoliberal policies, intensifying the damage to both environments – it is what Avelar calls *neoliberal ruin* or “the destructive

⁷ On the other hand, Prysthon (2002) also considers the risk that a general idea of hybridity could end up facilitating the construction of nationalist discourses in the Latin American context, dismissing, for instance, minority and marginalised groups.

utopia of privatization” (2009, p192) in Lazzara and Unruh’s seminal book mentioned earlier.

For Nelson Brissac Peixoto (2003), the urban environment is precisely a palimpsest, a sort of archaeological site informed by different spaces and times. It bears the mark of the new and the outdated in similar doses – and that balance is what defines it. “Paradoxically, the permanence of these landscapes is evidenced when its next disappearance is announced. It is when its destiny is confirmed: to become ruin. The majesty of the great city is accompanied by its decrepitude” (ibid, p274). Commenting on the advent of the modern city via Benjamin, Peixoto describes it as “the stage of ceaseless transformations, which reveal its precariousness”. Moreover, Peixoto argues that “ruins and construction sites look alike”, as if “death has already taken over the buildings we are building” (ibid, p275). In this sense, it is impossible not to think of the Lévi-Strauss-inspired lyrics of Caetano Veloso as the epitome of modern logic. I argue, however, that *Fora da Ordem* expands that logic: it does not only signpost the destructive premise of modernity, but identifies *the fresh decadence or decayed freshness* in the underdeveloped modern city from a Brazilian point of view.

As highlighted in chapter 1, progress and destruction are necessarily intertwined in the reading of modernity from a Benjaminian perspective. Following on from that, Tim Edensor (2005) relates that sort of imbrication to the late capitalist crisis, famously materialised in the industrial ruins, for instance, of towns in Northern England and North-American Detroit. “The production of spaces of ruination and dereliction are an inevitable result of capitalist development and the relentless search for profit” (ibid, p4). Edensor, however, is particularly “interested in re-evaluating industrial ruins in order to critique the negative connotations with which they are associated in official and common sense thought” (ibid, p17), that is, before capitalism transforms them anew into something profitable. In this regard, it is not difficult to associate his critical viewpoint with the ruins of Machu Picchu, Chichen Itza, and even those of downtown Havana, all turned into tourist attractions, historical areas which are now completely integrated into transnational capitalist profitability. Edensor, aware of how the capitalist system works, pursues an exploration of ruins prior to

them becoming commodities in neoliberal times “because they can’t be commodified without being entirely transformed, they contrast with the spectacles of the postmodern, themed city, and can stimulate imaginative, alternative practices which bring forth alternative and critical forms of consciousness” (ibid, p95).

2.1.3. Cinematic ruins: theoretical notes

The cinema, the modern invention par excellence, certainly plays an important role in exploring possibilities for representation, including for ruins. As Edensor suggests, “the representation of industrial ruins in films exposes, and is imbricated within, certain cultural assumptions about the negative qualities of contemporary cities and urban processes, particularly proffering dystopian visions of a bleak future” (ibid, p35), which may lead to critiques and the development of new courses of action. Considering the dystopian vision, one can easily identify cinematic ruins in action sequences and sci-fi landscapes as reminders of the end of the world as we know it. On the other hand, Edensor also claims that ruins can be positioned “in a celebratory fashion, so that ruins are free from the gloomy constraints of a melancholic imagination, and can equally represent the *fecund*” (ibid, p15, emphasis added). For instance, if ruins can serve as locations for subjects whose identities and activities are historically marginalised, they can also be depicted as sites of resistance and reclaiming. The very structure of ruins is open to interpretation, which potentially means being open to the fecund as well. Cinema, thus, can take advantage of the fact that ruins “contain manifold unruly resources with which people can construct meaning, stories and practices” (ibid, p62) – as put into practice by the documentary-makers in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

With that in mind, Moltke’s (2010) contribution to cinematic ruins is central. In *Ruin Cinema*, he begins his essay by mentioning the Lumière brothers’ *The Demolition of a Wall* (Démolition d’un Mur, 1896). The single-shot film shows workers demolishing a brick wall. A few moments later, the brick wall suddenly collapses. Moltke nonetheless says that the real appeal of the film was when the exhibitors ran the projector backwards to amaze the audience by the brick wall re-

assembling. This anecdote suggests a fascination with modernity through both the cinema, the quintessential modern medium, and the ruins, the inevitable outcome of modern (de)construction fever. As Moltke argues, “the cinema and the ruin plough common epistemological ground: as peculiarly modern forms of grasping contingency and temporality, they activate ways of knowing the past and its relation to the present” (ibid, p396). Evoking a Benjaminian view of the cinema spectator as a ruin traveller, Moltke compares the cinema and ruins in the sense that “ruins represent and activate temporalities every bit as complex as those of the cinema as an indexical medium with the ability to (re)structure and reverse linear time” (ibid, p398), as seen in the Lumière brothers’ film.

By looking closely at the history of cinema, Moltke identifies that “rather than ancient ruins or even the nostalgic ruin of romanticism, it is the quintessentially modern ruin produced by aerial bombing that holds pride of place in the ruin iconography of the cinema” (ibid, p403). In this sense, Italian Neorealism and German Trümmerfilm, postwar cinematic movements deeply influenced not only by aerial bombings but the whole deadly atmosphere of the time, stand as the foremost cinematic imaginary of ruination. According to Moltke, “alongside the patent mythologization of ruins, the cinema’s specific contribution to a postwar ruin aesthetic must also be sought in a more general effect of the transformation of rubble into representation” (ibid, p405). Finally, he also recognises the science fiction genre as being in close dialogue with the aesthetics of ruins, as Edensor (2005) previously pointed out. “Operating in the future anterior, the genre of science fiction projects the temporality of the ruin into the future” (2010, p409), explains Moltke. For him, sci-fi ruins can operate through a variety of approaches, such as the bad development of artificial intelligence, the aftermath of nuclear proliferation and even environmental damage. To a certain extent, the contamination of documentaries by aesthetic and discursive sci-fi strategies revisits that argument in chapter 3, as will be pointed out.

Interestingly, Habib’s (2008) very original contribution to knowledge lies precisely in approaching ruins *in* films without disregarding the materiality of the media. After analysing the emergence of a cinematic regime of ruins (starting with post-war Italian Neorealism and German Trümmerfilm up to postmodern Jean-

Luc Godard's *Germany Year 90 Nine Zero* and Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*), Habib underlines the use of *decaying* film stock by artists Peter Delpeut, Bill Morrison, Angela Ricci Lucchi and Yervant Gianikian in their found footage and archive films. In creating original films out of old film fragments, those artists seem to tackle the essence of the ruin itself, as suggested by Dillon (2011): the end of something (in this case, the decaying film stock) and the beginning of something else (the brand-new narrative that comes up). Although Eurocentric, Habib's doctoral thesis *Le Temps Décomposé: Cinéma et Imaginaire de la Ruine* is a milestone in the field, as it specifically investigates the relationship between the cinema and the imagery/imaginary of ruins. While his focus is exploring film production from the post-war period to the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Habib claims that the presence of ruins throughout the history of cinema could be divided into three broad categories for a "brief typology of ruin in cinema"⁸ (2008, p121): travel, catastrophe and fantasy. That is, ruins are markedly present in travel films, war and period dramas, and sci-fi plots.

In his comparative study of Brazilian and Cuban artwork (cinema, painting, sculpture, literature), Barros (2013) pushes the imaginary of ruins debate onto different ground, taking the particularities of the so-called Third World into account. In bringing that still underexplored relationship to the Latin American context, he addresses a sense of ruination in Brazilian cinema production, one not necessarily within Habib's brief typology. Barros chooses to shed light upon two landmark films from the 1960s, a decade in which national production saw the birth of the Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal's ground-breaking movements. Glauber Rocha's *Entranced Earth* (*Terra em Transe*, 1967) and Rogério Sganzerla's *The Red Light Bandit* (*O Bandido da Luz Vermelha*, 1968) are put forward as cinematic attempts to visually translate the aftermath of the 1964 military coup d'état, emphasising the underdeveloped condition of the country. For Barros, "those are two films trying to make sense of the Third-World chaos" (ibid, pp57-58). He associates those films with the ruination of a country in crisis, drawing on Xavier's (2012) famous reading of their images as *allegories of underdevelopment*, as will be discussed in the next section. While this field of

⁸ All translations from French to English are mine, unless stated otherwise.

research is still in its early stage, two notions of ruins in the context of Brazilian cinema production seem to follow on from Barros' (2013) argument.

Denilson Lopes coined the term *poor ruins* to emphasise the role of ordinary, extemporaneous ruins in a Third-World atmosphere, that is, ruins that “are not monuments nor the master houses marked by the gloomy decadence” (2016, p346). His essay is focused on Julia Murat's *Found Memories* (*Histórias Que Só Existem Quando Lembradas*, 2012), a fictional film about the arrival of a young photographer in a small village in Vale do Paraíba, a region historically marked by decadent coffee plantations, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. Lopes, however, attempts to underline the quality of the place as outside time, dissociated from any specific historical context, as if those ruins have always been there, regardless of the story being told – an approach that does not seem keen to explore more deeply the particularities of the ruinous state of Brazil. In this sense, I would argue that Prysthon's (2017) *disappearing landscapes* notion better relates to the critique of progress that this thesis addresses. Her analysis privileges films that denounce – sometimes directly, sometimes allegorically – the socioeconomic implications that have altered the landscapes of Northeastern Brazil, such as Gabriel Mascaro's *Defiant Brasília* (*Avenida Brasília Formosa*, 2010), and Kleber Mendonça Filho's *Neighbouring Sounds* (*O Som ao Redor*, 2012). Prysthon acknowledges “the production of images of transition that register the disappearance of forms of life, changes of the landscape and the ruins both of old ways of life and the novelties of predatory capitalism – that in some ways are born already obsolete” (ibid, p16). Curiously, Peixoto puts his trust in the filmmaker as one with the means to capture and reflect on that kind of scenery. “Lost in a world that one no longer recognises and in a cinema whose conditions of production one does not control, the filmmaker tries once more to preserve what is ending, the images that seem to no longer exist, that have lost all sense” (1987, p191). Will the filmmaker be successful?

To a certain extent, Prysthon's (2017) view concurs with Barros' (2013) view of the process of ruination in the Third-World environment. “The Third World did not become a ruin. It was born a ruin. The Third World – as other significant phenomena of the twentieth century, especially modern warfare – contradicts the

classical idea of ruins itself” (ibid, p260), he concludes after discussing *Entranced Earth* and *The Red Light Bandit* alongside other Latin American artworks. His notion of *Third World ruins* exposes a contradiction that is precisely what makes the new investigation of ruins so challenging yet so fertile – one that features a “radical potential” (2011, p18), as Dillon puts it. In this regard, the everlasting impact of the revolutionary 1960s on contemporary Brazilian cinema is crucial to investigate notions of progress and (under)development through moving images. Cinema Novo (alongside Cinema Marginal and Tropicália) was responsible for forging a certain idea of Brazilianness that resonates to this day, one that brought such controversial notions to the centre of the debate. The cinematic representation of the destructiveness of modernity figures as one of that movement’s main features – something that contemporary documentary-making will recontextualise and relate to draconian neoliberal measures in the present. In the following section, I will discuss the contribution of Cinema Novo to establishing a sense of ruination within the national production.

2.2. Cinema Novo: a country in crisis

Cinema Novo was not only a ground-breaking movement which challenged the discourse and the aesthetics of films being made at a specific time in history; its legacy turned out to be a paradigm, whether to be followed or deconstructed, as will be discussed in the following chapters. Most importantly, Cinema Novo played a key role in questioning notions of progress and (under)development for the first time in Brazilian cinema, a critical stance that grew stronger in the wake of the election of left-wing President João Goulart in 1961. Indeed, that was a period that favoured the work of the leftist filmmakers who made up the movement – Glauber Rocha, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Carlos Diegues, Leon Hirzsmann, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, and Ruy Guerra, among others. In that same year, the episodic film *Favela X Five* (Cinco Vezes Favela), considered one of the first Cinema Novo outputs, was produced with the support of the newly formed Popular Culture Centre (CPC). Both *Favela X Five* (that is, Cinema Novo) and CPC (under the umbrella of the socially committed Brazilian National Union of Students) were aimed at “rethinking what popular culture was and how it could

be expressed and channelled for revolutionary purposes” (Shaw and Dennison, 2007, p82).

In that decade, Cinema Novo spread its iconoclastic, anti-imperialist discourse across an industry then satisfied with by the popularity of the *chanchadas*⁹, a cinematic reflection of the lack of political awareness of the (neo)colonised Third-World bourgeoisie. Mainly based in Rio de Janeiro, the *cinemanovistas* wanted to report social inequalities by shedding light upon the *favela* (the urban shantytowns) and the *sertão* (the Northeastern backlands), disregarded yet meaningful spaces where social contradictions were clearly visible. That spatial regime shift was one of their first and foremost achievements, one that provoked discussions around the representation of the people and the underdeveloped condition to which the people was subjected. As Zuzana M. Pick claims, “the movement asserted the creation of new expressive spaces” (1993, p190) that finally enabled those discussions to take place. As mentioned above, film space finally went beyond the urban paradigms of cinematic representation, challenging fixed notions of identity and forging new utopias. “Through an oppositional notion of popular cinema, the New Latin American cinema has explored social experiences marginalized and excluded from class-based and homogeneous representation of nationhood” (ibid, p8). With that in mind, spatial representation becomes key for *cinemanovistas* to expose and reflect upon the failures of “a modernity based on self-confident promises of progress” (ibid, p194) that were never kept.

Needless to say, Cinema Novo was part of a *continental project*, a major phenomenon concerning the underdeveloped condition of Latin America,¹⁰ as

⁹ The term *chanchadas* was coined by film critics during the 1930s to refer to light, musical comedies that were inspired by a Hollywood formula but challenged them through parody. In Rio de Janeiro, Atlântida studios (1941-1962) heavily invested in the genre to promote carnival music at the time. For more details see Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison’s *Brazilian National Cinema* (2007).

¹⁰ Even though aesthetically diverse, the unity of the Marxist discourse within the plurality of regional cultures was a mark of the rise of Third Cinema. All films and manifestos had at least two major objectives in common: firstly, they were aimed at fighting against Hollywood and European classical narrative styles, so that filmmakers could nurture an authentic cinematic language and alternative modes of production and exhibition; and secondly, in so doing, they sought to raise

Pick (ibid) famously put it with regard to the New Latin American Cinema. Apart from the films produced in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Cuba, many filmmakers also wrote manifestos addressing that condition. In 1962, Argentinian, Fernando Birri stated that the kind of cinema that the underdeveloped peoples of Latin America needed was “a cinema which develops them”, that is, “which helps the passage from underdevelopment to development, from sub-stomach to stomach, from sub-culture to culture, from sub-happiness to happiness, from sub-life to *life*” (2014, p211). After the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959), Latin American artists felt that an ideological agenda could be developed through the cinema, considering the political potential of the medium, “a weapon against social alienation” (Pick, 1993, p101). In 1969, Argentinians, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino underlined underdevelopment itself as a hindrance to regional filmmaking. “Some of the circumstances that delayed the use of films as a revolutionary tool until a short time ago were lack of equipment, technical difficulties, the compulsory specialization of each phase of work, and high costs” (1997, p44). Once that cinema became viable, however, it was to undertake a key double mission. “The cinema of the revolution is at the same time one of *destruction and construction*: destruction of the image that neocolonialism has created of itself and of us, and construction of a throbbing, living reality which recaptures truth in any of its expressions” (ibid, p46).

In terms of aesthetics, Cinema Novo set new rules for depicting reality in both fictional and nonfictional realms; moreover, it contributed to blurring the boundaries between the two domains. To a certain extent, this set of new rules was influenced by the post-war Italian Neorealism and French New Wave cinema. All three had in common the aim to subvert the bourgeois, classical narrative in vogue. The French New Wave, in particular, inspired *cinemanovistas* by its *politique des auteurs* developed by François Truffaut and his peers, positioning the filmmaker as the author of the film. Glauber Rocha, however, related the *politique des auteurs* to cultural politics being subjected to economic underdevelopment, shying away from authorship as no more than an aesthetic concern. “He placed authorship at the center of an oppositional practice capable of

awareness of the impact of imperialism and (neo)colonialism on so-called peripheral, marginalised societies (Pick, 1993).

contesting the thematics and politics of modernization and nationalization” (Pick, 1993, p40). Cinema Novo had a closer relationship with Italian Neorealism, in the use of real locations and non-professional actors, strategies that the popular *chanchadas*, for instance, had never used. Also, as Moltke (2010) stressed, Italian Neorealism has an intrinsic link to cinematic ruination due to the context wherein it was born and the endeavour to film the ruined reality outdoors. Unsurprisingly, that stance resonates with *cinemanovistas* and their willingness to make films marked by their specific context and whose stories were shaped by the local reality, one deeply affected by economic underdevelopment and the ruinous consequences thus engendered.

Technically speaking, much of the innovative aesthetics of Cinema Novo relied on the limited conditions of the mode of production, which influenced the use of the camera and sound system, indeed, much like Italian Neorealism. Most importantly, cinematography and sound editing ended up mirroring the dramaturgy, that is, they aimed to technically transmit the sense of reality attached to the story being narrated. One of the best examples of that equation might be Nelson Pereira dos Santos’ *Barren Lives* (*Vidas Secas*, 1963). Filming in the *sertão*, the director of photography, Luiz Carlos Barreto innovatively opted for using no filter, so that the camera would allow the audience to witness the harsh, bright light of the region. Following the same purpose, the sound had no additional orchestral soundtrack added in postproduction. Instead, the sounds captured *in loco*, like the creaking wheels of an ox cart, were used as diegetic (accompanying the image of an ox cart *per se*) but also as non-diegetic sound (creating an innovative soundtrack from it). Based on Graciliano Ramos’ 1938 seminal novel of the same name, the film charts the story of a poverty-stricken family in the backlands of Brazil. Along with Ruy Guerra’s *The Guns* (*Os Fuzis*, 1964) and Glauber Rocha’s *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, 1964), they form “the memorable trilogy of the arid northeast” (Stam and Xavier, 1997, p299).

In this sense, the bleak scenarios depicting inequality and roughness in many Cinema Novo outputs were partly a thematic choice and partly the result of the precarious mode of production. That is, both the form and the content bear the

marks of underdevelopment. Even though more recent re-evaluations of Third Cinema foreground its exile and diaspora topics of filmmaking, challenging fixed notions of the centre and periphery, East and West, developed and underdeveloped (Naficy, 2001), the initial years of the movement were quite clear about what to target and whom to blame in the context of the 1960s. As previously mentioned, in Brazil, economist Celso Furtado's body of work is deemed a landmark in the reading of underdevelopment. Furthermore, his critical thinking gradually took account of the imbrication between the economy and culture and how that imbrication was the key for Brazil to overcome its underdeveloped condition. Later in his career, Furtado even became Minister of Culture and was involved in a series of projects to enable cultural initiatives to be carried forward. For him, "overcoming the structural impasse that is at the root of our crisis will only be achieved if future development leads to a growing homogenisation of our society and the opening up of space for the realisation of the potential of our culture" (2012, p33). Furtado's timely contribution was therefore in tune with the discourse that *cinemanovistas* were about to propagate through moving images.

The notion of underdevelopment as intrinsic not only to Cinema Novo but Brazilian cinema production as a whole was widely explored by Paulo Emílio Sales¹¹ Gomes¹² (1996). Written in 1973, *Cinema: A Trajectory within Underdevelopment* is an essay specifically addressing underdevelopment through and within Brazilian cinema history. To achieve that, Gomes considers five periods, from the arrival of the cinematograph up to the then newly emerged Cinema Novo (1896-1966). He tells of the endeavours to make films in spite of a complete lack of technical and economic support, irrespective of the international development of industrial technology. The advent of cinema, "this fruit of the acceleration of technical and scientific progress found Brazil stagnating in underdevelopment" (ibid, p8), as Rio de Janeiro, the then federal capital, did not

¹¹ Depending on the publication, his surname is often spelled in two different ways, with an L or double L.

¹² Recently, editors Maite Conde and Stephanie Dennison published an anthology that brings together his most influential essays for an English-speaking audience, showing how Gomes' ideas of a national cinema were developed in dialogues with international trends. For more details see *Paulo Emílio Sales Gomes: On Brazil and Global Cinema* (2018).

even have a stable electricity supply. Also, he complains that the way Brazilians deal so carelessly with their past makes it impossible to overcome the condition of underdevelopment. “The sloppiness about the past explains not only the abandonment of the national archives but the impossibility of creating a cinematheque” (ibid, p7).

When it comes to analysing film production per se, Gomes emphasises the role of the cultural colonialism imposed by Hollywood films in Brazil. Because of being subjected to “one of the laws of underdevelopment: the premature decays” (ibid, p10), every time national production came to a halt, foreign production had the advantage to attract an audience. “In reality, they find only a false compensation, a diversion that prevents them from recognising their frustration, the first step in overcoming it” (ibid, p110). Caught between the passivity of the bourgeois audience and the financial issues preventing production from rebounding, “Brazilian cinema does not have the strength to escape underdevelopment” (ibid, p111). After analysing the national cinema trajectory, Gomes ends up paraphrasing Furtado’s guidelines: “In cinema, underdevelopment is not a phase, a stage, but a state: films from developed countries never went through that situation, whereas others tend to settle into it” (ibid, p85). On the other hand, it was that somewhat ruinous scenario which allowed Cinema Novo to thrive in both its discourse and aesthetics, as pointed out. One could think of, for instance, Linduarte Noronha’s short documentary *Aruanda* (1960), precisely “the eloquent expression of a cinema that triumphs from underdevelopment” (Bernardet, 2003, p221), in one of the very first gestures of the movement. According to Ramos, “there is no way one can deny that the precarious image goes hand in hand with the rough and poor reality in which the film is made” (2013, p326), referring to the technical limitations that led cinematographer Rucker Vieira to use natural light, which ended up giving the film an unusual burst of cinematography, similar to what would occur to *Barren Lives*, as mentioned earlier.

In tune with Gomes’ rhetoric, the background of turmoil wherein Brazilian cinema/Cinema Novo developed was quintessentially captured by Glauber

Rocha¹³ in his “Aesthetics of Hunger” manifesto, originally published in 1965. “For the European observer, the processes of artistic creation in the underdeveloped world are of interest only insofar as they satisfy his nostalgia for primitivism; and this primitivism is (...) poorly understood since it is imposed by colonial conditioning” (Rocha, 2017). In forging a genuine cinematic language, the *cinemanovista* understands hunger not as a symptom but as the essence of Brazilian society, and that Cinema Novo films were able to transform social criticism into a central political issue. “From *Aruanda to Vidas Secas* [*Barren Lives*], Cinema Novo narrated, described, poetized, discoursed, analyzed, aroused the themes of hunger (...). What has made Cinema Novo a phenomenon of international relevance is precisely its deep engagement with the truth, its miserabilism (...)”. Aware of the conditions of production, that is, aware of the underdevelopment attached to Cinema Novo, he explains:

We know – since we made these ugly, sad films, these screaming, desperate films in which reason has not always prevailed – that this hunger will not be cured by moderate government reforms, and that the cloak of technicolor cannot hide but rather aggravates its tumors. Therefore, only a culture of hunger, by undermining and destroying its own structures, can qualitatively surpass itself. The most noble cultural manifestation of hunger is violence. (...) Cinema Novo, on the international level, demanded nothing; it fought the violence of its images and sounds in twenty-two international festivals.

The *ugly films* of Cinema Novo, as famously defined by the director, acknowledged the failures of Brazil as a nation, while conceiving of the urgent social revolution that their images could yield. Six years after writing “Aesthetics of Hunger”, however, he reassessed his account of the mid-1960s and stepped back from the more explicitly political discourse against underdevelopment in the “Aesthetics of Dreaming”.¹⁴ “Between the internal repression and the

¹³ Both a filmmaker and a theorist, Cinema Novo leader critically revised the history of Brazilian cinema in *Revisão Crítica do Cinema Brasileiro* (2003), originally launched in 1963, and later took account of the contribution of his movement in *Revolução do Cinema Novo* (2004), in 1981. In 1983, *O Século do Cinema* (2006) was released posthumously. Responsible for the re-launch of the books, Xavier also edited *On Cinema* (2019), gathering many of Glauber Rocha's writings to English-speaking readers for the first time.

¹⁴ Full manifestos available at: http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/891_the_aesthetics_of_hunger_and_the_aesthetics_of_dreaming

international repercussion, I learned the best of lessons: artists must always keep their freedom above all circumstances”. His second manifesto emphasises his Afro-Indian sensibility and defends popular culture as the people’s “language of a permanent, historical rebellion”. If his first manifesto was his “rational comprehension of poverty”, Glauber Rocha then invested in a mystical approach to combat domination. “Dreaming is the only right that cannot be forbidden” (ibid).

This complex debate was the main focus of film scholar Ismail Xavier when addressing the *allegories of underdevelopment* turned visible in Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal films. His film analyses were more than a critical account of what Brazilian society was undergoing as framed by filmmakers; his work brought to the attention the motif of underdevelopment as a common thread in those films and placed it as central to an understanding of Brazil. For him, “underdevelopment as a dramatic condition should come to the fore in films fighting the rules of spectacle and market culture, factors seen as part of a reproductive system of poverty and inequality” (2012, p14). In his interpretation of the political moment in which Cinema Novo came to prominence, he argues that:

(...) the cinema discussion, when politicising itself, assimilated the equation of poverty and social inequality as expressed in the notion of underdevelopment which, formulated in the economic sphere, assumed the principle that that was not just a new description of the distance between the poor and the rich, centre and periphery, but the elucidation of a structure to be fought (ibid).

Considering that *zeitgeist*, filmmakers were to elaborate on the tension between industrialisation and emancipation in the wake of the 1964 military coup d’état and even more so after the Institutional Act N°5 (AI-5) issued in 1968, which suspended any constitutional guarantees to citizens – a coup within the coup. In this sense, what emerges on screen is “a field of reflection detached from the conservative tradition, but mistrustful of progress, its organizational elements, its power structure” (ibid, p447). In other words, films were to deny the “heroic of development” and rather invest in the “urban experience within the framework of

underdevelopment” (ibid, p450). According to Xavier, they do so by resorting to visual allegories, a strategy that found adepts in the arts of the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on Benjamin’s defense of allegories as acknowledging the dissociation between man and nature (that is, the human experience free from pre-conceived truths and open to the circumstances of an historical period), Xavier is precisely interested in exploring the fractures that that dissociation brings about. The allegorical discourse is made of gaps that not only require to be filled, but that ultimately expose the fragmentary aspect of history. History *as* catastrophe. Therefore, “the allegorical sensibility – in the sense of fragmentary vision – has a revolutionary role: it faces a crisis masked by the bourgeois optimism of progress. (The revolutionary class is one that sees the bourgeois achievements of today as already ruins)” (ibid, p474).

As soon as President João Goulart was ousted by the military coup, not only was the country dragged into a crisis but so were the *cinemanovistas*. As a collateral effect, the coup rendered explicit the “contradictions embodied in the winners as progress, continuity, and the defeated as disaster, discontinuity” (ibid, p15), as Xavier stresses. In his analysis of the *allegories of underdevelopment*, he thoroughly covers the double shift provoked by reality: the teleological crisis regarding the project of national liberation over international dependency, and the teleological crisis faced by avant-garde programs, such as Cinema Novo itself. In that scenario, films had to adjust to the new reality of the country by inventing allegories to cope with that same reality. Xavier then scrutinises productions that brought a sense of catastrophe to the fore when unpacked “an allegorical place marked by an array of iniquities, inconsistencies, anomie, violence, fragmentation or constitutive incompetence (...)” (ibid, p17). He analyses a group of films released between 1967 and 1970 in order to identify the different forms of narrating the chaos installed, which emerged as three: the breakdown of traditional teleology marked by the installation of the military dictatorship (*Black God, White Devil, Entranced Earth, The Red Light Bandit*); the emergence of antiteleological themes, albeit with a teleological representation (*Brazil Year 2000, Macunaíma, Antonio das Mortes*); and finally the radical, antiteleological mode of representation (*Killed the Family and Went to the Movies, The Angel Was Born, Bang Bang*).

Xavier's (ibid) point of departure is Rocha's¹⁵ *White God, Black Devil*, the foremost example attempting to translate the mood of the early 1960s, framing a pre-military-coup society in which the oppressed have a vocation for freedom. The film articulates a classic teleology in the sense that the narrative embodies a utopian national project, leaving the rotten past behind and looking at a revolutionary future ("the *sertão* will turn into the sea, the sea will turn into the *sertão*"¹⁶). The people, represented by Manuel (Geraldo Del Rey) and Rosa (Yoná Magalhães), fight to overcome oppression and misery. The coup, of course, interrupts that utopian national liberation project. The imposed mindset shift can be first noted in the director's next film, *Entranced Earth*, when classical teleology is fractured in the face of the failure. The political crisis thus prompts a crisis in the narrative, here represented by Paulo Martins (Jardel Filho), a tormented left-wing poet. A Cinema Novo leading light, he changed his approach to cinematic representation when writing "Aesthetics of Dreaming", as referred above. Leaving the aesthetics of hunger behind, the director maximises his allegorical, baroque strategies in *The Age of the Earth* (*A Idade da Terra*, 1980), his final film,¹⁷ as I will discuss in chapter 3.

Presumably, the allegorical take had a central role during that period due to censorship, but Xavier goes beyond that more obvious explanation. For him, "apart from programmed schemes of communication and disguise, each work studied has an expressive dimension: it is capable of condensing a reflection, sometimes implicit, of the filmmaker in the face of the crisis" (ibid, p31).

Furthermore, each allegory "has a specific way of articulating two temporalities:

¹⁵ Xavier (2007) specifically analyses Glauber Rocha's body of work in *Sertão Mar: Glauber Rocha e A Estética da Fome*.

¹⁶ This is a mythical phrase of Brazilian culture attributed to the messianic figure, Antonio the Counsellor, mentioned above. For *White God, Black Evil*, Glauber Rocha included the phrase as part of the lyrics of the song played in the cathartic, final sequence of the film. Since then, "the *sertão* will turn into the sea, the sea will turn into the *sertão*" has been mobilised to refer to a utopian gesture in relation to the national underdeveloped condition. For more details see Lúcia Nagib's *Brazil on Screen: Cinema Novo, New Cinema and Utopia* (2007).

¹⁷ Considering their Portuguese titles, Nagib underlines that "the term *terra* (land) connects three Rocha films which became known as the *trilogia da terra*, or 'land trilogy'" (2011, p132). In each, the use of *land* acquires a different meaning: land as motherland, land as a mythical Latin American Eldorado, and land as a political aspect of global resonance.

that of the historical experience narrated and that of the film itself in its internal arrangement” (ibid, p34). In contemporary Brazilian cinema, however, criticism and creativity are not necessarily indebted to the allegorical discourse but, rather, to aesthetic experimentation. Although the will to politically intervene in society has not vanished, Xavier himself argues that that will is now pervaded by scepticism and doubt regarding the effectiveness of interventions. “This is a problem that everyone shares, those who lived in the 60s and 70s and the filmmakers of the new generations, whose relationship with the past – as a source of inspiration or refusal – has a strong point of reference in modern cinema” (ibid, p8), as the selected corpus in this thesis demonstrates.

Identifying less with traditional militancy and subsidised through unique modes of financing, present-day films resonate that tradition especially “when the relations between aesthetics and politics, conventions and ruptures, insertion in the parameters of the cultural industry or affirmation of alternative languages are on the agenda” (ibid, p9). For Xavier, “the documentary, sometimes on the frontier of the essay film, has affirmed itself as a pool of creativity whose research methods drive the more dense, critical reflection about new forms of representation or question the image as representation” (ibid, p10). In this regard, my analysis is precisely interested in that crop of films: films that relate to the 1960s and 1970s tradition – *as a source of inspiration or refusal* – and which resort to the documentary mode to render visible the ruins of underdevelopment in Brazil. Here, I am not devoted to reading potential allegories into those films; rather, I focus my analysis on the film strategies used to render ruins visible and why present-day filmmakers aim to shed light on them as a way to articulate their critique of progress and (under)development.

2.2.1. Documentary impulse as revolutionary cinema

Undeniably, the nonfictional aspect of filmmaking became a central issue for many Cinema Novo/New Latin American Cinema directors, as Julianne Burton (1990) argues. Besides Italian Neorealism and French New Wave, innovations led by North-American Direct Cinema and French Cinéma Vérité also affected how

cinemanovistas addressed reality. Direct Cinema brought the fly-on-the-wall, observational mode while Cinéma Vérité introduced an interactive, participatory mode of representation, as categorised by Nichols (1991). “Socially committed filmmakers embraced documentary approaches as their primary tool in the search to discover and define the submerged, denied, devalued realities of an intricate palimpsest of cultures and castes” (Burton, 1990, p6), that palimpsest being the boundaries of Latin America. “This documentary impulse”, she insists, “and the frequent aesthetic preference for a raw realism that replicated the compelling immediacy of certain techniques of reportage, has marked much of the fictional production throughout the region” (ibid), similar to what Luiz Carlos Barreto, a news photographer, used in *Barren Lives*. By raw realism or critical realism, she means an attempt to frame reality by immersion into a specific environment, unlike the *chanchadas* of Atlântida or the classical cinema of Vera Cruz.¹⁸ Burton stresses the pioneering work of Argentinian Fernando Birri, whose Documentary School of Santa Fe famously put into action the “documentary impulse – to record the unrecorded as it ‘really was’ – with fictive strategies – a narrative and poetic recreation of events” (ibid, p408), what would become a symbol of the New Latin American Cinema.

Indeed, Birri addressed documentary-making in his manifesto about cinema and underdevelopment, with the latter being the outcome of colonialism, “both external and internal” (2014, p217). For him, “the cinema of our countries shares the same general characteristics of this superstructure, of this kind of society, and presents us with a false image of both society and our people”. It is in this sense that the documentary mode comes to the fore in his argument as a way of engaging with reality and providing real images of it at last. “By testifying, critically, to this reality – sub-reality, this misery – cinema refuses it. It rejects it. It denounces, judges, criticises and deconstructs it”. Of course, one should bear in mind that the documentary mode was taken as a conveyor of reality without

¹⁸ In São Paulo, bourgeois intellectuals founded the Vera Cruz film company (1949-1954) inspired by the international studio system. Initially rejecting the *chanchada* style in favour of drama films, it also invested in popular comedies, namely those of comedian, Mazaropi. Although successful for a while, the studio was forced into bankruptcy due to management problems and commercial failure. For more details see Shaw and Dennison’s *Brazilian National Cinema* (2007).

necessarily incurring discussions about viewpoints, perspectives, subjectivity, or even the concept of reality itself – something that would be seen as intrinsic to that mode in contemporary production, as will be discussed. At the time, however, the alternative was “a cinema which makes itself the accomplice of underdevelopment” (ibid). In a similar vein, Solanas and Getino added weight to nonfictional strategies. “The cinema known as documentary, with all the vastness that the concept has today, from educational films to the reconstruction of a fact or a historical event, is perhaps the main basis of revolutionary filmmaking” (1997, p46). To a certain degree, they had already taken account of filmmaking’s capacity for *interacting* with so-called reality, as “revolutionary cinema is not fundamentally one which illustrates, documents, or passively establishes a situation: *rather, it attempts to intervene in the situation as an element providing thrust or rectification*” (ibid, p47) – a critical stance that realises the documentary’s power to elaborate on what is usually taken for granted.

In his analysis of the sense of ruination related to the rise of a new cinema in Latin America (especially in Brazil and Cuba), Barros (2013) emphasises the documentary mode as a pivotal point to be tackled. He understands that new cinema as “a machine of establishment of stories that intend to be officialized”, being “the documentary the perfect weapon for that, for it is based on a presupposition that is the capture of a certain exteriority of the world” (ibid, p29). For instance, the author mentions the use of scenes in *Entranced Earth* that were shot during the electoral campaign of José Sarney, who decades later would become President of Brazil. Those scenes were originally shown in *Maranhão 66* (1966), a short documentary directed by Glauber Rocha. In fact, his body of work salutes the documentary mode on different occasions, from *Amazonas, Amazonas* (1965), his debut short documentary, up to *Di* (1977) about the death of the legendary Brazilian painter, Di Cavalcanti. For Barros, “(...) the new cinema, the revolutionary cinema or the cinema of the revolution, is nothing but an invasion of the documentary into fictional work” (ibid).

With that in mind, it goes without saying that the origins of Cinema Novo already had close ties to nonfictional values, such as the use of real locations, natural light, non-professional actors, and an in-depth concern with social issues.

Considered the germ of the movement, Nelson Pereira dos Santos' *Rio, 40 Degrees* subverts classical fiction by incorporating nonfictional elements into its narrative, deeply influenced by Italian Neorealism. It was one of the first times¹⁹ that a film crew had gone up into the hills of Rio de Janeiro to film a real *favela*, an achievement that has influenced Brazilian filmmaking to date. The camera follows five boys who live in the *favela* but make a living out of selling peanuts around the upper-class neighbourhood of Copacabana. In a semi-documentary style, *Rio, 40 Degrees* foregrounded the cinematic representation of ordinary people and the tension between them and the elite, which would later constitute a central point in the discourse of *cinemanovistas* (Ramos, 1987a). By the end of the 1950s, two short-documentaries contributed to the debate around the representation of the people. Although still in tune with classical documentary grammar via the traditional voice-over, Mário Carneiro and Paulo César Saraceni's *Arraial do Cabo* (1959), and Linduarte Noronha's *Aruanda* (1960, but produced in 1959) moved away from the urban environment in the search to unveil another Brazil.

In *Arraial do Cabo*, the scene is a small fishing village whose fishing livelihood is menaced by the arrival of an industrial factory, causing human and environmental damage to the area. In *Aruanda*, the population in the Quilombo da Talhada, a former Black hub of resistance during the time of slavery in the Northeastern state of Paraíba, lives in precarious conditions while the country was being rapidly industrialised in far-away urban areas. According to Jean-Claude Bernardet (2003), it was precisely in the 1950s that that sense of concern, from what he calls *critical short films*, was first aroused on screen. Both documentaries shed light upon and seem to question notions of progress and (under)development defended by both the Brazilian State and a certain Brazilian elite. Most importantly, they produce images of the people.²⁰ “*Aruanda* and *Arraial do Cabo* are already fully

¹⁹ Alex Viany (1993) stresses that Humberto Mauro's *Shantytown of My Love* (Favela dos Meus Amores, 1934) had previously brought the 'morro' (the 'hill', in English) to the screen as a means of associating the *favela* with a sense of Brazilianness that was being developed in that decade. Marcos Napolitano (2009), however, underlines that, although the shooting had taken place in Morro da Providência, the atmosphere was more of exoticism rather than realism in Santos' film.

²⁰ Ramos (2013) highlights the work of filmmaker Humberto Mauro (1897-1983) portraying the Brazilian people in the documentary series *Brasilianas* (1945-1956). Even though commissioned

attuned to the sensitivity of the new cinema, but their narrative form is still classical” (Ramos, 2013, p324). What *Rio 40 Degrees*, *Arraial do Cabo* and *Aruanda* introduced was to be developed in subsequent documentaries produced from the 1960s onwards. The desire to frame the *other*, so that the real Brazil could be revealed; the depiction of different spatialities underlining the state of negligence affecting the people; and the assimilation of technical precariousness into aesthetics formed the basis for the new production to take over. While not specifically relying on decaying film stocks, as Habib (2008) might have expected, the idea of precarity here suggests a cinematic domain that anticipates many of the discussions concerning the imagery/imaginary of ruins.

Nevertheless, the documentary-makers would inevitably face controversy in their attempts to depict that *other*. The controversy lies in the tension caused by the fact that filmmakers were not exactly part of the *other*; on the contrary, they belonged to the middle-class or even upper-class, different from the people they wanted to frame. The contradiction between wanting to film the world (going out onto the streets, interviewing the people, being open at random) and, at the same time, wanting to voice their concerns as filmmakers (the use of the didactic voice-over) characterised what Bernardet (2003) famously defined as a *sociological model* of documentary. According to him, documentary-makers resorted to individual interviews making general statements about a given topic, as if a personal opinion could stand as official discourse. Therefore, “cinematic images of the people cannot be considered their expression, but the manifestation of the relationship between filmmakers and the people in those films”, as Bernardet (*ibid*, p9) affirms. Even though that model went through changes and ruptures throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Bernardet argues that the so-called *other* would still be the *other* until the day when he/she truly take ownership of the means of production to interpret the failures of underdevelopment and other matters.

In effect, Bernardet’s criticism of Cinema Novo’s middle-class stance is well known, and materialised in his famous analysis of the character, Antonio das

by the National Institute of Educational Cinema (INCE), Ramos points out the authorial aspect of the short documentaries as a remarkable attempt to subvert the official language in documenting the people.

Mortes, in *Black God, White Devil* and *Antonio das Mortes* (O Dragão da Maldade Contra o Santo Guerreiro, 1969). Antonio das Mortes represents the *bad conscience* of the middle class, that is, the *bad conscience* of Glauber Rocha and, in the end, of all leftist, progressive intellectuals at that time – including Bernardet himself. Antonio das Mortes is a contradiction (he is *for* the people but not *of* the people) which reveals what Bernardet deemed to be an illusion: “Brazilian cinema is not a popular cinema; it is a cinema of the middle class that searches for its political, social, cultural and cinematic way” (2007, p184). Ultimately, Bernardet, then a young film critic and scholar, is audaciously reflecting on those films in the heat of the moment, wondering what sort of cinema it was that only had white middle-class men, a “cinema without tradition and born in an underdeveloped country”, and where it was heading to now that words like imperialism and nationalism were in vogue. “What directions does it take? What forms does it create? What reality does it focus on?” (ibid, p35). It seems those remain open questions.

2.2.2. Branching to Tropicália and Cinema Marginal

Cinema Novo, however, was not the only cultural movement that erupted in modern Brazil to tackle the country’s contradictions. Xavier (2012) looks at Cinema Novo as a phenomenon in consonance with the emergence of Tropicália in the 1960s. Tropicália, also known as Tropicalismo, was a trailblazing artistic movement aimed at mixing traditional elements from national culture and foreign influences. Therefore, discussions would take account of the highbrow and the lowbrow, the avant-garde and the kitsch, the folklore and the pop. Tropicália was the symbol of a newly urbanised Brazil, the rise of mass culture, and the participation of youngsters in the arts and politics, as will be extensively discussed in chapter 4. This cultural uprising was greatly inspired by modernist writer Oswald de Andrade’s “Cannibalist Manifest” (Manifesto Antropófago), dating back to 1928. For Andrade, cultural anthropophagy was the only possible answer to external domination. In the 1960s, tropicalist music, for instance, renewed Andrade’s desire to mobilise foreign elements in favour of a genuine national manifestation. The lyrics of Caetano Veloso, Tropicália’s leading man, were

modern and subversive. Simultaneously, they managed to respect national tradition and propose a new sound. Most importantly, Tropicália, along with Cinema Novo, was aware of the crossroads at which Brazil was standing: the modernisation of the country resulting in no political liberation and no social improvements.

Arguably, Cinema Marginal,²¹ the underground or experimental cinema movement which responded to Cinema Novo's self-congratulatory revolutionary stamina with mockery and humour, could get even closer to the tropicalist imagery through films like Sganzerla's *The Red Light Bandit*, a postmodern, suicidal house burglar who challenges both morality and conservatism. As a sort of branch of Cinema Novo, Cinema Marginal relied on what became known as the *aesthetics of garbage*. Apart from Sganzerla, Júlio Bressane, Neville D'Almeida, and Andrea Tonacci, to name but a few, represented a sort of cinematic counterculture at a time when some Rio-based *cinemanovistas* were aiming to make concessions to reach a wider audience. Cinema Marginal radicalised Cinema Novo's endeavour to create an imagery for Brazil; filmmakers addressed prostitution, promiscuity, alternative lifestyles and drug abuse in their films. Mainly based in downtown São Paulo, in a run-down area called Boca do Lixo (literally, Mouth of Garbage), the movement assimilated national *chanchadas* and Hollywood references into its aesthetics in order to play out the crisis. It is no coincidence that Xavier's (2012) examples of antiteleological films par excellence, in both form and content, are Bressane's *The Angel Was Born* (*O Anjo Nasceu*, 1969) and *Killed the Family and Went to the Movies* (*Matou a Família e Foi ao Cinema*, 1969), and Tonacci's *Bang Bang* (1970). If Cinema Novo had already turned "scarcity into a signifier" (Stam and Xavier, 1997, p303), Cinema Marginal bolstered "an approach in which garbage provides the emblem of the social world portrayed and the key to the film's discursive procedures: the chaotic piling up of residue and detritus" (ibid, p305).

Taking account of Cinema Novo and its ramifications can never be a simple task. As I have briefly demonstrated, the movement prompted discussions on a wide

²¹ Ramos (1987b) provides an in-depth analysis of the experimental movement in *Cinema Marginal (1968-1973): A Representação Em Seu Limite*.

range of topics that have ended up inventing what Brazilian cinema would become known for. The wish to be part of a continental project; the need to incite a social revolution through moving images; the blurring of boundaries between fictional and nonfictional narratives; the urgency to expose the Brazilian reality on screen; the framing of the people as a means of embodying the nation; all were topics taken up by filmmakers making use of different aesthetic strategies. My understanding is that the articulation of controversial notions of progress and (under)development underpins such concerns. Firstly, it permeates discussions relating to the extra-diegetic domain (the political aims of the movement, the pursued raise of awareness, the ideological battle etc); and secondly, it fulfils the diegetic space as well (from the themes underpinning the narrative to the technical limitations rendered visible on screen). I argue that it is precisely that articulation that set the ground for an imagery/imaginary of ruins to emerge, taking into account the aesthetics of hunger and garbage, dialoguing with Italian Neorealism and the anti-imperialist New Latin American Cinema revolution.

As a movement, Cinema Novo had dissolved by the mid-1970s.²² Likewise, Tropicália and Cinema Marginal did not last long. As “premature decays” (1996, p10), to draw on Gomes, they collapsed in the face of the military dictatorship and the retraction of the cultural industry. Unlike any other cinematic movement in Brazil, however, Cinema Novo was successful in encapsulating the social inequality and political alienation that underpinned the underdeveloped condition of the country at the time. Those films were critical in depicting the growing tension that Xavier (2012) referred to as a sense of catastrophe and, more recently, Barros (2013) read as a sense of ruination, when shedding light on two of the flagship films of the 1960s. By the end of the 1980s, the economic crisis, foreign competition and corruption scandals deeply affected cinematic production. It took some time before filmmakers, producers and distributors were able to reset the industry and resume their duties, not until the mid-1990s. The legacy of Cinema

²² According to Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, apart from a preparatory period from 1954 to 1960, Cinema Novo can be divided into three main phases: “a first phase going from 1960 to 1964, the date of the first *coup d'état*; from 1964 to 1968, the date of the second *coup*-within-the-*coup*; and from 1968 to 1972” (1982, pp31-32). Filmmakers, however, carried on with their work as individuals.

Novo inevitably returned to the fore, with new filmmakers attempting to come to terms with the nation.

2.3. Documentary in the wake of Cinema da Retomada

The rebirth or revival of Brazilian cinema production during the 1990s is commonly known as Cinema da Retomada. Considered a decade of extremes, it started with the shutdown of Embrafilme²³ (Brazilian Film Company) in 1990 and witnessed a growing number of films being released from 1995 onwards due to new investment and funding policies. The impact of Embrafilme being dismantled was truly a milestone in the industry, as the State-body company had been successfully responsible for production and distribution nationwide since 1969. According to Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison (2007), its importance was due to generous financial support, exhibition quotas, market reserves and effective film distribution. However, drowning in bribery scandals, weakened credibility and not in tune with the neoliberal plans of the time, the company was swallowed by foreign capital speculation and an internal economic recession that strongly affected its marketing performance. In 1990, the then President, Fernando Collor de Mello (1990-1992), decided to close it down, freezing production completely.

Documentaries, however, did not suffer as much as feature films in terms of having their production interrupted. As Bernardet (2003) pointed out, from the 1960s to the 1980s (that is, including the Embrafilme period), documentary films were mainly short documentaries, therefore they took up less space in the industry and had less impact on the economy. During the heyday of Embrafilme in the 1970s, there was also a lot of competition among filmmakers, producers and distributors, all trying to benefit from the company's funding politics, which overshadowed documentary projects for good. Despite that, Tunico Amancio

²³ Controversially, Embrafilme symbolised the height of the intimacy between the State and the cinema in Brazil. On the one hand, it really protected national cinema production, distribution and exhibition from foreign intervention; on the other, because it was created during the military dictatorship (1964-1985), its credibility had always been suspected. For more details see Amancio's *Artes e Manhas da Embrafilme: Cinema Estatal Brasileiro em sua Época de Ouro* (2000).

(2000) underlines two important measures that helped documentary production to carry under those circumstances: the foundation of the Associação Brasileira de Documentaristas (Brazilian Documentarist Association) in 1973, pushing for exhibitors to safeguard the showing of short films (including nonfictional ones) before every feature-film session, and the creation of the Fundação do Cinema Brasileiro (Brazilian Cinema Foundation) in 1988, emphasising the cultural side of cinematic activities, thus taking into account short documentaries. Even if off the radar, these were strategies that managed to keep production alive.

Considered a “minor genre” throughout the 1980s, documentary was mostly produced in video format at that time. In order to survive, it actually “remained strongly attached to social movements which emerged or regained ground with the redemocratisation of the country, but with few showings outside festivals, associations, Unions and communitarian TV networks (...)” (2011, p11), as Consuelo Lins and Cláudia Mesquita argue. Many of the young documentary-makers also found themselves devoted to video art activities, which expanded the field of documentary into the visual arts domain. Lins and Mesquita argue such documentaries “renew themselves from strategies extracted from contemporary art and provide other ways to relate to moving images, redefining temporality, space, narrative and imposing modifications to the interaction with the viewer” (ibid, p58).

What Lins and Mesquita call the “experimentalist impetus” (ibid, p67) then became an important crop of nonfiction films produced from early 2000s onwards, such as Marília Rocha’s *Aboio* (2005), Clarissa Campolina e Helvécio Marins Jr.’s *Trecho* (2006), and Cao Guimarães’ *Rua de Mão Dupla* (2004) and *Andarilho* (2006) – the last two exhibited at the traditional São Paulo Art Biennial. “Documentary cinema finds itself expanded by experimental video, video art, genre films, confronted with its limits” (França, 2006, p50). Equally important, “video artists also sought a dialogue with the cinema of the 1960s; a cinema that, both in the field of documentary and of fiction, began a whole new problematisation about images of the world” (ibid), as I demonstrated in the previous section. It is no coincidence that the majority of documentaries analysed in chapters 3 and 4 can be considered experimental or hybrid documentaries in

dialogue with the visual arts and Cinema Novo/Cinema Marginal/Tropicália values, as will be discussed.

After the collapse of the industry, the context that allowed Brazilian fictional film production to recover consequently provided the tools for documentary to develop as well. In terms of policy strategy and implementation, the advent of new laws to reverse the cinematic chaos had a much more positive effect on documentary production than Embrafilme ever had. For instance, the passing of Lei Rouanet (Rouanet Law) in 1991 specifically focused on supporting independent short and medium-length films and documentaries alone. In 1993, Lei do Audiovisual (Audiovisual Law) was also passed, considering both fictional and nonfictional projects as potential films to attract finance.²⁴ Likewise, since 2001, the Agência Nacional do Cinema (National Film Agency), known as Ancine, has been regulating, supervising and reporting on feature films and documentaries in equal measure.

According to the National Film Agency (2017), 430 Brazilian documentaries were released between 1995 and 2015. Moreover, the graphs show that production had been steadily increasing throughout the period. In 1995, for instance, only three documentaries were released in cinema theatres, whereas in 2015, the number went up to fifty. If during the Embrafilme age documentaries were mainly of short and medium length, Cinema da Retomada documentaries are longer and finally reach commercial cinema theatres.²⁵ Aware of this singular moment in history, critics and academics then started to refer to that period as a time for resuming

²⁴ Lei Rouanet aims to encourage cultural investment and used by firms and citizens to finance cultural projects, including short and medium-length films and documentaries. This law allows a certain percentage of the investment not to be liable for Income Tax. The projects have to be approved by the State. Generally, Lei do Audiovisual follows the same pattern, although focuses only on audiovisual projects. They are both at risk after the election of President Jair Bolsonaro.

²⁵ Getting documentaries seen is still a mission, however. According to Amir Labaki (2006), although Miguel Faria Jr.' *Vinicius* (2005) is Cinema da Retomada's best documentary performer with 270,000 admissions, the average number of tickets sold for documentaries is way below, around 20,000 per film only.

cinema production – hence the term *Retomada* is appropriate, as it refers to the renaissance of Brazilian cinema.²⁶

In parallel with the political context, the advent of new technology played a crucial part in providing the necessary means for documentary-makers to carry on experimenting. Digital equipment had technical, economic and aesthetic advantages over analog, enabling established filmmakers and the younger generation to invest in documentary filmmaking at relatively low cost. Apart from the available federal funding policies, independent documentary-makers were now also able to make films without the financial support of major investors. A landmark example is the work done by director Marcelo Masagão in *Here We Are, Waiting for You* (*Nós que Aqui Estamos por Vós Esperamos*, 1999), a documentary whose archival material editing was done by the director himself using Windows in his personal computer.

Until 1999, at *É Tudo Verdade* (It's All Truth), Brazil's first and foremost documentary film festival since 1996, only documentaries shot on film were exhibited. In 1999, digital documentaries could be submitted, and 130 documentaries applied in comparison with an average of 15 documentaries in previous editions, as Lins and Mesquita (2011) point out. Apart from *É Tudo Verdade*, many other documentary film festivals were founded in the wake of Cinema da Retomada, such as *forumdoc.bh* (1997), *CineDocumenta* (2003) and *CachoeiraDoc* (2010). Most importantly, these events helped to deepen the discussion about the limits of documentary-making, the prominence of ethnographic films and the assimilation of visual arts into film practice. As an outcome of digital technology, the industry also acquired greater diversity in terms of modes of production and geographical localities outside Rio and São Paulo.

Following on from that, an important factor to be taken into account is the consolidation of alternative programs willing not only to boost documentary

²⁶ *Carlota Joaquina: Princess of Brazil* (Carlota Joaquina: Princesa do Brasil, 1995), a feature directed by Carla Camurati, is considered the first film of Cinema da Retomada due to its impressive one million ticket sales at the time.

production but to democratise it (Lins and Mesquita, 2011). DOCTV, for instance, is a governmental scheme linked to the former Ministry of Culture whose goal is to select documentary proposals to be produced and exhibited on public TV channels. Apart from supporting independent documentary-makers, the initiative covers the 27 federative units of Brazil, which means production is not restricted to big cities. Revelando os Brasis strikes a similar note; it is a cultural project developed by a non-governmental organisation, Instituto Marlin Azul, which used to be sponsored by Petrobras and supported by the Ministry of Culture as well. In this case, any Brazilian over eighteen years old living in a municipality of up to 20,000 inhabitants is entitled to submit a film proposal. Those who are selected take part in filmmaking workshops and actually shoot in their hometowns. The final cut is exhibited in many Brazilian cities, plus on TV. In sum, such projects attempt to decentralise investment and ensure documentary production can be seen by viewers in other parts of the country. The continuation of those programmes, however, is at risk in the wake of the controversial election of President Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, as he is fiercely against cultural initiatives. The Ministry of Culture, for instance, was shut down as soon as he took the office.

In this sense, it is impossible not to highlight the work by Vídeo nas Aldeias, an NGO aimed at supporting the indigenous fight for rights and providing filmmaking workshops in indigenous villages in Brazil. As will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5, VNA members use the documentary as a political tool to reclaim indigenous territories under threat. At the same time, it enables indigenous people to become professional filmmakers and eventually fill the gap where indigenous self-representation in Brazilian documentaries was lacking. Those are initiatives that “point to other roles for the documentary today: a place of production of ‘minimal’ images, making self-representation films, affirmation of the diversity of experiences, identities and languages” (Lins and Mesquita, *ibid*, p13). As will be discussed, similar projects can be found in postcolonial nations like Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador, especially because the “indigenous media contest a process of colonial subalternization that has denied indigenous communities participation in the dominant discourses and practices that have shaped Latin American societies” (2009, p9), as Schiwy puts it.

Considering a broader angle, Lúcia Nagib (2007) finds a way to relate the very emergence of Cinema da Retomada to the global picture. Nagib points out that the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 not only put an end to the socialist utopia but to cinema as we knew it. In the new context, cinema production came to be identified with nostalgia, citation, parody and simulacra (Jameson, 1991). Interestingly, she mentions Jean-Luc Godard's *Germany Year 90 Nine Zero* (1991), a postmodern film referencing Roberto Rossellini's *Germany, Year Zero* (1948) and evoking "the ruins of narrative and the death of cinema itself" (Nagib, 2007, pxvii). The timely link between the ruins of the Berlin Wall, and those of the Second World War depicted by Italian Neorealism, hint at the ground zero in which both society and cinema found themselves. "In Brazil, 1990 was cinema's real year zero. It saw the sudden closure of Embrafilme, the state film company, by the newly elected President, Fernando Collor de Mello, which brought film production to a halt for the following two years" (ibid, ppxvii-xviii), as discussed. When President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994-2001) took over, Nagib remarks that filmmakers were successful in catching a glimpse of a belief in Brazil as a viable nation, a sense brought about by the economic improvements that had been lost since the initial years of Cinema Novo. Most importantly, however, she states that "this new utopia never attained full development, subjected as it was to another realistic tendency which pointed to the continuation of the country's historical problems" (ibid, pxix).

Proposed by Cinema Novo, the utopian gesture towards social revolution depicted in Rocha's *White God, Black Evil* turned out to be a hopeless plan, as pointed out in the previous section. Therefore, not only did the *sertão* not turn into the sea, but people would not triumph over underdevelopment any time soon. Hence, filmmakers from the mid-1990s onwards had to make sense of the country by reflecting on the failures of the nation once dreamed of by Cinema Novo. At this time, unlike *cinemanovistas*, filmmakers were not united in support of a political-cultural project standing up to underdevelopment. There was no cohesive movement nor any agenda to be followed. In fact, many had to deal with the very erosion of the potential of any such project while attempting to come to terms with the nation. In this regard, I draw attention to Ramos' argument about the depiction of the new Brazil, a country constituted by what he calls a "statute of

incompetence” (2003, p66). According to him, filmmakers would turn against the country itself, depicting it as incapable of rising above profound historical problems. As a consequence, “the constant demonstration of incompetence exacerbates the feeling of chaos” (ibid) – and to a certain extent, it turns out that new Brazil is the same as old Brazil.

2.3.1. The rise of contemporary documentary within the *unviable nation*

Ramos’ critical standpoint detects the shift from the utopian, yet failed desire of *cinemanovistas* to the corrupt and fragmented society depicted by a new generation of filmmakers. If, on the one hand, “to betray or not to betray the people is a dilemma that appears constantly in Brazilian films of the 1960s”; it could be said that “the 1990s, however, provide no fuel for the existential-political tragedy. Political action with the power to transform no longer appears on the horizon, giving way instead to the sordid and the incompetent”. This scenario led Ramos to coin the term *unviable nation* to encapsulate the impossibility of Brazil overcoming its historical problems, something that gave filmmakers room to explore these chronic issues as “narcissism turned inside out” (ibid, p67). Instead of a clear enemy, the author claims that “the true villain has now become the nation as a whole, without further distinctions being made” (ibid, p66). Rendered visible on screen, this institutional crisis stretches from the police department to the public health service, proving that Brazil has not met Cinema Novo’s expectations for revolution neither has designed a new project to make it viable.

Films like *Central Station* (Central do Brasil, 1998), *Midnight* (O Primeiro Dia, 1999), and *Chronically Unfeasible* (Cronicamente Inviável, 1999) present the State as shredded, sordid and corrupt, as if confirming “the unviability of the nation by showing up its incompetence” (ibid: 72). Recycling Bernardet’s (2007) pioneering discussion on the class tension between the middle-class *cinemanovistas* and those whom they filmed, Ramos makes use of his term *bad conscience* when investigating the representation of the populace. “As a rule, it is made up of low self-esteem born of a feeling of responsibility for the terrible living conditions endured by the country’s poor (identified as the ‘popular’

section of society) who lend their voices to the middle-class filmmaker” (2003, p66). Ramos contends this is still the case, as the so-called populace has never actually owned the means of production to speak for themselves. In accordance with Ramos’ viewpoint, I would argue that Brazilian cinema, in some measure, portrays the unfeasibility of actual development to take place, as if the country had become rather attached to perpetual underdevelopment.

Regarding the documentary, both the notion of the *unviable nation* and the tension attached to the *bad conscience* seem to echo in what Ramos calls the figure of “the criminalised populace” (2013, p207). A cinematic concern since Cinema Novo, the representation of the people becomes increasingly linked to violence and misery in the most acclaimed documentaries: João Moreira Salles and Kátia Lund’s *News from a Private War* (Notícias de uma Guerra Particular, 1999), José Padilha’s *Bus 174* (Ônibus 174, 2002) and Paulo Sacramento’s *The Prisoner of the Iron Bars* (O Prisioneiro da Grade de Ferro, 2003), productions that emphasise the feeling of chaos pointed out earlier by Ramos. In his definition, *the criminalised populace* is not just a matter of describing social types for (poor) people; it includes the spaces which those people occupy, namely *favelas* and prisons in the above examples. Needless to say, the attempt to seize a given reality links to Cinema Novo on different levels, establishing “a form of dialogue that happens to be an update, at the beginning of the 21st century, of the acute existential exasperations with the relationship with the people that moved our main directors in the 1960s” (ibid, p246). This inescapable update is the backdrop from which contemporary production can arise. More specifically, what can documentaries do to direct the nation’s attention towards itself in a precise yet creative fashion?

In this sense, the impetus for coping with national reality not only refers back to Cinema Novo but experiments with the new possibilities available to frame the tangible world. Documentary thus found ground to flourish in as a means of finding a reality and reflecting on its visual elaboration. In contemporary Brazilian cinema, Shaw and Dennison (2007) interestingly point out that many fiction films resort to documentary strategies, whereas many nonfiction films incorporate techniques associated with fictional narratives. Even though the dialogue between

fiction and nonfiction films has been a constant in Brazilian cinema history (here one could refer to Cinema Novo again), Amir Labaki is aware that the “boundaries between genres became even more permeable. In some cases, documentary and fiction are found in the same film, even, albeit rarely, in the same scene” (2003, p98). He claims “there are fewer certainties, fixed models and definitive explanations”, so “the challenge is no longer to give right answers but to present new questions” (ibid, p104). Writing at the threshold of the 2000s, Labaki believes that, after having already expanded its thematic diversity, the documentary was then positioned to explore its stylistic diversity in the following years, confronting “the challenge of reinvigorating itself as an aesthetic principle” (ibid, p99).

Indeed, contemporary Brazilian documentary-makers have been exploring different ways of registering reality, as “their films are aesthetically challenging, their methods are unorthodox, and their understanding of their contexts is multifaceted” (Navarro and Rodríguez, 2014, p4). Formal innovation, personal filmmaking, and self-reflexive strategies have allowed the documentary to problematise its own practice, opening up a discussion about documentary “cinema’s capacity for delivering such social diagnosis” (Andermann and Fernández-Bravo, 2013, p2). For Migliorin, “the place of documentary is that of undefinition” (2010, p9), that is, it should be understood precisely as “the search for a way to approach the world” (ibid, p10). In this regard, Eduardo Coutinho’s *Playing* (Jogo de Cena, 2007) might stand at the forefront of that thought-provoking branch. In it, the director invites women (famous actresses, non-famous actresses, and non-actresses) to tell their intimate stories to the camera. Challenging ideas of truth and authenticity, the documentary mixes up their statements to the point that the spectator is not capable of distinguishing which one is actually acting. One could also think of João Moreira Salles’ *Santiago* (2007) and Petra Costa’s *Elena* (2012), highly subjective documentaries centred on the directors’ personal relationships with Salles’ aristocratic family’s butler and Costa’s sister who committed suicide at young age, respectively. Other documentaries, such as Sandra Kogut’s *A Hungarian Passport* (Um Passaporte Húngaro, 2001), Kiko Goifman’s *33* (2002), Marcelo Pedroso’s *Pacific* (2009) and Gabriel Mascaro’s *Housemaids* (Doméstica, 2012), also invest in formal

innovation, personal filmmaking and self-reflexive strategies to deliver original perspectives of the world.

Against the homogeneity delivered by the traditional documentary and mass media reportage, Migliorin argues for a documentary that unveils stories in an uncertain, fluid way, ready to invent a new space and time. “In these aesthetic inventions lies the documentary as a political force that claims neither the indignation of the spectator nor guilt, but participation (...)” (ibid, pp24-25). As Bruzzi points out, what has come up in contemporary production is an update of the definition of authenticity, “one that eschews the traditional adherence to observation or to a Bazinian notion of transparency of film and replaces this with a multi-layered, performative exchange between subjects, film-makers/apparatus and spectators” (2006, p10). Alternatively, Erika Balsom and Hila Peleg remind us that the documentary, traditionally, “has always been one of uncertainty, contamination, and contestation” (2016, p18). Nichols seems to agree with them and reiterates “the established story of documentary’s beginnings continues to perpetuate a false division between the avant-garde and documentary that obscures their necessary proximity” (2001, p581). For him, in fact, “documentary, like avant-garde film, cast the familiar in a new light” (ibid, p583).

At the same time that the dispute over what is *real* has shaken “the viewer’s belief in the images of the world” (Lins and Mesquita, 2011, p69), it permitted other angles and perspectives to arise and contaminate the viewer’s perception of reality. As part of a *post-industrial cinema*, as Migliorin (2011) puts it, contemporary documentaries no longer follow the industrial capitalist logic centred on market profits and multiplex exhibition circuits. Rather, these new films (experimental, hybrid, and blurred films) subvert the Fordist logic by relying on independent modes of production, collaborative projects, festival recognition, and online exhibitions – strategies that indeed gave new contours to the national production. Lima and Ikeda (2011) coined the term *garage cinema* to take account of the innovative group of films emerging in the first decade of the new century. Bluntly put, the term encompasses not only low-budget films, as it might seem, but films aimed at suggesting new aesthetics, ethics, and politics concerning imagery and life. Most importantly, these are films questioning the world while

inventing “another way of being in the world, of connecting with the world from the audiovisual field” (Ikeda, 2014, p12).

Documentaries produced in Brazil find much of their power in this new ground that has been cultivated from the creative treatment of reality in experimental, nonfiction films to the politicised pro-indigenous output. According to Xavier (2012), many of the concerns that shaped Cinema Novo as a daring movement were bequeathed to contemporary documentary production. Regardless of contextual differences, he believes that “each one, interrogating its own condition in culture and politics, restores concerns about the status of art and the intellectual in this violent and fractured society, whether in the period of military government or in the current coalition presidency” (ibid, p27). Xavier contends that it is “on the boundary between the documentary and the essay film that today’s experience connects in a special way with the discussion in question” (ibid), one interested in scrutinising reality through its disputes and ambiguities. It is via the documentary mode that contemporary production questions the traditional representation of reality and consequently, our perception of the world.

In this thesis, all the documentaries under analysis have in common that they challenge the official narrative built upon historically biased truths. Therefore, the rise of contemporary Brazilian documentary has enabled controversial notions of progress and (under)development to be scrutinised in the light of a new context. The advent of digital technology; the decentralisation of production; the scrutiny of what makes reality; the dialogue with the visual arts; and the consolidation of alternative programs are some of the characteristics of present-day documentary-making. As Andréa França wonders, “what can be the images of Brazil when one does not resort to the totalising narrative (...) ? Why carry out documentary filmmaking in Brazil?” (2006, p57). The answer to the first question might be implicit in the second one: I would argue that contemporary documentary filmmaking produces images of Brazil without relying on a narrative closed in on itself. With particular interest in documentary-makers who aimed at investigating progress and (under)development through images of ruination, the following pages delve into these images, not to fully capture them, but to illuminate some of their many nuances. As will be discussed, these images of ruins acknowledge

desolation in the face of the unviability of the nation, but they also enable the emergence of new imagery and critical storytelling that diversely engages with the legacy of the revolutionary 1960s and 1970s.

3. The other side of progress: cinematic (re)constructions of Brasília

First stop: Brasília. In this chapter, I will explore the cinematic (re)construction of the federal capital via the experimental cinema of Ana Vaz and Adirley Queirós. Although adopting different film methodologies, Vaz's *The Age of Stone* (A Idade da Pedra, 2013) and Queirós' *White Out, Black In* (Branco Sai, Preto Fica, 2014) both claim to be science-fiction documentaries in their attempts to move far away from conventional documentary filmmaking. In doing so, both artists challenge the official narrative that underpins so-called reality and propose new imagery and critical storytelling to address the origins of Brasília as well as the consequences for society. Furthermore, both sci-fi documentaries seem to set up a fruitful dialogue with Cinema Novo/Cinema Marginal's visual legacy, either as its counterpoint or as its complement, as will be discussed. In this respect, I argue that their visual depictions frame the complexities of underdevelopment through images of ruins.

Divided into five parts, the first section provides a brief discussion of the invention of Brasília itself in order to introduce the controversial spatiality of the capital and its subsequent cinematic translations. The second section tackles the current trend within Brazilian cinema that seems skeptical of realism as the most appropriate means to depict national issues. In this sense, Queirós' and Vaz's sci-fi documentaries can be read as fitting examples of that tendency. The third and fourth sections relate their productions to Cinema Novo/Cinema Marginal: more specifically; the third focuses on the link between *The Age of Stone* and Glauber Rocha's *The Age of the Earth* (A Idade da Terra, 1980), whereas the fourth sheds light on *White Out, Black In* and Rogério Sganzerla's *The Red Light Bandit* (O Bandido da Luz Vermelha, 1968), paying special attention to their groundbreaking discussions on progress and (under)development. The last section echoes that debate in finally focusing on Queirós' and Vaz's images of ruins. Here, the role of those images will be highlighted as a unique tool to enable the directors to cope with the premises and paradoxes of Brasília.

3.1. A controversial spatiality: myth and apartheid

The city of Brasília encapsulates the cinematic discussion of space and society in a very particular way, as it was genuinely conceived for spatial segregation and subsequent social control. Built from ground zero, it took four years for the city to be inaugurated by the then President, Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961). From 1956 to 1960, the Central Plateau in the Brazilian state of Goiás was a continuous construction site. Part of JK's development project, known as 50 Anos em 5 (literally, '50 Years in 5', referring to the time of his presidency as a period of industrial and rampant modernisation), the construction of the new capital of the country was its most ambitious aspect. Much influenced by State-directed industrialisation, the building of Brasília was conceived as the means to create national integration (from the coastline to the Central Plateau) as well as regional development (its creation was to strengthen the infrastructure in a geographically undervalued area). Of course, sectors of society were critical of the plan, seeing it as a strategy to isolate political power in the middle of the Plateau, far from the most active and populated cities. Many also feared that JK's pharaonic plan would not be completed on time. "They reasoned that the city's construction would never be continued by the succeeding administration and that it would remain an incomplete and *fabulously expensive ruin*" (Holston, 1989, p20, emphasis added).

Under the guidance of urban planner Lúcio Costa, and architect Oscar Niemeyer, the invention of Brasília was a modernist one par excellence. Following Le Corbusier's guidelines, the city gave form to the manifestos announced at the seminal Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), in which modern architecture and planning were deemed "the means to create new forms of collective association, personal habit, and daily life" (ibid, p31). Originally aimed at solving the crisis Western capitalist societies had created through architecture, the modernist city, however, could not cope with this mission in the Brazilian context. As one of the premises of modernist cities is an absolute break with the past – for the past had led society to a chaotic present of inequality, Costa and Niemeyer had to deny the historical background of Brazil when planning and designing Brasília. That is, they followed dehistoricising and decontextualising

principles in order to propose new forms of perception through architecture. The strategy Costa found to dehistoricise and decontextualise the yet-to-come city, however, was somewhat controversial. He opted for building Brasília using the foundation myth²⁷ rhetoric, as if it had been “divinely inspired” (ibid, p65). In fact, this mythical aspect would later be found in a variety of literary excerpts addressing the character of the city, especially in writer Clarice Lispector’s²⁸ two tales, *Brasília* (1999a) and *Five Days in Brasília* (1999b, originally *Brasília: Esplendor*), written on the occasions she visited the capital in 1962 and 1974.

Not by coincidence, Ernesto Silva, a military man and bureaucrat in Brasília, wrote right at the beginning of his classical *History of Brasília* a mythical yet strategic comparison between Rome and Brasília, since both cities were founded on April 21st, with a 27-century break in between. “On 21 April, 753 B.C., Romulus founded, on the Palatine Hill, a city that would be the mark of a new era in the Pagan World – the Rome of the Caesars”, he goes. “On the same day, 27 centuries later, Divine Providence willed that a pleiad [i.e., a group] of valiant men should give Brasília to Brazil” (Silva cited in Holston, 1989, p72). Although in a much more complex and sophisticated way, Clarice (1999a) resorted to the same comparison in order to simultaneously stress the greatness of the construction and also a certain sense of failure (the Roman Empire collapsed, after all) that this greatness inevitably would inherit. “I look at Brasília the way I look at Rome: Brasília began with a final simplification of ruins. The ivy has not yet grown” (ibid, p41).

The dualities of Brasília as a project (the greatness and the great failure, a two-way street) have gone far beyond the mythological aspect that helped Costa’s urban plan to win the government’s competition back in the 1950s. The modernist values embedded in Costa and Niemeyer’s approach to JK’s mandate gave it the

²⁷ The Pilot Plan’s axial cross that defines the areas of the city plays a key role, as it refers to the sign of the Cross as linked to the foundation of human settlements. As Costa claimed, cited in Holston’s book, the plan “was born of that initial gesture that anyone would make when pointing to a given place, or taking possession of it: the drawing of two axes crossing each other at right angles, in the sign of the Cross” (1989, p70).

²⁸ Both in the media and in academic texts, Clarice Lispector (1920-1977) is commonly referred to as Clarice. The same applies to Glauber Rocha (1939-1981) and Caetano Veloso (1942-), usually referred to as Glauber and Caetano, respectively.

foregrounding it needed. Modernism and modernisation were then ready to go hand in hand to make a new Brazil. While architects and politics seemingly agreed on the building of that utopian city, the modernism of the former and the modernisation of the latter did not necessarily merge. Contradictory as it was, the conflict of intention and interpretation bequeathed Brasília the paradox of being socialist-modernist yet national-developmental. After all, the contradictions in its formulations have forged Brasília into what it is. “I adore Brasília. Is it contradictory? But what is not contradictory?” (Lispector, 1999b, p47).

The vast, empty outdoor spaces; the collapse of the distinction between public and private; the end of the culture of the street and the square – none of that communicated to Brasília’s population in a positive way. Nevertheless, the most significant aspect evoked by the architecture of Brasília ended up being the segregation and social control that modernism was unable to prevent. While the Pilot Plan does make a clear distinction between the centre and the periphery, it is worth noting that the idea of stratification was present even before its inauguration. Coming mainly from the Northeastern states of Brazil, the labour force that erected Brasília had no function other than to build the city – a city only for politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen. “While ‘the creators of Brasília’, the architects and politicians, were exalted, the workers, who actually gave their blood to build the city, were ‘honoured’ by their removal to several satellite cities soon after the completion of the works in which they were engaged in the Pilot Plan” (Gouvêa, 1995, p65).

3.1.1. The contentious capital on screen

The dynamics of spatiality, with their strong links to power and privilege, influenced more than just the geography of Brasília. The controversies resonate with the way Brazilian cinema frames the space of the capital, as if the spatial politics led to the spatial aesthetics. Eduardo de Jesus (2017) particularly

emphasises that spatial/social tension in film. Despite propaganda newsreels²⁹ produced before Brasília's inauguration, there is a group of documentaries that do take into account the paradox that surrounds the construction of the city. In this sense, Vladimir Carvalho's *Old-Time Veteran Countrymen* (Conterrâneos Velhos de Guerra, 1990) is a critical landmark,³⁰ a call to pay attention to what the official narrative has deliberately obliterated. The documentary gives an in-depth view of urban planning and its social consequences, mainly from the perspective of the *candangos*, the Northeastern migrants. Produced over the course of twenty years, the documentary interweaves archival footage with interviews, "with the dusty desert spaces of the new capital shown in wide open shots denouncing the policy of segregation and the almost uncontrolled spread of suburbs that would end up housing the migrant builders (...)"(ibid, p46), as Eduardo de Jesus puts it. In fact, Carvalho's really critical approach to the federal capital had been already felt in his short documentary *Brasília Segundo Feldman* (1979), in which he uses historical images produced by North American artist Eugene Feldman – instead of official archive imagery – in order to shine a light on the controversies of the construction, as Bernardet (2003) points out.

Previously, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's *Brasília: Contradictions of a New City* (Brasília: Contradições de Uma Cidade Nova, 1967) had already attempted to expose the other side of the capital, just seven years after its establishment. The Olivetti company, which had commissioned a short documentary about the city, turned out to be unhappy with the final cut, as it exposed the contradictions mentioned in the title. In the first part, the documentary presents Brasília through an explanatory voice-over narration and a moving, instrumental soundtrack – the official Brasília on-screen. In the second part, however, the documentary foregrounds interviews with the *candangos* in the satellite cities – the unofficial Brasília invades the on-screen domain. Facing censorship by its own sponsors and the military dictatorship, Andrade's documentary was never released, in particular

²⁹ Director Jean Manzon (1915-1990) was famously known for making State-commissioned films, such as *As Primeiras Imagens de Brasília* (1956), *O Bandeirante* (1957), and *Coluna Norte* (1960).

³⁰ Queirós frequently mentions the decisive impact of Vladimir Carvalho's documentary upon his work. For more details see Fest Brasília (2014): <http://www.festbrasil.com.br/2014/noticia/debate-dos-curtas-nua-por-dentro-do-couro-e-castillo-y-el-armado-e-do-longa-branco-sai-preto-fica/17>

because giving voice to *candangos*, “shows the other side of Brasília, which, contrary to what had been planned, became a Brazilian city like any other, divided and socially segregated by the ways space was occupied” (Jesus, 2017, p47).

“From underdevelopment to the incongruously modern” (1989, p3) – that is how Holston coherently defined the birth of Brasília. His comment says much, not only about the capital, but the country as a whole – a country in which space and status have gone hand in hand since its foundation, followed by three centuries of extractive colonialism. The aim to pass from an underdeveloped to a modern nation was more of a utopian dream than a project – hence, the debacle. At the same time, Holston suggests “that without a utopian factor, plans remain locked in the prison-house of existing conditions” (ibid, p317). Caught between the past and the future, the premise and the paradox, the intention and the interpretation, the spatiality of Brasília does not facilitate the cinematic endeavour to depict it. “What possibilities are left for intellectual and artistic production that wants to retain an image of a better or different world with which to point to an emergent future?”(ibid), Holston wonders.

In this sense, perhaps the cinema of experimentation of Adirley Queirós and Ana Vaz sets out new ways to investigate the controversial spatiality of Brasília famously addressed by Holston (ibid). Eduardo de Jesus (2017) has hinted that recent productions may seem to be interested in subverting rather than representing reality. “Contemporary Brazilian cinema seems to have noticed these forms of domination directed toward space and shows us other visions of the city, induced by more vigorous and libertarian representations (...)” (ibid, p42). Both Queirós’ *White Out, Black In* and Vaz’s *The Age of Stone* propose new film methods and critical angles from which to reflect upon how the capital was shaped and how its contradictions dictate the way it is today. Interestingly, the directors chose to construct an image of Brasília by filming outside Brasília. Queirós’ documentary takes place in Ceilândia, a satellite city on the outskirts of the capital, whereas Vaz’s production is filmed in two different regions of the Goiás state, north and west of Brasília.

In *White Out, Black In*, Queirós deliberately mixes fiction and nonfiction elements to address a police shooting that happened in Ceilândia in 1986. On that occasion, Marquim do Tropa and Shokito, friends with the director and non-professional actors in the film, were attending a party at the Quarentão ball, a famous nightclub at the time and a place known for its black music culture. The brutal event injured both friends, leaving Marquim in a wheelchair and Shokito in need of a prosthetic to replace one of his legs. Shouting “white people can leave the place, but black people stay in!”, the police act of violence not only left scars on them both but emphasised the racial and social apartheid still perceivable today. Instead of retelling the story through traditional documentary methods, Queirós decided, alongside Marquim and Shokito, to create a sci-fi documentary feature that interestingly moves away from reality, but at the same time, addresses it with fierceness and poignancy.

In *The Age of Stone*, Ana Vaz follows a similar journey in terms of not giving in to traditional documentary methods, like her contemporary Queirós, as will be thoroughly discussed in both cases. The director also plays with fictitious and non-fictitious elements in the attempt to put on screen a different version of what Brasília might look like. Her short film invites the audience to discover a monumental structure in the form of a ruin placed in the heart of the Central Plateau, an allusion to Brasília itself. Shying away from a teleological narrative, Vaz invests in building up the spatial concept through images and sounds, mobilising just a few characters, but more importantly, letting the camera roam through and extract meaning from that specific region. In brief, the film could be said to be an investigation of the origins of the city. The monument seems to hypnotise both the characters and the spectators, confronted by the fact that no kind of certainty seems available to them.

Most importantly, both filmmakers resort to the imagery of ruins to deliver original insights into the history of Brasília and the way it has traditionally been presented, as I will highlight. This is specifically what makes these productions artistic outputs that urgently need to be considered: by relying on the imagery of ruins, these films seem keen to invest in the multiple narrative possibilities of history, as if inspired by the multiple possibilities that a ruin contains within itself.

Even though commonly associated with the collapse of something, Dillon (2011) remarks that one of the roles played by ruins is of being the very starting point of something or anything else. In this regard, one could say “the most enigmatic aspect of the time of ruination is the manner in which it points towards the future, rather than the past, or rather uses the ruined resources of the past to imagine, or reimagine, the future” (ibid, p18).

3.2. Realism under erasure or not quite: new imagery and storytelling

The concept of the *unviable nation* (Ramos, 2003) relating to the unlikeliness of Brazil becoming a stable and prosperous nation has been widely explored by Brazilian filmmakers since Cinema da Retomada’s early years, as pointed out in chapter 2. In depicting the social, economic, political, and cultural turmoil of contemporary Brazil, these films usually resort to realism as a strategy for conveying urgency and credibility to the audience. *Central Station* (Central do Brasil, 1998), *City of God* (Cidade de Deus, 2002) and *Elite Squad* (Tropa de Elite, 2007), three of the most internationally successful Brazilian films, have relied on this strategy to the fullest, frequently reaching into the nonfiction domain by the use of non-professional actors and real locations. If one considers documentary production itself, *News from a Private War* (Notícias de Uma Guerra Particular, 1999), *Bus 174* (Ônibus 174, 2002) and *The Prisoner of the Iron Bars* (O Prisioneiro da Grade de Ferro, 2003) also shed light on national issues, especially the *favela* and prison environments.

Prysthon (2015), however, claims that present-day production might go in a different direction. If Brazilian cinema, from the first decade of 2000, has been heavily marked by a belief that realism is the most appropriate means to portray and scrutinise national issues, Prysthon (ibid, p68) suggests that many present-day films are devoted to what she refers to as “realism under erasure”, a cinematic language that plays with the very idea of what real means by focusing on more ambiguous and thought-provoking narratives. She is not necessarily labelling the strategy as a new one but underlining it as a prominent characteristic of the

ongoing approach to reality. Her perspective focuses the attention on the “deliberate shock between realism and an excess of artifice that disarticulates and destabilises the effects of real” (ibid) in many films; the excessive artifice achieved through the revitalisation of film genres, such as horror or science-fiction, within the national production.

The assumption that genres normally associated with mainstream cinema could be a powerful, critical means of addressing Brazilian reality then led Prysthon to coin the term “furious frivolity” (ibid, p69). In other words, the sense of so-called ‘frivolity’ attached to horror or science-fiction genres embraces ‘furious’ as an adjective, for those films would also contain an inevitable fury in their storytelling due to the problematic reality they are actually attempting to emulate. As Eduardo de Jesus claims, those could be films with “more vigorous and libertarian representations” (2017, p42) of what we understand by reality. One could think of André Antônio’s *The Cult* (A Seita, 2015), Anita Rocha da Silveira’s *Kill Me Please* (Mate-me, Por Favor, 2015), Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra’s *Good Manners* (As Boas Maneiras, 2017), and Marcelo Pedroso’s *Brasil S/A* (2014), to name but a few. In this regard, Prysthon (2015) highlights a branch of contemporary production that could also be in tune with the notions of *post-industrial cinema* (Migliorin, 2011) or *garage cinema* (Lima and Ikeda, 2011) mentioned in chapter 2 – theoretical efforts that not only try to pin down the context in which this crop of contemporary production lies, but also the belief that the new context allows for the creation of images detached from convention.

The idea of *realism under erasure* (Prysthon, 2015), however, is less a negation of realism than “a more complex exploration of its possibilities” (ibid, p74). Thoroughly explored by Nagib (2017, 2011, 2009), her discussion of cinematic realism goes beyond classic elaborations on the topic, such as André Bazin’s (1967) ontology of the photographic image or Gilles Deleuze’s (1989) movement-image and time-image concepts, whose discussions took greatly into account an Eurocentric perspective marked by the Second World War and the rise of modern cinema. While paying tribute to their seminal contributions, Nagib is less interested in their “evolutionist model” (2017, p312) than in a “timeless view of

realism” (ibid, p313). Also, rather than reaffirming World Cinema³¹ as a term born from realistic strategies developed from Italian Neorealism onwards, as postulated by Thomas Elsaesser (2009), Nagib defends a realist cinema in itself, “which is defined by an ethics of the real that has bound world films together across history and geography at cinema’s most creative peaks” (2017, p311). On that note, she advocates an ethics of realism attached to, most importantly, a “realist mode of production and address” (Nagib, 2011, p10). That is, instead of embracing a somewhat worn-out debate about reality and simulation, the author sees it as “a moral question, but one which concerns casts and crews alone in their drive to merge with the phenomenological real, and this is why the stress on modes of production and address is here of the essence” (ibid). In this sense, the scholar believes in “the realism of the medium” (ibid, p125), one less concerned with narrative mimesis than with what Alain Badiou calls “an active fidelity to the event of truth” (2006, pxiii).

Furthermore, Nagib (2017) proposes a taxonomy of cinematic realism encompassing modes of production, address, exhibition, and reception. In terms of modes of production, she lists “the physical engagement on the part of crew and cast with the profilmic event; the near identity between the cast and their roles; real location shooting; the audiovisual medium’s inherent indexical property; and the engagement with works of art in progress within the film” (ibid, p316). These are characteristics attached to the work of Adirley Queirós and Ana Vaz – whose outputs are not straightforwardly associated with a conventional idea of realism but could be associated with what Nagib refers to as an ethics of realism. “In films resulting from this mode of production, the illusionistic fictional thread (if existing) interweaves with documentary footage and/or approach, as well as with crew and cast’s direct interference with the historical world” (ibid). Moreover, it would be “aimed not only at highlighting the reality of the medium but also at producing, as well as reproducing, social and historical reality” (ibid). In *White Out*, *Black In* and *The Age of Stone*, both filmmakers choose to approach Brasília by resorting to science-fiction elements, although genuinely referring to reality. In

³¹ She discusses the concept of World Cinema as detached from the binary opposition between Hollywood and off-Hollywood cinemas. For more details see Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam, and Rajinder Dudrah’s *Theorizing World Cinema* (2012) and Nagib’s “Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema” (2006).

this sense, the documentary mode present in the construction of their narratives turns out to be penetrated by unexpected artifices – an undertaking that rivals conventional nonfiction attempts to capture reality.

3.2.1. The sci-fi way into reality

Having thoroughly analysed the role of science-fiction, Jameson (2005) raises awareness of a key point that seems crucial for an understanding the use of the genre in relation to realism: science-fiction is about what is happening here and now. In this regard, it stands as a genre willing “not to give us ‘images’ of the future (...) but rather to defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own *present*” (ibid, p286). By doing so, science-fiction can elaborate on the present by enriching the cityscape with imaginary futures. The resulting unfamiliar present would be devoted to what Sobchack (1987) has famously suggested as the speculative or the extrapolative realms. Her ground-breaking study addresses science-fiction films as nothing less than the visuality of postmodernity, a meaningful product of the cultural logic of late capitalism (Jameson, 1991). “Of all narrative film genres, science fiction has been most concerned with poetically mapping those transformations of spatiality, temporality, and subjectivity informed and/or constituted by new technologies” (Sobchack, 2016, p127), which flourished in the second half of the twentieth century. Most importantly for this chapter, Sobchack’s understanding of science fiction is not a disbelief in the real but a suspension of belief in realism (in its *stricto sensu* definition), “a rejection of the transparency of such belief in ‘realism’ and a recognition that our access to the real is always mediated and epistemologically partial” (ibid, p124). It is precisely this approach that seems to characterise Queirós’ and Vaz’s outputs about their hometown, Brasília.³²

According to Jeffrey Skoller, what makes experimental or avant-garde films like theirs “important departures from conventional historicism is the incorporation of

³² Queirós was born in Morro Agudo de Goiás, in the Góias state surrounding the Federal District, but moved to the periphery of the capital at the age of three.

what is imagined or remains unrealized in a given historical moment but returns as potential within these works of art” (2005, pxli). In (re)constructing Brasília by defying the official discourse about the city, Queirós and Vaz invest in experimental narratives to see how far they can defamiliarise themselves with their present and restructure it. Willing to create new imagery and critical storytelling, both artists seem to find in the realm of science-fiction the opportunity to subvert the official narrative and its traditional form of representation. Considering their sci-fi documentaries, it is like “the representational apparatus of Science Fiction (...) sends back more reliable information about the contemporary world than an exhausted realism” (Jameson, 2005, p384). Following this perspective, Prysthon affirms that what she calls frivolity in film does “not necessarily mean escapism; rather, it is a matter of conceiving the most interesting forms of escaping” (2015, p74) from a problematic reality in order to propose a fresh concept of it.

Worth mentioning at this point, in his pioneering research,³³ Suppia (2007) investigates the presence of sci-fi genre within Brazilian cinema. In terms of the unusual conflation of sci-fi and documentary,³⁴ he highlights Marcos Bertoni’s *Sangue de Tatu* (1986) and Jorge Furtado’s *Barbosa* (1988), two short films that add nonfictional elements (interviews and real footage) to their futuristic plots. Notably, both films are short films; Suppia claims that experimental films like these are more commonly short and medium-length productions. More interestingly, however, are his mentions of films with Brasília as a backdrop. Firstly, Suppia mentions Tadao Miqui’s *Projeto Pulex* (1991), a short animation set in the Brasília of June 2013.³⁵ In the story, the Brazilian government intends to exterminate the poor in the population to achieve ‘acceptable’ levels, in a sort of

³³ Many of the films discussed by Suppia (2007) became part of the film programme *Brasil Distópico* (Dystopic Brazil, 2017), at Caixa Cultural, Rio de Janeiro. The event screened films aimed at imagining alternative, dark futures for the country.

³⁴ The author explores the use of documentary elements in science-fiction films in more detail in the paper “A Verdade Está Lá Fora: Sobre a Retórica Documentária no Cinema Fantástico ou de Ficção Científica” (2011).

³⁵ Impossible not to note the involuntary prediction made by this short film in 1991, as in June 2013 many cities in Brazil, including Brasília, saw the eruption of protests over public services and World Cup costs. For more details see Jonathan Watts (2013): <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/18/brazil-protests-erupt-huge-scale>

capitalist eugenics. More recently, Santiago Dellape's *Nada Consta* (2006) depicted Brasília in a live action short film taking place in 2017. In it, the protagonist needs the government to issue an official document allowing him to travel to the moon. The only obstacle is his participation in a march against the 'Robotic World Government', years before, which obstructs the approval he needs. The black-and-white cinematography explores the modernist lines of Brasília Airport and the University of Brasília in order to create the sci-fi atmosphere. Significantly, Suppia points out that, in the majority of Brazilian sci-fi films, "the theme of underdevelopment and the Third World discourse seem impregnated – even when one tries to deny them" (2007, p248). Although through different film methodologies, the theme of underdevelopment and Third World discourse are, indeed, part of Queirós' and Vaz's outputs about Brasília.

As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) famously suggest, discussions with regard to Third World issues should not be taken as at all homogeneous. By using the term *Third World* in order to delve into what has become known as the Third World Cinema, scholars do not express any empathy towards it; quite the contrary, they believe the term "not only flattens heterogeneity, masks contradictions, and elides differences, it also obscures similarities" (ibid, p26). Considering the (dis)similarities between Queirós and Vaz, in particular, what interests me in the combination of historiographic revisionism and innovative language present in their sci-fi documentaries is the cinematic will to challenge the narrative paradigm, which is historically "enlisted to serve teleological notions of national progress and manifest destiny" (ibid, p118). When they break that chain, they render visible their criticism in relation to both the teleological narrative and so-called national progress itself. Coming from quite different backgrounds, Queirós and Vaz are drawn to discuss the advent of Brasília as the other side (or the underside) of so-called national progress. Both filmmakers are conscious of the importance of investigating Brasília in terms of its construction and the consequences of it: Why build a capital city from scratch? How did the capital city come to be populated? What kind of government policies shaped Brasília as it is today? What sort of imaginary was invented to cope with its construction? The cinematic gaze of Vaz and Queirós reflects upon these questions in *The Age of Stone* and *White Out, Black In*, respectively (the former

being more interested in the origins of the mythical city and the latter in the aftermath of its construction).

3.3. What if: the uchronic mode of a monument

The crafting of *The Age of Stone* results from both Vaz's experience in her two previous short films and her dialectical engagement with Glauber Rocha's filmography, specifically *The Age of the Earth*. *The Age of Stone* could be said to be a journey into the far west of Brazil, an immersion into the flora, fauna, and textures of geography, a voyage that leads the audience to discover a mysterious, monumental structure in the middle of nowhere. It is never quite clear if the monument found in the Central Plateau stands as the foundation of Brasília or the debris of what was once the federal capital. That monument is an invention, a kind of foreign body in the region, quite like Brasília was at the time of its invention. Filmed in the Chapada dos Veadeiros' wild nature and in a Pirenópolis quarry (areas surrounding the capital), one witnesses the building of a purposely unspecified space through visual and sensorial pillars. The location is inhabited by a few characters who never share the screen: a teenage girl, a black *boiadeiro* (or a cowherder), and a group of quarry workers, as I will discuss in greater detail below. They are characters but also real people who live and/or work in the region, exemplifying Nagib's (2017) ethics of realism as one that, among other assets, underlines near identity between the cast and their roles. In this case, Vaz had travelled a few times to those cities to meet the locals and eventually cast some of them. The teenage girl is Ivonete dos Santos Moraes,³⁶ with whom Vaz ended up establishing a friendly professional relationship; the black *boiadeiro* is Seu Chico Preto, and when he rides his horse on screen he is doing nothing different from what he does in daily life; and the workers are simply doing their ordinary work shift in front of the camera.

³⁶ In the Q&A after the Whitechapel Gallery screening of her films in September 2018, Vaz mentioned that she spent three months building an intimacy with Ivonete prior to the actual shooting. However, the director felt that that intimacy was sort of broken when the crew and the apparatus had to be incorporated to their relationship. That was also one the reasons for her to comeback and do a second collaboration with Ivonete in *There Is Land!*.

Nevertheless, one could say that the main character is indeed that mysterious, monumental structure resembling a ruin, although it is only seen in its entirety in the final third of the film. Before that, the camera just shows fragments of it, unveiling particular parts through carefully selected angles. As mentioned, the monument itself plays with uncertainty: one never knows if it is a ruin from ancient times or a visionary image of the future. Sometimes, it is integrated into the massive rocks of the region; at other times, it is clearly an architectonic outsider, so the viewer wonders if it really can be found in the Central Plateau or crafted by the film crew. None of these possibilities are correct, as the monument is actually a CGI monument developed by French sculptress, Anne-Charlotte Yver. In collaboration with Vaz, Yver's artwork is a structure greater than human scale, sprouting from the arid terrain yet falling from the blue sky. Workers unearth an archaeological find and/or erect a monumental memorial. It is therefore about to collapse and, at the same time, about to be established – “perpetually in construction or collapsing” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005, p20). The monument is Brasília. Full of dualities (like the actual city), the monument is both an allegory of progress and of its underside, as it can be understood as a spectacle or a catastrophe. In Clarice's words, it is “the failure of the most spectacular success” (1999b, p46).





Figures 1, 2 and 3 – Flora, fauna, and textures of geography in *The Age of Stone*



Figure 4 – The timid first appearance of a fragment of the monument

The very idea of imagining a brand-new starting point or a tragic ending for Brasília came into being while Vaz was making *Entre Temps* (2011), a short film

focused on the demolition of ZUP³⁷ buildings, a controversial project aimed at constructing public housing complexes between 1959 and 1967 in France, some of which collapsed due to poor construction and inadequate finance provided by government policies in the subsequent decades. Looking at the debris from the ZUP implosions, she found herself thinking that “in the middle of that destruction camp, there would and *should* be a parallel universe in which things could be redefined in another way” (2017a), Vaz affirms in the Skype interview I did with her. In this sense, she is faithful to Deleuze and Guattari’s (2005) critical thinking in terms of breaking the chains of a dogmatic, dualist understanding of the world. By contrast, the rhizome philosophy proposed by both authors in *A Thousand Plateaus* is much more interested in multiple, non-hierarchical interpretations of reality, as “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be”, which “is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order” (ibid, p7). In other words, the image of the rhizome translates into the freedom to articulate potential connections within reality. And this could only work by taking language and “decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers” (ibid, p8). Moreover, it is a matter of defending a model “perpetually in construction or collapsing” (ibid, p20), as mentioned earlier.

Considering Vaz’s body of work, *Entre Temps* and *The Age of Stone* are closely related as both discuss the power of architecture as a sign of history and the passage of time. *The Age of Stone*, however, is more interested in what nineteenth-century French philosopher Charles Renouvier’s (1988) coining of *uchronia*,³⁸ a neologism derived from *utopia*, replacing *topos* (place) with *chronos* (time). The term refers to a hypothetical time in history, mainly unspecified to the reader/viewer. When Vaz started the project, she decided it was not an appropriate time to address Brasília through an iconoclastic gesture that could spoil the complexity of her approach to her hometown. The iconoclastic gesture towards Brasília could have led to a pointless binarism, as if by destroying whoever/whatever the enemy is, one is actually reaffirming the supremacy of that

³⁷ Zone à Urbaniser en Priorité (Priority Zones for Development).

³⁸ The concept is commonly associated with the idea of alternate or alternative history. Alternate history is a widely deployed narrative strategy in science-fiction outputs, “in which history as we know it is changed for dramatic and often ironic effect” (Duncan, 2003, p209).

enemy. Rather, the film opts for (re)imagining the beginning (or the ending) of Brasília in uchronic mode. There is no clear information about whether Chapada dos Veadeiros or Pirenópolis are the settings, nor in which year the story unfolds. Therefore, the film seems to implicitly ask: what *if* history was told from a different perspective? That is, what *if* one could redefine time and space via imagery?

In *The Age of Stone*, there is no past, no present, no future; rather, all exist at the same time, as the Benjaminian, dialectical relation to time suggests. As a matter of fact, Vaz refers less to Walter Benjamin (1968) than she does to Clarice Lispector (1999a, 1999b) when it comes to challenging temporal accuracy. In this regard, the legacy of Clarice's two tales *Brasília* and *Five Days in Brasília* plays a clear role, as the writer defines Brasília as "a future that happened in the past" (Lispector, 1999b, p50), obstructing attempts to specify the imaginary of the capital. In this sense, the building of time and space in the narrative of *The Age of Stone* (or, perhaps, the blurring of them) works as a visual translation of Clarice's genuine impressions: "I am so lost. But it is indeed like this one lives: lost in time and space" (ibid, p63). Interestingly, the impact of Clarice on Vaz's work has actually been part of her artistic practice since her first short film, *Sacris Pulso* (2008). Having lived abroad since the age of seventeen,³⁹ *Sacris Pulso* was Vaz's first attempt to cinematically return to her hometown. The short film is a very personal meditation on *Brasiliários*, a 1986-short-film directed by Sérgio Bazi and Zuleica Porto based on Clarice's tales, assembled with a body of 8mm found footage depicting rituals of travel and family.

Vaz's connection to *Brasiliários* is vital, as her mother, Cláudia Pereira, is the actress who plays Clarice on screen, and her father, Guilherme Vaz,⁴⁰ is the sound designer and music composer of the film. Her parents actually met during the shooting and, nine months later, Vaz was born. She then not only comes from a

³⁹ Vaz studied Cinema and Philosophy at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia. Later on, she moved to France to attend Le Fresnoy Studio National des Arts Contemporains, and became a member of Bruno Latour's School of Political Arts. She is currently based in Lisbon, Portugal.

⁴⁰ Guilherme Vaz (1948-2018) was one of Brazil's foremost composers. He played a major role in developing Brazilian concrete music and collaborated on many Cinema Novo soundtracks.

family of artists, but also metaphorically from a film set in and based on Brasília itself. *Sacris Pulso* is an attempt to unravel her origins as a daughter of artists as well as an artist herself in order to access her hometown through moving images. In this sense, *Sacris Pulso* can be read as her encounter with a ghost city, a city that never actually existed. It is rather an investigation of the Brasília of her memories, of her parents, and of Clarice. According to Vaz in her interview, “Clarice re-imagines the city as a ruin from a far-away future or a really old past” (2017a), creating an imaginary which deliberately plays with time and space. *Sacris Pulso*, *Entre Temps*, and *The Age of Stone* make up what Vaz has called her Trilogy of Utopias.

In analysing Vaz’ cinema, Raquel Schefer sees two main strategies, each overlapping the other. Firstly, the author points out “questions related to the multi-temporality of the event (experience, recollection, multiple interpretations and multiplied perspectives)” (2016, p2). That is, she identifies Vaz’s concern with re-imagining history as a means of shedding light on its obscurities – or rather, suggesting *another* history. The first aspect, therefore, stands as a theoretical one, a question of content. Secondly, Schefer notes “a demystification not only of the history of modernism, but also of its visual forms, the essentially architectural and filmic (mainly New Latin American Cinema and, in particular, Brazilian Cinema Novo)”. Here, it is Vaz’s endeavour to respond to or to dialogue with the visual forms of modern Brazilian cinema which is at issue. In other words, the scholar rather emphasises the artist’s ability to produce original imagery whilst proposing *another* history. In this sense, this aspect is a practical question concerned with form. Nevertheless, in highlighting both work-defining characteristics of Vaz’ cinema, Schefer claims that form and content are not and should not be taken as separate domains in her artistic practice. Rather, they are intrinsically linked, acting and reacting in relation to each other. “If the motives of Vaz’s cinema are the engine of its formal inventiveness, the latter gives rise to new perspectives of the present, history, as well as representational forms” (ibid).

3.3.1. The Earth and the Stone: Brasília is delirium

Bearing that in mind, Vaz's Deleuzian intellectual porosity concerning critical thinking stands as an alternative to pre-given information about the tangible world. As an artist, she is less interested in finding certainties than in questioning them. Not surprisingly, Vaz critically takes account of the Marxist approach that influenced moving images from the late 1950s onwards in Brazil. Even though such principles were a common theme in the work of Cinema Novo filmmakers, Vaz specifically refers to Glauber Rocha. His ground-breaking 1965 manifesto, "Aesthetics of Hunger", is a summary of his aims as the militant artist that he was. As such, Vaz seems skeptical of an approach like his, which she considers a sort of cinematic pamphlet. "Latin America has suffered a hangover from Marxism, which is not a communitarian but a communist booklet" (2017a), she observes in her interview. The so-called radical, Latin-American militancy of the 1960s that she refers to has never come to terms, for instance, with two core historical mistakes it somehow endorsed: a profound machismo in relation not only to women but to the complexity of the idea of the other in general, and a disdain for ethnicities and their fundamental relevance in the search for a sense of Brazilianness.

In 1971, however, Glauber Rocha wrote "Aesthetics of Dreaming", marking a conceptual shift in filmmaking that aims for a much more complex political strategy through moving images. "Glauber goes from hunger to the delirium of the hungry, from realism to surrealism, making brutality and dreaming the basis of a new thinking" (Bentes, 2002, p91). Mainly on account of the military coup d'état that took place in 1964, Glauber re-processed the idea of underdevelopment in a Third World nation, rejecting the rational, sociological approach, and choosing instead a mystical, sensible one. Influenced by the anthropophagic modernism of Brazil, Latin American Magical Realism, and European Surrealism, he acknowledged that hunger cannot be 'comprehended' neither can revolution be 'rationalised'. "What Glauber seems to be saying is that no historical, sociological, Marxist, or capitalist explanation can account for the complexity and tragedy of the experience of poverty, something for him of the order of the 'unknowable', the 'unthinkable', and the 'intolerable'" (ibid, p92). It is precisely the "mystical politics" (ibid, p94) of that new Glauber that attracts Vaz as both a spectator and an artist, particularly epitomised in his last film, *The Age of the*

Earth. “It breaks away from a Marxist script, because it resurrects the dimension of dreaming, the dimension of the ritual that it so inconspicuously represses” (Vaz, 2017b, p217).

Produced in 1980, Glauber’s final cinematic contribution symbolises best the mystical politics that the “Aesthetics of Dreaming” manifesto advocates. In this film, the allegorical takes the stage in order to re-elaborate the mythical, religious, and prophetic aspects of Brazilian/Latin American identity. “On the day that Pasolini, the great Italian poet, was murdered, I thought of filming the life of Christ in the Third World”, says Glauber in voice-over. Charting the story (or the anti-story, as Glauber himself says, the film has no teleological thread) of four Christs (a black Christ, an indigenous Christ, a military Christ, and a guerrilla Christ), the film questions Western imperialism in relation to the spiritual as well as the mundane domains. Profoundly criticised by the Italian press on the occasion of its premiere at the 1980 Venice Film Festival, *The Age of the Earth* is less a film than a manifesto in itself in proposing a Latin American perspective of (neo)colonialism and an allegorical Christianity which rejects the martyr and celebrates a Christ made of “destabilising forces” (Bentes, *ibid*, p9).

As a manifesto, *The Age of the Earth* challenges the conventional cinema to the fullest. The anti-stories of the four Christs were shot separately as four distinct blocks and were edited by three editors working individually. Ricardo Miranda, Raul Soares, and Carlos Cox were respectively responsible for editing sequences filmed in Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, and Bahia. Consequently, each city block bears a unique editing style. “Glauber did not formulate a specific aesthetic approach, a unique stimulus for all of us: he would say something different to each one of us” (2017, p197), says Miranda interviewed by Albert Elduque. Put together, the four blocks (Rio has two different settings which counts as two separate blocks) first resulted in six hours of material, but the theatrical version was 160-minute long, the director’s longest output. Once it was made, Glauber wanted it to be screened on the walls of buildings and public squares, breaking down the exhibition circuit. Also, as his final intervention, he required the projectionist to assemble the film’s reels in any order, offering no chance of logical narrative.



Figure 5 – Glauber Rocha’s four allegorical Christs

With no title or credits, the shooting was mostly impromptu, as no script was provided to cast and crew. Whether filmed on the beach, in a Carnival parade, during a *candomblé* ceremony or in the streets of the modernist capital, the hallucinatory sequences lead to the confrontation between the Christs and Johan Brahms, a ruthless foreign businessman, the representation of the imperialist mindset. It goes without saying that the film was not conceived for one to follow their journey but to witness “a cinematic trance through hand-held camera and montage” (Bentes, 2002). As Glauber himself claims, “it is a film that the viewer should watch as if in a bed, in a party, a strike or a revolution. It is a new cinema, anti-literary and metatheatrical, that will be enjoyed, and not seen and heard like the cinema out there” (cited in Freitas, 2008, p1). According to Xavier, in *The Age of the Earth*, Glauber finally achieves a “syncretic way of thinking of Brazil as a peripheral country within the decadence of imperialism” (2001, p108). His achievement is deeply attached to the film’s formal aspects (the long-take, the free camera movement, the non-teleological montage), which gave him the means to transfer the social-political crisis of representation to the cinema.

The Age of Stone is Vaz’s animist answer to Glauber’s *The Age of the Earth*. Instead of four Christs vociferating entranced words, Vaz’s 29-minute short film sheds light upon nature, light, silence, and colour, allowing her human characters to merge with the geography. It is an elaboration of the possibilities of contemporary Brazilian cinema opening a dialogue with tradition, “beyond the

canonical, but alongside the canonical” (2017a), as Vaz states via Skype interview. Screened together for the first time as part of Tate Modern’s *Tropicália and Beyond: Dialogues in Brazilian Film History* (2017), one film seems to echo the other, with delirium as a common theme. That delirium was Glauber’s rupture with any kind of cinematic rule. Vaz herself pays tribute to *The Age of the Earth* as “one of the most rebellious gestures of the Cinema Novo” in the programme’s catalogue: “because it refuses the discipline of any militant agenda and situates its militancy elsewhere, in the shadows of a hallucination, in the body of its characters, in the breakdown of industrious narrative structures” (2017b, p214), as discussed above. In *The Age of Stone*, delirium is conducted by the uchronic mode of the film, as this is “a cinema that seeks images of other possible worlds” (ibid, p223). On screen, Brasília is a delirium, as it is not Brasília that one sees but its fractured, CGI monumental version. In common, both outputs seem to be interested in the image in flux, in the montage as an experience, in cinema as the building of different spatial-temporal dimensions. They both seem to take “the incorporation of what is imagined or remains unrealized” (Skoller, 2005, pxli) as their guideline.

There are differences, though. While the title of Glauber’s film refers to the Earth (in Portuguese, ‘earth’ also means ‘land’, or one’s ‘motherland’) as a stage for characters to explore, Vaz’s opts for referring to an age of stone, that is, a primitive age still full of possibilities. More than questioning the world as we know it (precisely what Glauber does), she is questioning the very origins of the world/Brasília. Apart from the title, Vaz’s experimental way of documenting that age also cites Glauber’s work in its opening sequence. In his film, the first sequence (perhaps the most iconic of late Cinema Novo) is a circular panoramic scene which frames the sun rising above the Palácio da Alvorada (literally ‘Palace of Dawn’, the President’s official residence in Brasília). While the sun rises over the modernist palace, Naná Vasconcelos’ music score emphasises Amerindian and African sonorities through human chants and percussive instruments referring to national roots. For Vaz, “the sequence incarnates at once the mythic birth of the city of Brasília as a totem of modern prophecy whilst also revealing the messianic mysticism of its foundations. (...) Brasília emerges as both fever and prayer – totem and taboo” (2017b, p213). Being *The Age of the Earth* concerned with

establishing a Brazilian/Latin American identity, the sequence plays a crucial role as it portrays Brasília as the embodiment of the contradictions of the country.

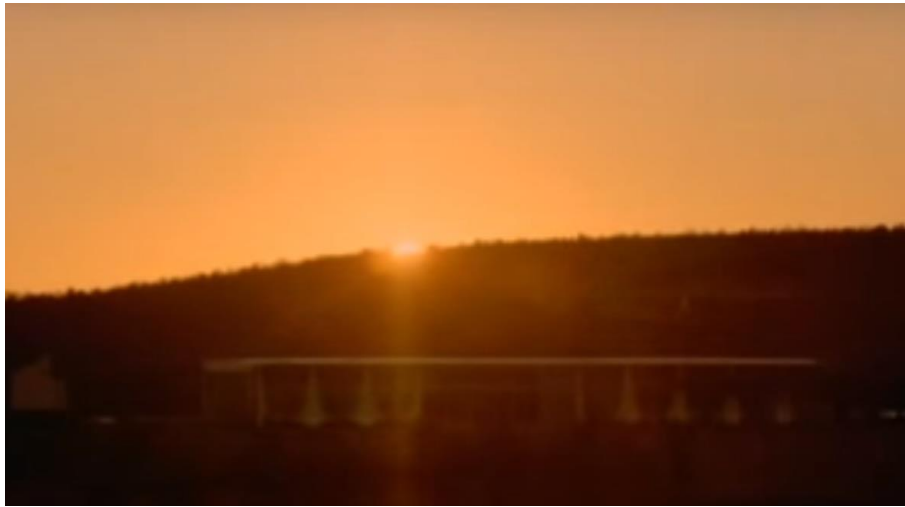


Figure 6 – The sun rising above the Palácio da Alvorada in *The Age of the Earth*

Schefer explains the use of circular panoramic view in Cinema Novo (and other emerging Latin American cinemas of the 1950s and 1960s) as an emancipatory film strategy: “a formal expression of an extensive understanding of the process of decolonisation (political, cultural, aesthetic, perceptual and cognitive decolonisation)” (2016, p6). In other words, the camera movement embodies a dual representation: the vision of the subject of the world itself, and, more specifically, the vision of the observed covering those who have been historically observing. While aiming for national liberation, by resorting to this strategy *cinemanovistas* would have ended up reproducing the binary relationship of the colonised and coloniser. In Vaz’s take, the circular panorama gives way to a zoomed-in camera shot, as if attempting to unravel that paradoxical strategy. According to Schefer (ibid), her camera movement is aimed at breaking the separation between the subject filming and the object filmed, as well as replacing the representation by the interpretation of reality. Rather than decolonising, Vaz is interested in exploring the possibilities of not being colonised in the first place.

In this sense, she sides with scholar Suely Rolnik’s intellectual mission for a permanent decolonisation of the unconscious and its creative irruptions. Art is not the fire exit for a political agenda; “rather it is a space for calling upon that which has been taken away from us, what Suely Rolnik calls the body-that-knows, the

body that has been domesticated, colonized, and needs to vibrate again” (Ramos, 2016, p256). Hence, Vaz’s camera is an extension of the body, much in tune with Maya Deren’s cinema tradition of exploring visual representation through the body. The zoom-in “is a movement that the human eye is not able to make. It is the camera-body that is able to do so” (2017a), Vaz puts it in her interview. Besides being a union between camera and body, “it is as if the camera movement itself could insinuate the construction and destruction of the landscape, as if the camera were inserting the movements of those sculpting that landscape, as if the camera could also carve that landscape” (ibid). Influenced by the North-American avant-garde feminism, her camera is a subjective prosthesis of the body, a tool to explore a range of (psycho)geography. *The Age of Stone*’s opening sequence, therefore, deconstructs that of *The Age of the Earth* in merging subject and object, turning the camera into an element of nature. Interestingly, Xavier (2012) briefly remarks that, although initially inspired by Italian Neorealism and French New Wave, modern Brazilian cinema then went on to flirt with North-American experimental productions, inaugurated in 1947 by Maya Deren herself.

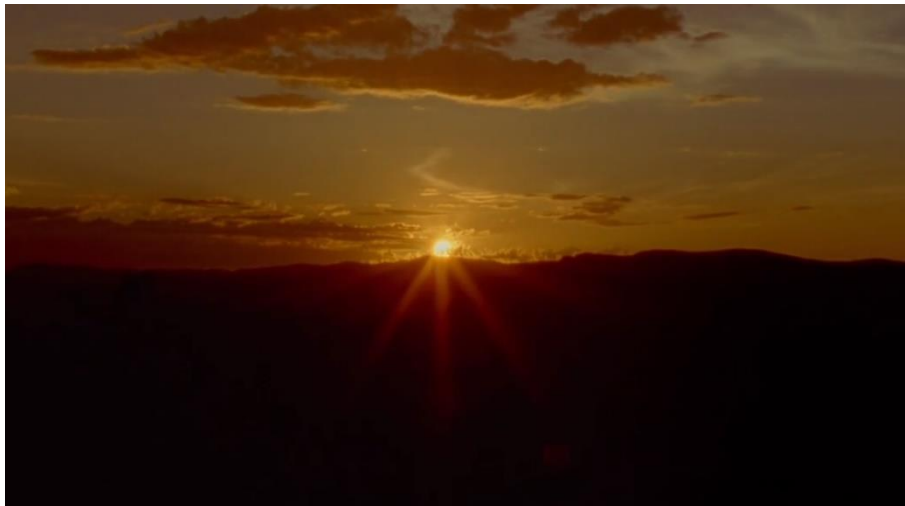


Figure 7 – The uchronic sunrise in the Central Plateau in *The Age of Stone*

While Vaz’s sensorial camera movement zooms in, there is no Palace of Dawn on the horizon but dawn itself, as if the film was exploring a space-time prior to the existence of the human-made construction or one that will never lead to it. The dynamic is enhanced by the sound design. The use of sound marks a second difference with regards to Glauber’s sequence. Designed by Arno Ledoux and Vaz herself, the sound departs from natural to artificial sound, following the

director's approach to reality as construction. At first sight, the soundtrack can be taken as purely diegetic, as it was indeed fully captured *in loco* by Chico Bororo. However, while the sun rises and the camera zooms in, that diegetic sound (wind blowing, birds singing) is intensified to the extent it becomes fake, almost electronic, *naturally* artificial. Again, Vaz plays with the blurring of nature and artificiality in order to question what one acknowledges as reality. The images that match those blurred sounds are framed by Vaz herself and Jacques Cheuiche. As if coming full circle, her partnership with Cheuiche is quite a meaningful one, as he was the director of photography in *Brasiliários* – in a way, where all this started.

Indeed, *The Age of Stone* is a comeback. Personally, it is Vaz's comeback to her hometown, in a journey that, significantly enough, takes place outside her hometown. The federal capital is not there because it has never actually been – only in Vaz's imagination. After addressing Brasília in *Sacris Pulso* through archival material, *The Age of Stone* imposed itself as an invitation for her to finally travel and give meaning to her imagined Brasília. Cinematically, it is her return to images, sounds, and texts that have haunted and fascinated her for years: from *Brasiliários* and Clarice's two tales to *Sacris Pulso* and *Entre Temps*, an artistic thread that found in Glauber's iconic *The Age of the Earth* a friction that had to be explored. Influenced by the monumentality of modernist Brasília and in dialogue with Brazilian cinema tradition, Vaz builds a narrative interested in deconstructing (or reconstructing alongside) the references. Her sci-fi documentary, the outcome of her speculations on reality, is not only a voyage into the far west of Brazil but an attempt to redefine national history and (hi)storytelling through cinematic friction.

3.3.2. The science-*friction* documentary of Ana Vaz

“Brasília is science-fiction” (1999b, p59), as Clarice categorically affirmed. Her impressions of the country's new capital are still today what best encapsulates the mixture of astonishment and strangeness that arises in those who set eyes on Brasília. “Brasília is a strictly perfect and error-free joke. And what only saves me

is the error” (ibid, p44). In other words, the perfection acquired by the architecture has forgotten to take account of the imperfections of reality. Errors not only save (or better, define) Clarice, but us all. “I never cried in Brasília. There was no place to” (1999a, p42), she confessed referring to the lack of corners, streets, and squares the modernist city wanted to avoid constructing. Interestingly, the void of modernist architecture became, after all, the emptiness that had a decisive impact upon Clarice’s outlook. “If it is not populated, or rather overpopulated, it will be too late: there will be no place for people” (ibid). It is a hyperbole, but one that subtly points to the lack of human presence in the Pilot Plan. The sophisticated stream of consciousness dear to Clarice’s literature beautifully permeates the two tales she wrote, as the above-mentioned extracts demonstrate. Fascinated by the inaccuracy of time and space that only Brasília bears, Clarice felt, indeed, like a “space traveller” (1999b, p52), who had “finally got off the flying saucer” (ibid, p53), and was quite overwhelmed by “writing in the past, in the present and in the future” (ibid, p46).

In *The Age of Stone*, science-fiction is not straightforwardly a projection of the future. That is, it is not evident if what one sees on screen is set in a distant future per se. Rather, the film is more the visual conflation of Clarice’s past, present, and future, interested in the friction with so-called reality. Like the Brasília of Clarice, the Brasília of Vaz “is the place where space resembles time more” (1999a, p43). In other words, space is constructed through the exploration of the possibilities of cinematic time. As the Deleuzian time-image, Vaz’s visual tapestry evokes temporalities that go beyond the image itself, as “the image itself is the system of the relationships of its elements, that is, a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows” (Deleuze, 1989, pxii). Much in tune with the idea of uchronia (Renouvier, 1988), one could be seeing either the origins of Brasília or its final days. The element which conveys this sense of multiple spatial-temporalities is precisely an allegorical ruin. This choice is quite significant, as the ruin has the ability to bear past, present and future within itself (Dillon, 2011). It is physically in the present, it is a reminder of what has now gone, and invites conjecture about what is to come.

As mentioned earlier, the monument-ruin in its entirety is only seen in the third part of the film. Until then, the ambience is composed by an exploration of other human and non-human elements. The construction of the surroundings of the ruin is directly linked to the use of sound, which marks the first turning point in the film. For nine minutes, the landscape is that of Chapada dos Veadeiros.⁴¹ The camera explores the fauna and flora, the geological site slowly unfolds as a black *boiadeiro* rides his horse across the frame. At a given moment, part of the monument is seen at relative distance, without further explanation. In a close-up shot, the *boiadeiro* gazes steadily at the horizon. The camera frames the mountains covered in green vegetation. As the camera zooms in, the crescendo of sound resumes its artificial timbre, similar to what happens in the opening sequence, as discussed earlier. Cut. And what one then sees is a quarry in Pirenópolis. The sound becomes purely diegetic again. In the quarry, workers and stones share the same environment. Amid them, fragments of the monument start to appear regularly, albeit never entirely.



⁴¹ In October 2017, a fire destroyed nearly a quarter of the protected area of Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, a UNESCO Heritage site. In a sense, *The Age of Stone*'s investigation of space has become even stronger, as much of that area was deeply transformed. For more details see BBC News (2017): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-41747575>



Figures 8, 9, 10 and 11 – From Chapada dos Veadeiros to Pirenópolis through the gaze of the *boiadeiro*

What I call a second turning point in the film is the appearance of Ivonete dos Santos Moraes, a young girl Vaz had met during her location research. Ivonete's figure appears like a sort of creole ghost, the daughter of miscegenation and

offspring of that (psycho)geography. Originally from that locality, the film plays with the fragility and strength that Ivonete contains within herself. Some might see her as a fragile teenager subjected to that arid atmosphere, but others as a strong force in constant interaction with nature. In many of the close-ups Ivonete seems to be looking at the horizon, as the reverse angle shot shows the impressive landscape – and stays there for more than just a few seconds. Therefore, one has the impression that Ivonete is not only looking at the landscape, but the landscape is looking back at her. In tune with Deleuze and Guattari's (2005) exploration of the earth/Earth's limits, the Brasília of Vaz *is* the solid yet disoriented Central Plateau. Full of holes, recesses, and textures, the topography could be that of the moon or Mars – the earth/Earth is indeed another planet – the rhizomatic plateau “a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end” (ibid, pp21-22). If a rhizome is made of plateaus, as both authors claim, then Brasília, located in the Central Plateau, appropriately matches the concept.



Figures 12 and 13 – Ivonete looks at the horizon, and the horizon looks back at Ivonete

In clear opposition to Glauber’s verbiage in *The Age of the Earth*, silence is definitely part of the soundtrack in *The Age of Stone*. Characters, from the black *boiadeiro* to Ivonete and the workers, do not say much. In fact, only Ivonete speaks to the camera. She recites literary extracts from Machado de Assis, Hilda Hilst, and, not surprisingly, Clarice Lispector, transforming them into a prosaic yet mythical speech. Interestingly, when Clarice’s words are uttered, something quite significant happens. “It was as artificial as the world must have been when it was created”, says Ivonete looking at the camera/spectator. Not coincidentally, Clarice’s famous sentence referring to Brasília’s natural-artificial aspects is the same sentence used by Vaz to underline the natural-artificial in cinema as well. Ivonete breaks the cinematic fourth wall precisely by pronouncing these words. Declaiming in an amateur fashion, her own acting seems artificial in itself, she ends up giving “a creole dimension to Clarice” (2017a), as Vaz points out in her

interview. More than characters, Ivonete, Seu Chico Preto, and the diggers are spectral figures, uchronic announcers of people who might have once been there. Although allowing itself some distance from Cinema Novo, the use of non-professional actors in this film is worth mentioning, an element often present in the 1960s cinematic movement that continues to the present (Queirós' films are examples of that, too).



Figure 14 – Ivonete recites Clarice to the camera

In that dreamlike scenario, the enormous size and power of the ruin/Brasília strikes one when it is finally shown in its entirety. In a circular panoramic shot that lasts two minutes, we see the structure from a privileged point of view (the camera is positioned in the centre of the quarry), equally acknowledging its extension and oddness. In the frame, there is a man, one of the diggers, crossing the site, tiny in comparison with the monument. There is also a little house made of stones as small as his human stature. The nomadic thought (to make use of a Deleuzian term) of Vaz prevents us from fully decoding those elements. Again, a suspicion which arises. The monument is not only an object of science-fiction but the outcome of the friction between reality and speculation. Interested in merging with Clarice and Glauber, past and future, Brasília and outside Brasília, it turns out to be an object of science-*friction*. Near the end, it vanishes. The camera moves toward the blue sky and the monument is no longer there. If development has not yet come, the ruins of underdevelopment have already disappeared. “Brasília is a future that happened in the past. Eternal as a stone” (Lispector, 1999b, p50).





Figures 15, 16, 17 and 18 – The monument-Brasília

3.4. Exploding the Third World from a *laje* point of view

To a certain extent, the Brasília of *The Age of the Earth* runs in parallel with the Brasília of *White Out, Black In*. According to Xavier (2001), although fragmentary, the discourse of Glauber and his four Christs take account of violence and exclusion as issues deeply attached to national history. In Glauber's film, the foreigner, capitalist conqueror arrives in Brasília bragging about his superiority over the decadent elite of that piece of land. In these sequences, Glauber explores the threads linking business, corruption, and oppression, with the urban, modernist space of Brasília as the setting. "The greater metaphor of imperial exploration crystallises in the biblical image of the enslaved people working on the building of tombs – this is the connotation that acquires the monumental architecture of Brasília" (ibid, p126), as the local labour force is seen in a similar situation. In voice-over, that spatial-political oppression makes Glauber no longer believe in socialism and capitalism as separate domains but imbricated ideologies that do not help solve social problems. Above all, he is *for* the people. "Democracy is not socialist, communist, nor capitalist. Democracy is the reign of the people. De-mo-cra-cy is the *un*-reign of the people", he shouts at a given moment.

The Brasília of *White Out, Black In* is, indeed, one of violence and exclusion but Queirós' discourse as a filmmaker is less fragmentary. Glauber's sense of being

politically adrift in 1980 is replaced by a renewed leftist discourse in Queirós' experimental documentary. It is noteworthy that Queirós' political stance has been mostly in tune with the left-wing federal government of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party) through the mandates of President Lula (2003-2010) and President Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016) – the latter's second mandate was interrupted by a controversial impeachment process that many believe to be a political-mediatic coup d'état orchestrated by the right-wing sector of her presidency, including her Vice-President, Michel Temer. The director, personally, is an enthusiastic supporter of the anti-poverty programs and affirmative action policies developed by the Worker's Party, such as university quotas for minorities. In a sense, his documentaries quite directly open a dialogue with that leftist debate, as his body of work⁴² sheds light upon the poor black communities targeted by those policies.

The concern with discourse and aesthetics goes hand in hand with his cinema. The cinematic elaboration of Brasília's segregated society gives form and content the same level of importance, although doing that is constantly questioned, he complains. "They only want to relate the people of the periphery to discursive matters. It is funny how when we deal with aesthetic and formal areas, these are ignored, as if we wouldn't have the capacity to think about form in cinema" (2014), affirms Queirós in a Canal E interview available on YouTube. In that powerful statement, 'they' could be interpreted as the mainstream, the industry, the system, whilst 'we' means him and his crew from CEICINE,⁴³ the Ceilândia-based film collective founded by him. The director complains that 'they' expect documentaries to be 'serious' and stress that it is important "to mess things up, by which he does not mean having no responsibility" (ibid). In Portuguese, he uses the word *avacalhar* which approximately translates into 'mess up' or 'screw up', unsettling or discomposing something, but it has a rougher and more popular sense in the original.

⁴² Before *White Out, Black In*, Queirós directed short-documentary films *Rap: O Canto da Ceilândia* (2005), *Dias de Greve* (2009), and *Fora de Campo* (2010), and the documentary feature *Is the City One Only?* (A Cidade É Uma Só? 2011), exploring the reality of Ceilândia.

⁴³ Coletivo de Cinema em Ceilândia (Ceilândia Film Collective).

The aggression towards Brasília in *White Out, Black In* is so strong that the capital does not even appear in the frame, as the narrative's point of view comes from Ceilândia, the satellite city. The documentary charts the story of Marquim do Tropa and Shokito, survivors of police violence at the locally popular Quarentão nightclub in 1986.⁴⁴ In acknowledging how painful it would be to register the traumatic events in documentary mode alone, Queirós opted to work through science-fiction fabulation with them. Through constant interaction, all decisions were made collectively. For instance, Queirós says they would normally shoot according to the will and availability of the non-professional actors on the day: if they were not in the mood to shoot a particular heavy sequence, they would do something else instead. Because they were the characters themselves, that kind of dynamics was crucial for setting the very specific tone of a film centred on a traumatic event. Again, Nagib's (2017) ethics of realism can be mobilised in relation to the mode of production.⁴⁵ Marquim and Shokito (Sartana, in the film), although in a fictional context, identify with their roles in a quite literal way here. As mentioned above, the non-professional actors actually play themselves, not only merging with but mirroring the phenomenological real. They have known each other for a long time, they experienced the same violent episode, they are residents in Ceilândia – and the film uses all of that to support the narrative. As characters in a sci-fi documentary, they plan to explode a sonic-atomic bomb over Brasília, the conjunction of music,⁴⁶ sounds, and noises collected on the streets of Ceilândia and integrated into a futuristic contraption. Interestingly, the allegorical bomb is a musical one, as the crime took place in a black music nightclub.

Here, the capital is constructed as an off-screen space. Brasília is absent, unreachable, not there. Rather, it gains meaning through the marginalised spatial

⁴⁴ Quarentão was considered one of the birthplaces of black music in the Federal District. For more details see Oliveira (2015): <https://noticias.r7.com/distrito-federal/filme-branco-sai-preto-fica-mostra-historia-de-violenta-batida-policial-no-quarentao-berco-da-cultura-black-do-df-19042015>

⁴⁵ In interview, Queirós himself claimed that a film is, after all, shaped by its mode of production. For more details see Adriano Garrett (2015): <http://cinefestivais.com.br/conheca-a-carreira-do-diretor-adirley-queiros/>

⁴⁶ Music plays a key role in Queirós' body of work. For instance, his first short-documentary film, *Rap, O Canto da Ceilândia*, focuses on the story of four rappers, and his first documentary feature, *A Cidade É Uma Só?*, is a discussion centred on a controversial political jingle.

architecture of Ceilândia, subjected to the capital’s tyrannical pomposity in both the film and reality. In a way, it seems there is no need for the white, wealthy Brasília to be shown. Firstly, because its official version has already been exhaustively mediated; secondly, because cast and crew want it to vanish for good. The best symbol of its off-screen presence comes in the shape of a passport, a key element for the film to convey the sense of apartheid in the Ceilândia/Brasília equation. More than just an object, the passport raises awareness of the boundaries that exist between the two localities. To access Brasília, one needs to have this document. “If you are listening to this track, it is because you are in the controlled area of the city of Brasília. Please have your passport with you”, advises the announcer, as if referring to Michel Foucault’s (1995) disciplinary panoptic. In another moment, the characters listen to a curfew announcement through urban loudspeakers: “Citizen, the social welfare police are starting their night round. We urge everyone to remove children from the streets and return to their homes. Have your documents to hand. 103 days have passed without a record of any attacks in our city. A better government is an alert government”. Both the need for a passport to enter the capital city and the control curfew define the kind of space the characters live in for the audience.



Figure 19 – The passport is key to marking the boundaries between Brasília and Ceilândia

The sci-fi documentary, therefore, sets its perspective at a distance from the capital, although from a ‘privileged’ viewpoint, or a “*laje* point of view” (2014, p198), as César Guimarães suggests. Literally a paving slab in English, the word *laje* also has a social connotation in Portuguese. If someone lives or parties in a

laje, this is a reference to the open-to-the-air first floor of a poor house, or a *favela* shack. In this sense, the perspective of the film finds a correlation in the set design per se, as Marquim and Sartana have a sort of *laje* in their houses in Ceilândia. As a matter of fact, the way the characters' houses were designed (collectively constructed especially for the shoot) also emphasises their personal relationships to Ceilândia/Brasília. In the case of Marquim, there are two opposite yet oppressive scenarios. Marquim goes to the basement to work in his subversive radio station; a sort of bunker in which he plays songs and elaborates on his memories for potential listeners. Going up to the first floor, the bunker is exchanged for a balcony surrounded by iron bars. When he is up there, he seems to be set apart, isolated from the street, almost imprisoned; paradoxically, he also feels the city is much closer there, as he can gaze upon the urban horizon from his own *laje* viewpoint.

The city also invades the house of Sartana, a house that seems to have no walls. Many sequences take place in his *laje*, a mixture of inside and outside, as if the place was either under construction or being demolished. When he is not at home drawing or taking digital-camera pictures, Sartana is framed in a sort of junkyard, where he is surrounded by mechanical debris, including prosthetics like the one he himself uses. Sartana was so badly injured after being trodden on by police horses that he lost one of his legs. The shocking police onslaught had consequences for Marquim's mobility as well – today, he is in a wheelchair. Thus, not only does the cinematic space reveal the materialisation of social apartheid, but also the characters/people's own fractured bodies, the intimate space they inhabit, bearing the consequences of it. In fracturing their bodies, the police violence also fractured their urban experience within the city. Tatiana Hora calls both Marquim and Sartana “cyborgs of the past” (2016, p14), referring to the meaning of their bodies in Queirós' sci-fi documentary. Half human, half machine, the cyborg, here, is the aftermath of State violence. Interestingly, there is an opposition between the bodies in the Brasília newsreels of the 1950s and the ones in his film, as “instead of the bodies capable of tireless and accelerated work to erect the new capital presented in the official films, *White Out*, *Black In* shows the bodies of the city mutilated by urban control” (ibid, pp14-15). In a WhatsApp interview with me, Queirós affirms that “the characters are amputated, just as the city is

amputated. And where there are bodies amputated in an amputated territory, there is a state of permanent war” (2018). Alternatively, the director claims that the state of permanent war also allows reaction, one that fiercely refuses the *status quo* and aims at other possibilities.



Figure 20 – Marquim in the radio-bunker



Figure 21 – Marquim in the *laje*



Figure 22 – Sartana in the no-wall house



Figure 23 – Sartana in the junkyard

3.4.1. Two cyborgs of the past against one Red Light bandit

As pointed out in chapter 2, Cinema Marginal was a response to the deep consciousness of Cinema Novo films. Exploring an *aesthetics of garbage*, it emerged as an underground movement resorting to a radical discourse fuelled by irony and humour, as Rogério Sganzerla's *The Red Light Bandit* emblematically demonstrates. Jorge the bandit, played by actor Paulo Villaça, is essentially an outlaw in crisis: he steals and attacks women, while questioning his identity and life. An aggressive, frustrated antihero who wanders in the Boca do Lixo, the red-light district of São Paulo, and whose unpredictable political action is precisely to

avacalhar. At one point, he even says: “when we can do nothing, we can only ‘*avacalhar*’”. That is, make a fool of oneself, or more appropriately, to let oneself collapse. The irony and humour engendered in the precarious sci-fi aesthetics of *White Out, Black In* bring Queirós’ film closer to Cinema Marginal than to Cinema Novo, as the director believes that the former had a greater impact on his filmmaking. As Queirós himself has said, the will of *avacalhar*, or to mess things up, gives his film the freedom to play with science-fiction elements and yet address current reality, much in tune with the idea of *furios frivoly* evoked by Prysthon (2015). Unsurprisingly, sci-fi elements are also an essential part of the imagery of Sganzerla’s film as a means of conveying a powerful social critique. If Sganzerla’s film is devoted to an aesthetics of garbage, many of the sequences in Queirós’ film take place in a junkyard, bringing together and rendering visible the sense of ruination that pervades both films.

Looking closely at *The Red Light Bandit* might help unpack *White Out, Black In*’s strategies by taking account of their differences. Whereas the bandit is the portrait of the failed, tedious criminal man, Marquim and Sartana are pro-active victims in face of the crisis. There is no way out for the bandit; and there is revolution for the cyborgs of the past. It is Queirós himself, however, who seems to address the reality of his characters/actors by resorting to a strategy similar to Sganzerla’s inventiveness. Even the term *avacalhar* is mobilised by both Queirós and Sganzerla’s protagonist. “The worst place for cinema is that of the politically correct. The politically correct is an incredible place for the political, democratic, and party’s needs. The politically correct character in the films is a reactionary” (2015), says Queirós in an Itaú Cultural Encontros de Cinema interview available on YouTube. In an angry film like this one, “a vengeful film” (ibid) as the director defines it, Marquim and Sartana’s aim to blow up Brasília comes as a political statement in this unconventional storytelling. Indeed, the politically correct as a dramaturgical element is not an option here.

Although working with different cinematic styles, the freshness of the narrative position of both films produces a sort of dialogue. Sganzerla’s film is essentially a fictitious film, but not just that. At twenty-one years old, the director was mocking Cinema Novo’s seriousness in investigating national issues by shedding light on a

collage of references. The urban culture of the red-light district resulted in an aesthetics of garbage in opposition to an already disseminated aesthetics of hunger – even though Sganzerla had Glauber as one of his references alongside Sergei Eisenstein, Orson Welles, and Jean-Luc Godard. “My film is a Western about the Third World. That is to say, a fusion and a blending of various genres. I made a somatic film; a western, but also a musical, a *documentary*, a cop film, a comedy (or is that slap-stick?), and *science fiction*” (Sganzerla, 2017, p81, emphases added). As claimed by Xavier (2017), the tropicalist tone of *The Red Light Bandit*, that of mixing national and international references in a pop, parodic mode, is the film’s most prominent feature. Instead of imitating Cinema Novo’s search for an authentic national cinema, Sganzerla opts for subverting the idea of the national, questioning progress and (under)development through self-mockery and countless citations. For instance, whereas the use of African percussion sounds in Glauber’s *Entranced Earth* (Terra em Transe, 1967) intends to shed light on Brazil’s African roots, in Sganzerla’s film, the African percussion sounds are intertwined with Jimi Hendrix’s guitar, very much in tune with Tropicália aesthetics.

Sganzerla reaches the science-fiction domain through citing Welles’ classic radio adaptation of H. G. Wells’ *The War of the Worlds*. In the film, the voice-over narrators seem to be working at a radio station per se, as they announce all sorts of information with a sensationalist vibe. Again, it is the tropicalist tone that comes to the foreground. Additionally, the image of flying saucers frequently occurs throughout the film, playing a central role in the dialogue with science fiction. More than a homage to the genre, Xavier (2012) suggests that repetition is the key to the fragmentation of *The Red Light Bandit*. Firstly, a flying saucer appears in the film the bandit is watching, that is, as an element outside the bandit’s tangible world; later on, however, it reappears inserted into the bandit’s film narrative per se. In other words, the flying saucer creates a sense of chaos that not only pervades the film the bandit is watching but the one the audience is watching. Sganzerla does this without a trace of intellectual seriousness. On the contrary,

according to Suppia, *The Red Light Bandit* “is perhaps the apex of the parody attitude of Brazilian cinema in relation to science fiction”⁴⁷ (2007, p122).

In the final sequence, the bandit succumbs to the crisis and commits suicide after being chased by the farcical police, in a clear reference to Godard’s *Pierrot Le Fou* (1965) ending. Next, flying saucers, called UFOs by the voice-over narrators, unexpectedly float above the Boca do Lixo sky. Creating an apocalyptic atmosphere, the flying saucers, accompanied by images of Afro-Brazilian carnival dancers and radio announcements about general disorder, finally hit the ground at a single moment. At this point, the death of the bandit has already been set aside by the film, and the exploding flying saucer becomes the climax of the narrative. The explosion is a sign of failure, defeat, finality. The voice-over narrators, however, refuse to attribute meaning to this frenetic sequence. Although in allusion to the Wells/Welles narration, any dramatic sense is completely absent. Intentionally, there is no moral in the conclusion; rather, a sense of catastrophe which attempts to communicate the political environment of the off-screen world at that time. Interestingly, Barros (2013) relates the sense of catastrophe to ruination in his reading of the film. For him, the city is in a state of siege – and the bandit is a tropical outsider that refuses to cooperate. He is the underdeveloped criminal, “the one who could not stand the frustration humanity and devolved into a destructive form of indiscriminate violence” (ibid, pp62-63).

⁴⁷ Suppia (2017) claims that Brazilian science fiction films can be divided in two major strands: comedies (essentially parodies) and ‘serious’ films. Apart from *The Red Light Bandit*, he mentions Cinema Novo films, such as *Brazil Year 2000* (Brasil Ano 2000, 1969) and *Who is Beta?* (Quem É Beta?, 1972).





Figures 24, 25, 26 and 27 – Flying saucers hit Boca do Lixo in the closing sequence of *The Red Light Bandit*

Essentially a documentary film, Queirós' output brings to the fore the mix of genres seen in Sganzerla's classic, deeply drawing on science-fiction, as pointed out. A big fan of Hollywood sci-fi, the director has said on several occasions that his dream was to film his own *Mad Max* (1979) or *Blade Runner* (1982). As such, documentary and science-fiction fulfil the narrative needs at similar levels, playing with the blurring of boundaries but, most importantly, using sci-fi elements to paradoxically enhance the characters/director's approach to reality. As mentioned, the irony and humour in the use of these elements bring Queirós' and Sganzerla's closer together, as the sense of *avacalhar* seems to guide the political discourse of both projects. Like Vaz, Queirós acknowledges Glauber's manifestos as key to Brazilian cinematic history and influential in his cinema practice (Furtado, 2017). Not surprisingly, however, he highlights the work of Cinema Marginal filmmakers, such as Rogério Sganzerla and Andrea Tonacci, as aesthetically closer to himself: "Not only because of the '*avacalhação*', but mainly due to the fact that Cinema Marginal appeared at a time when Cinema Novo was becoming an institution, making concessions and presenting an average Brazil on screen" (2018), Queirós observes in his interview. For him, the risk his cinema and the cinema of some of his contemporaries are proud of taking refers back to the risk that Cinema Marginal (and, to a lesser extent, Cinema Novo) once had in the past.

Nevertheless, the central point of *White Out, Black In* differs from that of *The Red Light Bandit*. Whereas the latter shows a protagonist in search of his own identity (“Who am I?”, he questions throughout), the former creates self-assured characters, conscious of their place in society and willing to overthrow the current social structure. In this sense, if the bandit is an allegory of a man/country immersed in chaos, Queirós’ sci-fi documentary is the visualisation of the aftermath, the post-apocalyptic environment, the ruined Third World. Its characters, however, are not finished but ready to revolt. Here, the explosion planned by Marquim and Sartana is an allegory of rebellion, achievement, a new beginning. The final sequence of *White Out, Black In* is a drawing sequence showing a spaceship bomb-attacking the main political hub of Brasília, as if the vengeful plan of the characters had finally succeeded.

The barbarians’ invasion is imminent... they are ten seconds away from Brasília... everything is suffused with a terrible red light, no one can tell what is going to happen... the people are invading the public parks... only a miracle can save us from total extermination... it takes only one obscure individual in the crowd to shake the foundations of power in the world.

The above quotation could belong to Queirós’ sci-fi documentary but it is actually one of Sganzerla’s film’s final voice-over announcements. The bandit is dead, the police are miserable, the dancers seem entranced, a flying saucer is in the air, the Third World is about to explode. This chaotic scenario is underlined by the radio announcers’ parody, as Xavier (2017) points out. There is a sense of Cold War paranoia when the speakers claim the flying saucers “arrived from the East”, meaning it does not matter whether they are Reds or Yellows. The news billboard informs us the marines have landed in Bahia in order to defend Brazil, while the Martian fantasy invasion is taking place at the same time. Xavier calls attention to “the image of the ‘survivors of the Third World’ conducting their Afro-Brazilian carnival in the realm of trash (...) turning itself into an emblem, a kind of nightmarish vision threatening the conservative mind” (ibid, p100). The closing sequence takes place in São Paulo but, as the speakers say, could be ten seconds away from Brasília, where Marquim and Sartana would inevitably be found. Their bomb does not come from the East, but from the outskirts. They are not Cold War

paranoia sufferers, but present-day oppressed. They are not dancing amid the trash but surviving out of the trash.

3.4.2. The science-*non*fiction of Adirley Queirós

Instead of prompting a meditation on the origins (or the collapse) of Brasília as seen in *The Age of Stone*, the role played by ruins in *White Out, Black In* goes in a different direction, as Queirós finds redemption in exploding the bomb in the Pilot Plan. In other words, the image of a ruined Brasília is the director's way of shedding light upon and condemning the capital's history of segregation and social control (Gouvêa, 1995). In fact, the destruction of the capital represents the destruction of the oppressive regime that sustains society as a whole. Although aiming to re-write history through science-fiction, the nonfictional aspects of the narrative is implied by a range of documentary strategies. The traumatic event itself is unveiled mainly through voice-over statements by Marquim and Sartana. These passages are objective and descriptive, compared to the more loose and playful aspects of the narrative. At one point, there are even talking-head interviews with Marquim and Sartana. Here, it seems as if the documentary mode has imposed itself on the narrative. That may be true until the moment when a reverse angle shot shows Dimas Cravalaças (Dilmar Durães), the time-traveller agent, watching the interviews projected inside his precarious spaceship (in reality, a container). All of a sudden, one is brought back to science-fiction. Dimas is an agent from the future who time-travels in order to collect evidences of crimes committed by the State.



Figures 28 and 29 – Sartana/Shokito speaks to the camera in the documentary, whereas Dimas Cravalaças watches him speaking in the sci-fi film

In addition to the commentary (via voice-over or talking-head interviews), the viewer also gets the chance to see archival photos that evoke the atmosphere of the Quarentão ball, alluding to more traditional documentary storytelling. It is precisely the indexicality of the photos (or the ontology of the image, to mention Bazin's (1967) famous concept) that prevents the film from moving away from realism completely. Nevertheless, when these images are on screen, Marquim is not giving any interview whatsoever. Rather, he recounts the event from his bunker/radio station while putting on records. Again, the film suspends traditional documentary mode, exploring new possibilities of conceiving realism in film by adding sci-fi elements to real, empirical history. Most importantly, this sort of fiction and nonfiction overlapping reveals that, no matter how science-fictional this documentary seems, there is a pulse of reality in each of its frames. In this sense, it is rather a science-*non*fiction than a science-fiction per se; hence, the

term *sci-fi documentary*. In this sense, Suppia (2015) reads the film as an example of *borderlands science-fiction*,⁴⁸ as it is precisely located in an in-between cinematic situation. It is a documentary and, at the same time, a Third-World cyberpunk or a *garbage-punk film*, as the author claims.

In this case, the traditional documentary form could not ever be applied because “it cannot handle telling a class story, that is, the story of a Brazilian periphery, in the sense that it cannot overcome the documentary form itself” (2018), Queirós affirms via WhatsApp interview. For the director, every time traditional documentaries aim to tell a story like the one of *White Out, Black In*, they fail. “It’s as if the documentary betrays the characters. The revenge that is supposed to happen does not happen. The documentary presents these characters as victims and turns the everyday event, or even an extraordinary one, into an extremely exotic thing”. In other words, “the memory remains the memory of the oppressor’s eye over the oppressed. This is what the classic documentary does: it gives the memory of suffered oppression” (ibid). It is no coincidence that in the final credits of the sci-fi documentary Queirós’ comment appears: “*Da nossa memória fabulamos nós mesmos*” (‘Our memory, we ourselves make fables’, in loose translation). Interested in re-assessing history through memory, he argues that once one acquires power over the narration, new layers of politics, interventions, possibilities and territories are created and have to be taken into account. With this in mind, the ruinous cinematic atmosphere is key, as Edensor reminds us of “the allegorical power of ruins to interrogate memory, look at the stimulation of involuntary memories, and identify the numerous ghosts which inhabit the haunted space of the ruin” (2005, p139).

According to Mesquita, *White Out, Black In* engenders its own regime of historicity, regardless of any institutional attempt to define temporal phases. Referring to Queirós’ documentaries, she believes his “works evoke the past, but in relation to the present (and sometimes to the future)” (2015, p3). Although the actual crime took place in 1986, the film is quite vague about the year in which the action takes place. The viewer knows the time-traveller agent has come from a

⁴⁸ The author borrowed the concept from Lysa Rivera’s “Future Histories and Cyborg Labor: Reading Borderlands Science Fiction after NAFTA” (2017).

2070's society and that for three years he has been in the 'territory of the past'. In the opening credits, a board informs the viewer that the story is set in 'Old Ceilândia, Federal District', but gives no further information. The spatial-temporal vagueness is so that Dimas can receive a message from the future telling him that, after three years away, he might actually be lost: "We do not know of your whereabouts and there is the suspicion that you have disintegrated in time and space". The disintegration that the message refers to helps Queirós to purposely puzzle our perception. When Dimas wanders into the so-called 'territory of the past', for instance, he strolls through vast, empty spaces that could be a sort of wasteland or ground ready to receive high-rise buildings.

In this sense, Hora (2017) claims Dimas' precarious spaceship-container plays a key role in the construction of time, or within its own regime of historicity, as mentioned. "Anachronistic scenic object par excellence, the time machine, a construction container, is an apparatus of the future, but also an allegory of the past of Brasília's construction and of the present of the capital's growth" (ibid, p73). That is, the container refers to an idea of Brasília being a construction-site type of city, from its modernist invention to current real estate speculation. As a sci-fi element, the time-travel machine is therefore a contradictory *novum*⁴⁹ in the narrative. At the same time that it is used as a means of bringing justice from the future, it encompasses the controversies of past and present times. Interestingly, Hora creates an opposition between the time-travel machine and the bomb, the film's second *novum*. While both objects are sci-fi objects, they have opposite meanings in the storytelling. "If the time machine is the anachronistic element par excellence that promotes the multiple plots between different temporalities, the weapon of mass destruction is the element that implodes the very historical time and that crystallises progress as a catastrophe" (ibid, p77), in a true Benjaminian fashion.

⁴⁹ According to Darko Suvin (1979), *novum* (the Latin for 'new thing') is the defining characteristic of science fiction narrative. The term is used to describe the scientifically plausible innovations that allow the story to be developed in a sci-fi mode.



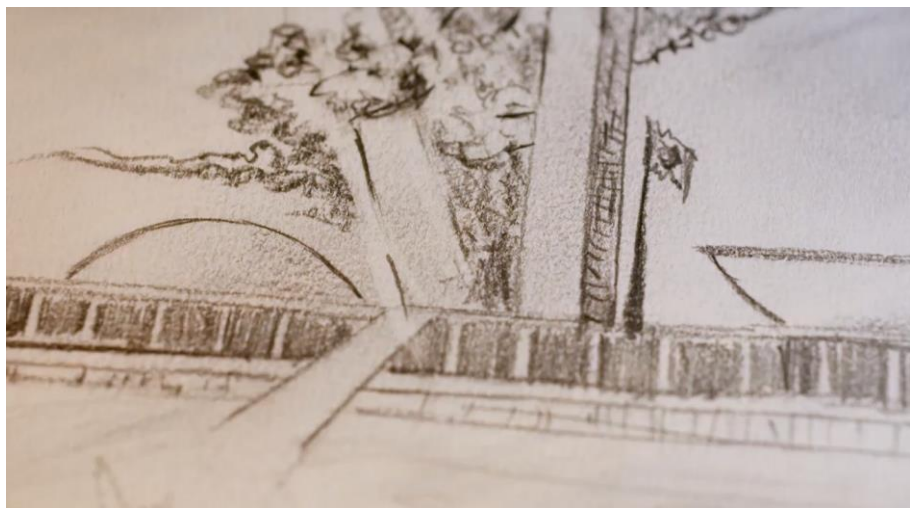
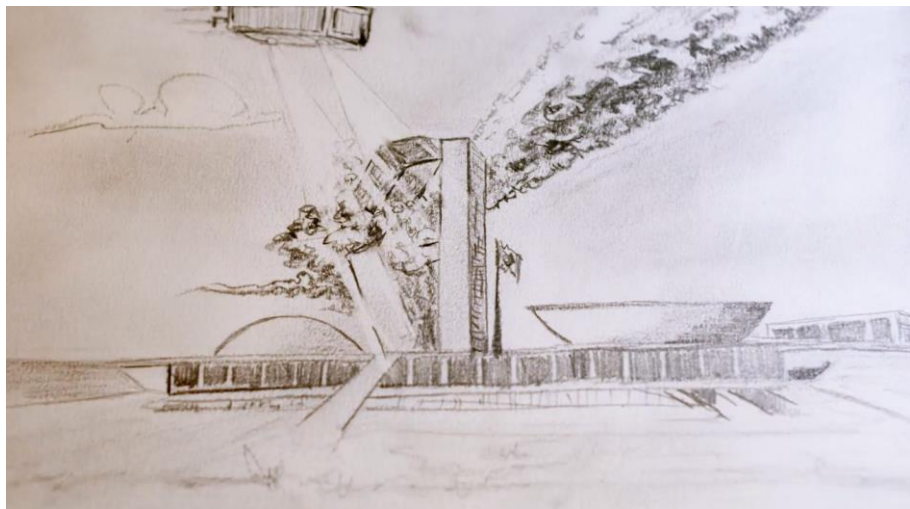
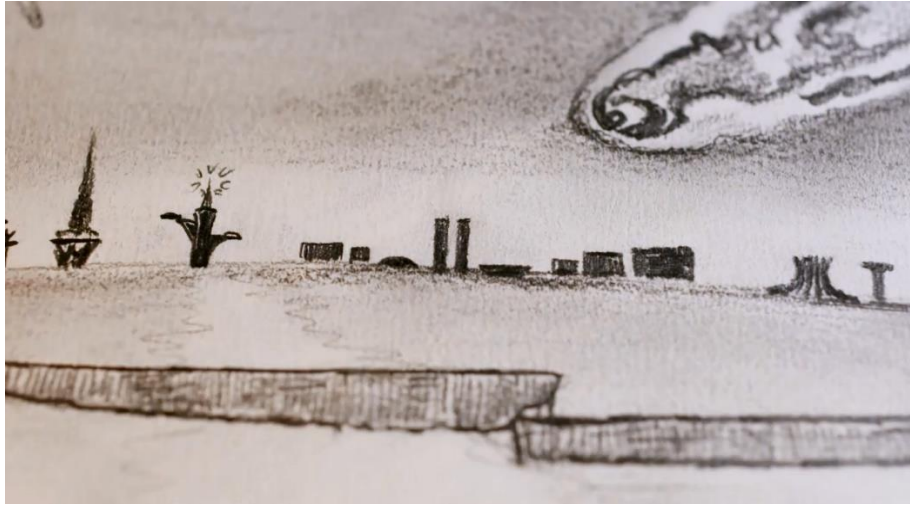
Figures 30 and 31 – The time-traveller and the spaceship-container

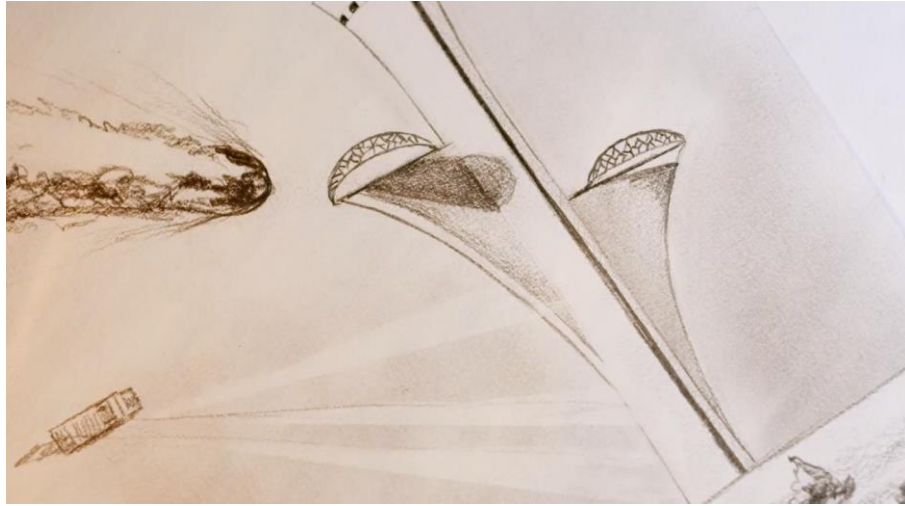
The second half of the sci-fi documentary focuses on the second *novum*. The bomb is going to be launched into the future, the characters stress, calling attention to the division between the time-space of (Old) Ceilândia and Brasília. Not by coincidence is the bomb heading into the future, as Brasília has forever been considered the city of the future. There is a sense of naivety in this vindictive plan, very much in tune with the fable tone of the story. While Marquim is responsible for collecting and mixing the atomic sound, Sartana takes pictures of Brasília (from quite a distance) and draws something which will only be understood at the end of the film (as his drawings become the ending of the film *per se*). Nothing is known at this stage, but Sartana, just like Marquim, is cooperating with the final explosive sequence. As the sentence that wraps up the film points out: “Our memory, we ourselves make fables”. Indeed, revenge comes in the shape of art. Fulfilled by music and depicted through drawings, the closing

sequence shows the collapse of the white, wealthy Brasília, the modernist design under attack, the capital in ruins. The use of drawings is particularly interesting as it emphasises the fable/fabrication aspect of the narrative, a fantasy created by the draftsman (and the director). Moreover, there seems to be an implicit analogy here: if the drawings are a science-fiction invention in the film, Brasília itself is a modernist invention in the real world.



Figures 32 and 33 – Marquim (right) and Sartana set up the sonic-atomic bomb





Figures 34, 35, 36 and 37 – Brasília under attack

Apart from *The Red Light Bandit*'s dystopic ending, the final sequence of *White Out, Black In* seems to open an involuntary dialogue with *Projeto Pulex*, Tadao Mياqui's short animation film. As mentioned earlier, *Projeto Pulex* shows a Brasília ruled by politicians aimed at exterminating the poor population. In it, a man of the people attempts to stop the plan. He invades the meeting where the government is explaining the project in order to shoot them. The security system, however, identifies his presence and murders him first. In a sense, Marquim and Sartana, men of the people, carry on with that failed plan. Their successful plan is put into action through drawings, an explicit link between both films, as *Projeto Pulex* is an animation per se. For Suppia (2007), dystopia in the short film is a reflection of a general social indignation which was aroused in the wake of the neoliberal presidency of the late 1980s, just after the end of the military dictatorship.⁵⁰ In *White Out, Black In*, the crime under scrutiny took place in 1986, a time link between the films. This time, however, dystopia turns into revolution as Marquim and Sartana succeed in their plan. In this sense, they stand as an empowering Afrofuturist Brazilian narrative, as Antonio Cordoba (2017) suggests, bearing both a deconstructive and reparative tone, and making use of technology in favour of black storytelling.

⁵⁰ In *Science Fiction and Digital Technologies in Argentine and Brazilian Culture*, Edward King (2013) precisely aims at tracing how narratives produced since the last dictatorships have used devices and imagery drawn from postmodern science fiction to examine the shifts in power in a neoliberal context.

Finally, Daniel Herwitz reminds us that “Le Corbusier’s cities aim for permanence” and that “it is hardly an easy thing to imagine dismantling Brasilia or Chandigarh now” (2010, p236). At the same time that he believes that “the presumption of such radical change would simply be a perpetuation of the thinking of the utopian planner, like Le Corbusier, or the apartheid administrator”, he does not think that we “must accept the human or urban landscape exactly as it is”. For Herwitz, “velvet revolutions are often about tearing down the icons of authoritarian monumentality, and most of us have seen images of crowds gleefully ripping down Berlin Wall or a statue of Lenin” (ibid), so perhaps it is indeed about time for us to see the images created by Queirós. His ruins question viewing Brasília as an untouchable icon. As a UNESCO World Heritage site, the modernist Pilot Plan does not allow urban interventions at any cost. “Brasília is a city that can’t be touched. You can’t change her physical structure. The surroundings, they can explode” (2014), says Queirós in the Canal E interview. Hence, the situation is reversed in *White Out, Black In*.

The bomb will not only touch but explode the modernist symbols of the Pilot Plan. Most of the drawings show the emblematic Plaza of the Three Powers being squashed, while furious, funk-music lyrics by MC Dodô loudly play in the soundtrack (*Bomb explodes in the head/Ripping thief apart/I’m going for this war and I’m going to win it*). “Social transition required a symbolic break from the monuments of the past, giving their complicity in forms of hegemonic power” (2010, p238), Herwitz claims, but those could also be Queirós’ words. “These styles of monumentalization were written in the script of the settler. They speak to the excluded majority only as confirmations of its exclusion” (ibid). At last, the monument is torn down. So-called progress is undone, though not as a regression. As one knows, ruins have the ability to be the end of one cycle and, at the same time, the promising starting point of something else.

3.5. The heterotopic Brasília in *The Age of Stone* and *White Out, Black In*

As discussed, reality in *White Out*, *Black In* and *The Age of Stone* takes place in spaces other than Brasília itself. In the case of *White Out*, *Black In*, the absence of the capital has a strong political sense, as Queirós rejects the white, wealthy Brasília – for him, a symbol of oppression. Therefore, Ceilândia, home of the director, 30 km from Brasília, is his cinematic viewpoint. With regard to *The Age of Stone*, sequences were filmed in Chapada dos Veadeiros, 230 km north of the capital, and Pirenópolis, 150 km west of the capital. In proposing a new spatiality for Brasília, the director suggests mystery instead of understanding, as neither Chapada dos Veadeiros nor Pirenópolis are even identified as such. Vaz decentralises the historical perspective of Brasília through decentralising its space. These places, however, should not be taken as unreal; they are more “like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (1986, p24), as Foucault defines *heterotopia*. Furthermore, the Brasília of Queirós and Vaz, like the counter-sites of Foucault, “are most often linked to slices in time (...), a sort of absolute break with their traditional time” (ibid, p26); in other words, a spatial-temporal experimentation attempting to flee the authoritarianism of society.

In this sense, the connection between Brasília and ruins in the directors’ outputs are no coincidence. As Edensor claims, “ruins are exemplary spaces of this sort of heterotopia. The affective, peculiar sensations experienced in the ruin slip away from those normative procedures through which space is represented and categorised” (2005, p63). Drawing on Foucault’s (1986) *heterotopia*, Vaz and Queirós seem to entail this concept in their cinematic (re)constructions of Brasília. In so doing, both filmmakers propose *another* perspective of the capital. As discussed, their alternative worlds rely on sci-fi elements as a detour from the official narrative. Firstly, this is because the genre per se is based on the invention of alternative worlds as “the exploration of all the constraints thrown up by history itself – the web of counterfinalities and anti-dialectics which human production has itself produced” (Jameson, 2005, p66). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because the sci-fi imaginary is mobilised with regard to the idea propagated of Brasília being the city of the future – the modernist city was

meant to create genuine, “new forms of collective association, personal habit, and daily life” (Holston, 1989, p31).

Significantly, neither *The Age of Stone* nor *White Out, Black In* are labelled as sci-fi films, but sci-fi documentaries, by the directors themselves. That is, apart from the sci-fi realm, there is a genuine concern in locating both outputs within the field of documentary. My hypothesis is that their attempts to suggest an original approach to reality gain credibility if linked to cinema’s most realistic strategy: the documentary film, the so-called visual document of one’s historical time. However, the connection with the documentary mode also seems very keen to play with the false certainties usually attached to it. That is, both films appropriate (or better yet, re-situate) the values of the documentary film in order to problematise the idea of reality. Plus, they resort to defamiliarising the present (Jameson, 2005) through science-fiction by aiming to redefine that same reality. Thereby, both films encompass a dual plea: in questioning the official narrative of Brasília, they find it impossible not to question the traditional means of narrating it – content and form under scrutiny.

Unlike Vaz’s *The Age of Stone*, *White Out, Black In* targets a new representation of Brasília as a clear enemy to be destroyed. It is precisely that iconoclastic gesture that sets Queirós and Vaz apart. Whereas Vaz believes that defining the enemy so assuredly actually empowers it, Queirós seems to follow a more Marxist way of reading social relations, underlining hierarchical positions in Brasília’s spatiality and society. As discussed, the oppressed characters in his fable-documentary plan to drop a sonic-atomic bomb on the white, wealthy Brasília, the political hub created by modernism. That Brasília is Queirós’ and the film’s enemy. By resorting to science-fiction elements, the director is able to cinematically destroy it, as the awaited explosion can finally turn that Brasília to ruins. The constant interaction and division between Queirós and Vaz’s film methodologies provides at least one certainty: there should be nothing like a fixed notion or pre-given reading of what Brasília is.

Their artistic aims and original schemes put the very meaning of the capital city into narrative dispute alongside previous attempts to depict national progress and

(under)development, such as *The Age of the Earth* and *The Red Light Bandit*. That dispute implies a place of tension that houses creative initiatives aimed at destabilising the *status quo* instead of finding easy solutions. Even though Queirós seems to be firm in his left-wing political stance, he openly welcomes contradiction as a quintessential element of his filmmaking. He says *White Out, Black In* is a contradictory film or a film that works through contradiction. For instance, the film crew, though cohesive and friendly, is immersed in contradiction themselves, disagreeing and coping with their distinct subjectivities. He mentions that, at the same time that he is a *white* director representing (though he dislikes that word) *black*-community demands, he feels he can legitimately talk about territorial issues in Ceilândia as he has always lived there. “The only thing that makes us move is contradiction. It can advance with us or implode on us” (2014), Queirós states in the Canal E interview. In terms of methods, one could relate Queirós’ fondness for contradiction to Vaz’s Deleuzian intellectual porosity concerning critical thinking and filmmaking. Their heterotopic Brasília, therefore, is the aftermath of contradiction and porosity.

In 1964, Niemeyer was in Paris when the military coup d’état took the federal capital by storm. Haunted by the prognosis of what was to come, he painted two oil paintings straightforwardly titled *Ruins of Brasília*. The man who once designed the genesis of the city also painted his modernist columns lying on a dark horizon in an expressionist tone. Highly obscure and to date left out of the national imaginary, the two paintings firstly came to public view in 2017 in an exhibition celebrating the 110th anniversary of the architect’s birth. His prophecy was realised in motion. As if in the climax of ruin or a cinematic trance, Dimas Cravalaças shouts, pretending to have an imaginary gun in his hands: “Take this, progress-toady! (...) Racist who will never change; it’s going to stay the same! (...) Take this, hell of Europe; take this, everyone!”. He is insanely mad in his own science-*nonfiction* act, as if opening a time-travelling dialogue with *The Red Light Bandit*. “The Third World will explode! (...) The solution for Brazil is extermination!”, exclaims a little poet man in Sganzerla’s frenetic film debut. The black Christ of Glauber does not shy away either. He welcomes the bomb in the

theatrical tone of *The Age of the Earth*: “Blessed be the misery, because one day they will break free! Blessed be the atomic bomb, the prostitute of Babylon, blessed be the criminals!”. The diggers of the quarry are sculpting the bomb. Or collecting the remnants. Between fear and fascination, Clarice ensures that “Brasília is broken glass on the street floor. Shards” (1999b: 56). How long will it take for the shattered pieces to be gathered? Amid the ruins of underdevelopment, Brasília is still breathing.

4. Constructing ruins in Rio de Janeiro: an intermedial visualisation of failing projects

Before Brasília was crowned capital of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro had been the country's leading city for almost two centuries. It was in Rio that Hélio Oiticica exhibited *Tropicália* for the first time, and that Caetano Veloso first saw Glauber Rocha's *Entranced Earth* (*Terra em Transe*, 1967), a catalyst for Tropicalismo to erupt as a movement in 1967. In this chapter, I consider the city as an ongoing (de)construction site, from the standpoint of the experimental documentaries that question the modern and neoliberal consequences embedded in the urban space. I argue that they apply a tropicalist, intermedial aesthetics to the documentary mode to visualise ruins of underdevelopment in Rio.

The first section draws on the intermedial emergence of *Tropicália* (Solomon, 2017) in the wake of Cinema Novo, underlining its countercultural attitude of unpacking national issues and the risk of that being commodified under the yoke of the neoliberal regime (Rolnik, 2006, 2011). In the face of that risk, I argue that the films I analyse fight against the loss of the radical power of art precisely by exposing the architectonic failures of the city. Next, I offer the World Cup and the Olympic (de)construction works as emblematic images of the present-day dynamics of capitalist extraction, as explored in Daniel Santos' *ExPerimetral* (2016) and Clarissa Campolina, Julia de Simone, Luiz Pretti, and Ricardo Pretti's *The Harbour* (*O Porto*, 2013), two experimental short documentaries on the Elevado da Perimetral, a 5.5-km elevated highway located in Rio's harbour zone, using intermedial tactics.

The third section focuses on Luisa Marques' *Tropical Curse* (*A Maldição Tropical*, 2016), an experimental short documentary intermingling visual arts and performance. It starts with the abandoned Carmen Miranda Museum to question national modernity through both Mirandas, the commodified Portuguese-Brazilian artist and the decaying, modernist building. In the final section, I refer to Pedro Urano and Joana Traub Csekö's exploration of the intermedial, multi-sensorial documentary aesthetic that reflexively references the country's historical

architectural modernism – or its *peripheral modernity* (Prysthon, 2002) – in *HU Enigma* (HU, 2011). The documentary feature investigates the last days of the university hospital of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro – in fact, half of the building’s final days, as the other half still functions as a fragile public hospital. Four visual constructions of failing projects that frame ruins (an elevated highway, a museum, and a hospital) are presented as a means of addressing Rio’s (and Brazil’s, by extension) (under)development. In doing so, the documentary-makers’ belief that the ruin in Brazil is not the work of chance but a project in itself establishes a dialogue with the 1960s tropicalist intermediality.

4.1. Tropicália: an intermedial counterculture

In *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil*,⁵¹ a blending of autobiographical episodes intermingled with commentaries on Brazilian culture, Caetano Veloso (2017) delivers an exquisite mosaic to unpack issues related to national identity. He explores the 1964 military coup d’état, modernist anthropophagy, and, most importantly, Tropicália itself – the ground-breaking intermedial movement that originally mixed national and international references to create an authentic image of the turmoils of late 1960s’ Brazil. In the book (which had a revised and amplified second edition in 2017, twenty years after its original release), Caetano delves into the politically charged decades of the 1960s and 1970s, left and right-wing debates, capitalist and socialist ideologies, to articulate his particular viewpoint – or rather, his tropical truth. Accused by the traditional left of being alienated, and criticised by the conservative right of being subversive, Caetano’s stance is indeed hard to label. Tropicália, in that sense, was his means of expressing through music the dualities, nuances, and contradictions of what it felt like to be young, progressive, and Brazilian, at that specific moment in time.

⁵¹ At the time he was writing it, his grasp of both music and literature had become more prominent, as he released a studio album appropriately named *Livro* (1997), literally ‘Book’.

As briefly pointed out in chapter 2, it is worth considering Caetano's tribute to Claude Lévi-Strauss' writings in his fifty-year body of work, one of particular relevance to this study. The conflation of the Brazilian *tropicalista* and the French anthropologist, the popular artist and the foreigner lecturer, the singer-thinker and the European-Indigenist, took shape better when the former wrote the lyrics of *Fora da Ordem* (Out of Order), a song for his album *Circuladô* (1991). Inspired by the paradoxes of Brazilian progress suggested by Lévi-Strauss, he evokes the French author singing: "*Aqui tudo parece/Que era ainda construção/E já é ruína*". In English: "Here everything seems/It was still under construction/And is already a ruin". Full of dialectic images, the song plays with the idea of the country being a construction site whose work will never be completed. This conclusion presents itself in the following: "*O asfalto, a ponte, o viaduto/Ganindo pra lua/Nada continua*" ("The asphalt, the bridge, the viaduct/Howling at the moon/Nothing continues"). In another excerpt, there is even an implicit relationship between the devastated landscape and the socio-economic wreckage of Brazil: "*Um mero serviçal/Do narcotráfico/Foi encontrado na ruína/De uma escola em construção*" ("A mere servant/Of drug trafficking/Was found in the ruin/Of a school under construction") (Veloso, 1991).

Interestingly, that perception attunes with North-American artist Robert Smithson's notion of *ruins in reverse*, which has served as a conceptual umbrella for many contemporary artists. In his 1967 essay "The Monuments of Passaic" (the year of publication is a symptomatic coincidence here), Smithson wanders in his New Jersey hometown and notices that "that zero panorama seemed to contain ruins in reverse, that is – all the new construction that would eventually be built. This is the opposite of the 'romantic ruin' because the buildings don't fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise as ruins before they are built" (1996, p72). As Dillon claims, the concept "reminds us that the ruin is always dynamic and in process, giving rise to what Smithson calls 'dialectical landscapes' that hover between the deep geological past and a catastrophic future" (2011, p14). Seemingly inspired by both Caetano's and Smithson's critical viewpoints, Welsh visual artist, Cerith Wyn Evans, directly embraced the argument. In 2004, he displayed a major installation called *Aqui Tudo Parece Que É Ainda Construção e*

*Já É Ruína, A Partir de Fora da Ordem*⁵² (Here Everything Seems That It Is Still Under Construction and It Is Already a Ruin, From Out of Order), a sort of ephemeral firework sculpture. In the artwork, the famous sentence borrowed from Caetano's song shines in a precarious wooden outdoor structure – a luminous event that lasts less than two minutes to emphasise its ephemeral nature.

More recently, for instance, Brazilian visual artist Andrey Zignatto re-appropriated the concept in his installation *Tudo É Sempre Construção, e Também Ruínas*⁵³ (Everything Is Always Construction, and Also Ruins). Here, Zignatto plays with a wall made of broken bricks, emphasising the logic of (de)construction, and making use of a single object to depict the duality. Notably, the dialogue established between literature, music, and installation art not only points to the kind of productions Tropicália might have inspired, but refers to its very origins as a movement. As will be discussed throughout the chapter, the tropicalist critical reading of national (under)development had intermediality as its main driving force, an artistic strategy that blurred the boundaries within the cultural scene at the time and resonates to this day. Multimedia artist, Caetano himself has also been involved in the visual arts, particularly film.⁵⁴ In 1986, he directed *O Cinema Falado*⁵⁵ (translated as 'The Talkies'), a fragmented, experimental collage of literary references, from Guimarães Rosa to Thomas Mann, whose texts were brought to life by friends and family members.

Having said that, his connection to Brazilian cinema actually goes back to the conception of Tropicália itself. The trigger for the movement to erupt took place when he first saw Rocha's *Entranced Earth*. "(...) One powerful image after

⁵² The artwork is part of the Inhotim collection, an open-air art gallery in Brumadinho, in the Minas Gerais state, Brazil.

⁵³ The installation art piece was first exhibited in 2017, at SESI Tatuí, in São Paulo, Brazil.

⁵⁴ The contribution of Caetano Veloso to cinema is vast. Apart from being the subject of many documentaries, he made a guest appearance singing in Pedro Almodóvar's *Talk to Her* (Hable Con Ella, 2002); soundtracked the Brazilian Oscar-nominated *O Quatrilho* (Fábio Barreto, 1995); and worked as an actor in Júlio Bressane's *Tabu* (1982) and *Sermões - A História de Antônio Vieira* (1989); and so forth.

⁵⁵ Before the film was made, he had already named one of his albums *Cinema Transcendental* (1979), literally 'Transcendental Cinema', indicating his leaning towards cinematography.

another confirmed my impression that unconscious aspects of our reality were on the verge of being revealed” (Veloso, 2017, p35). The contradictions that Glauber managed to visually represent on screen had a decisive impact on Caetano. What struck Caetano most was Glauber’s emphatic discourse on the death of populism, questioning the traditional leftist approach in the middle of a right-wing military dictatorship that lasted from 1964 to 1985. In the film, the protagonist is a haunted left-wing poet in crisis with his own political beliefs – and Glauber radically addresses that topic in one of the film’s many classical sequences. “During a mass demonstration, the poet, who is among those making speeches, calls forward a unionized worker and, to show how unprepared the worker is to fight for his rights, violently covers his mouth, shouting at the other (and at the audience), ‘This is the People! Idiots, illiterate, no politics!’”, Caetano recalls. “It was a hecatomb that I was facing. (...) *Tropicalismo* would never have come into being but for that traumatic moment” (ibid, p39).

The birth of Cinema Novo was itself a hecatomb. It ruthlessly destroyed what people – from intellectuals to a general audience – had understood about national cinema up to then. Aiming to construct a genuine Brazilian identity from moving images, Glauber, alongside Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Ruy Guerra, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and many others, sought to evolve out of the standard cinematic output of Atlântida and Vera Cruz studios by bringing to the foreground the contradictions of underdevelopment in which the country was immersed. In other words, the complexities of Brazil as a Third-World nation, more specifically, after the military coup d’état, became the very motto for that generation of artists to work on – something that Caetano would put into action through *Tropicália* sonorities. According to Xavier, that was actually “a moment of strong transition – political, cultural, aesthetic – where cinema, theatre, the visual arts and popular music, together and in constant interaction, defined a time and a debate of rare intensity” (2012, p7). Particularly thinking of the cinema, Xavier regards the films of that period as filled with allegorical strategies marked by a sense of history as catastrophe, as discussed in chapter 2.

In the recently published *Tropicália and Beyond: Dialogues in Brazilian Film History*, Solomon (2017) attempts to re-assess that legacy in order to evaluate the

resonances of the Tropicália era in the present-day artistic scene, especially considering its intermedial aspect. Both in the book he edited and in the film season he organised, Solomon sheds light on particular strands of that cinema and on more recent productions in dialogue with that tradition. Celebrating *Entranced Earth*'s fiftieth anniversary, he points out: "We are now a full fifty years from the film's release, but its concerns seem just as pressing today as they were then; indeed, one cannot help but consider the way that the political crisis depicted in *Terra em Transe* mirrors the abject failure of politics in Brazil circa 2017" (ibid, p20), referring to President Dilma Rousseff's controversial impeachment and the political and economic turmoil that damaged national democracy afterwards. Decidedly, underdevelopment has not been overcome. According to a Lévi-Straussian pessimistic view of progress (Veloso, 2017), the failure of development has been contingent upon the cyclical phases of economic boom and downfall, hardcore exploitation and subsequent contraction, cycles of construction and subsequent destruction, as previously mentioned.

Discussions of cinema and intermediality, in particular, play a central role in the work of scholar Ágnes Pethő (2010, 2011), whose research delves into a variety of intermedial approaches to cinema and advocates intermediality as a consistent branch of film studies. Rather than a compilation of overlapping media expressions, her work revisits and expands the realm of filmmaking, taking into account "cinema's non-discursive domains and more sensual modes of perception" (2010, p65) through the fusion, not the accumulation, of film and other art forms. It seems to be, after all, an opportunity to scrutinise, once again, the ubiquitous Bazinian enquiry: *What is cinema?* As Lúcia Nagib and Anne Jerslev (2014) point out, the Bazinian tone is indeed a crucial part of intermedia's genealogy, since Bazin's "Pour un Cinéma Impur: Défense de l'Adaptation"⁵⁶ addressed the controversial relationship between cinema and literature in the early 1950s in France. For Nagib and Jerslev, a so-called impure cinema should be seen not as an object, but as a method "capable of understanding cinema beyond the constraints of the medium's specificity" (ibid, pxxi). In this sense, an intermedial

⁵⁶ Hugh Gray translated the essay to English for the first time in 1967 under the title "In Defense of Mixed Cinema", part of Bazin's *What is Cinema? Volume 1* (1967). In their book, Nagib and Jerslev (2014) take issue with the term *mixed*, using Bazin's original term *impure* instead.

approach to film relates to a theory that “is focused on relationships, rather than structures, on something that ‘happens’ in-between media” (Pethő, 2011, p2).

As stated above, Solomon (2017) draws on that intermedial method in his re-assessment of Tropicália against the contemporary cinema backdrop. Focusing on the Brazilian artistic experience, he underlines the implicit analogy between intermediality and cultural anthropophagy in a country marked by cannibalistic rhetoric. As Caetano once stated, “Tropicalismo is a neo-Anthropophagism” (Veloso cited in Campos, 1974, p207). Solomon appeals to Brazilian scholar Jair Ferreira’s timely reading of “cinema as an *anthropophagic* art, polarised and transcendental in the way it synthesises all six previous arts and metamorphoses itself into an uneasiness about its future (...)” (2006, emphasis added). Nagib and Jerslev (2014) strike a similar note when simultaneously relating intermedial and intercultural approaches to film. “From Lumière’s travelling the globe with the *cinématographe*, the moving image as well as the moving camera have been crossing cultural boundaries in the same way that they cannibalized pre-existing arts and media” (ibid, pxxiv). The intercultural aspect (or the cultural anthropophagic aspect) of intermediality has also been tackled by Robert Stam in his analyses of the “multicultural nature of artistic intertextuality” (2005, p3).

Ultimately, Nagib and Jerslev emphasise another aspect of intermedial practice that seems to mirror tropicalist-like values. Rather than “ascribing, in principle, a politically progressive, ‘modern’ and/or experimental character to films which expose in form and content their cross-border intentions”, both authors are interested in such films precisely “because, among other things, they push intermediality to its ultimate boundary, which is the division between art and life” (2014, pxxiv). Indeed, the blurring of boundaries between art and life itself was one of Oiticica’s (1999a) main goals in defending his *anti-art*, as will be highlighted below, an art intrinsically linked to every day experience, centred on the multi-sensorial mode of human interaction with the world. According to Pethő, intermediality has “a kind of sensual mode”, one that invites the audience “to literally get in touch with a world portrayed not at a distance but at the proximity of entangled synesthetic sensations, and resulting in a cinema that can be perceived in the terms of music, painting, architectural forms or haptic

textures” (2011, p5). Bluntly put, as Oiticica’s multi-sensory *Penetrable PN2* encapsulated in its title: “*Purity Is a Myth*”.

In this context, Solomon places intermediality as the defining aspect of the countercultural 1960s movement, as “*tropicalismo* offered itself as a banner under which the purity and particularity of any given art form could become compromised, giving rise to something new by ignoring its own institutional confines” (2017, p16). In his study, intermediality encompasses Tropicália as a whole, from the intermingling of the cinematic and visual arts to the multi-tasking kind of artist that stood for the movement, like Oiticica himself, who worked with sculpture, painting, and film (with filmmakers Neville D’Almeida and Ivan Cardoso). When investigating its resonances in contemporary cinema, Solomon is less interested in tropicalist films per se than in films that have “at least some connection with *tropicalismo* as a strategy or an idea” (ibid, p19). According to Nagib and Solomon, “Tropicália collected and made sense of the debris of the left-wing revolutionary utopia shattered by the military coup in Brazil in 1964” (2019, p123). More fundamentally, “Tropicália artists took the political catastrophe as an opportunity to dismiss hierarchies and break the boundaries”, as “their outputs and interventions recognized no frontiers between the established arts and media but circulated freely across them” (ibid).

Following that argument, I focus on the intermedial aspect of experimental documentary-making as one of the everlasting resonances of Tropicália in present-day culture. Here, the return to Tropicália via a contemporary version of intermediality can be read as the execution of intermedial aesthetics in the documentary mode to visualise the ruins of underdevelopment. The dialogue with that tradition and the openness to experiment seem in tune with Migliorin’s argument affirming that today “the place of documentary is that of undefinition” (2010, p9). If since Cinema da Retomada, “there have been fewer certainties, fixed models and definitive explanations” (2003, p104) in Brazilian documentary, as Labaki suggests, contemporary production seems to be at ease exploring the boundaries of cinema, visual arts, and other art practices. In Brazil, the proximity between documentary and video art, for instance, echoes the 1980s, as Lins and Mesquita (2011) point out. That crop of nonfiction productions was consolidated

after the digital revolution, while fostering connections with both the contemporary art circuit and the 1960s revolutionary cinema, as França (2006) contends in chapter 2.

4.1.1. The anthropophagic tropicalist appearance

Considered the Tropicália leader, one cannot dismiss the role of other art practices (cinema, visual arts, poetry, theatre)⁵⁷ in the music of Caetano Veloso and his comrades. In this regard, the mix partially resulted from the way Caetano related to Oswald de Andrade's "Cannibalist Manifest"⁵⁸ (1928), released in the wake of controversies provoked by the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week. His tropicalist conceptualisation was much influenced by Andrade's anthropophagic approach to art and culture, one inspired by the Tupinambá cannibalism in order to allegorically digest foreign influences in favour of developing a Brazilian art. Tropicália drew inspiration from the modernist movement of the 1920s, at the same time maintaining a stimulating interchange with contemporary artists in the 1960s. In mixing bossa nova and rock'n'roll, high art and pop culture, music and visual arts, it proposed a new look at the condition of underdevelopment, updating Cinema Novo's early days and establishing a dialogue with Cinema Marginal films. Honouring the intermedial aspect, the movement was actually baptised after Hélio Oiticica's ground-breaking installation *Tropicália, Penetrable PN2 "Purity Is a Myth" and PN3 "Imagetic"*, displayed as part of a major exhibition Nova Objetividade Brasileira (New Brazilian Objectivity, 1967), at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro – the first time the word *Tropicália* was used. Inferring connections between Oiticica's artwork and one of Caetano's early songs, cinematographer and producer, Luiz Carlos Barreto, suggested the title

⁵⁷ In 1967, actor, director and playwright José Celso Martinez Corrêa's adaptation of Andrade's *The Candle King* is considered to be the birth of Tropicália in the theatre. Alongside Glauber's film *Entranced Earth*, and Oiticica's installation *Tropicália*, the play was also fundamental to the emergence of the movement.

⁵⁸ The manifesto was first translated into English by Leslie Bary in 1991. For more details see Andrade and Bary's "Cannibalist Manifesto" (1991).

Tropicália for the songwriter's lyrics.⁵⁹ It is no coincidence that *Tropicália*, the song, a sort of unofficial anthem, contains an intermedial discourse unlike in any other lyrics, playing with references ranging from filmmaker Glauber Rocha to singer Tom Jobim and writer José de Alencar.

In this sense, it becomes clear that the movement had its origins in the visual arts realm. In fact, Cynthia Canejo (2004) shifts the focus away from Caetano, claiming the prominence of Oiticica in promoting *Tropicália* as both an artistic practice and form of critical thinking – a fact commonly overlooked, she argues in her essay. Oiticica's installation invited the public to walk through a labyrinth of a garden of sand intermingled with clichéd tropical signs attached to a certain idea of Brazilian identity. In parallel, the structure brought the precarious architecture of Rio's *favelas* to the fore while TV images situated the oeuvre in a technological, post-modern context. Mobilising the cultural anthropophagy proposed by Andrade (and later absorbed by Caetano), both *penetrables* "are multi-sensory installations surrounded by stereotypically emblematic Brazilian elements" (ibid, p65). For him, *Tropicália*, the artwork, was "the very first objectively conscious attempt to impose an obviously 'Brazilian' image on the current context of the avant-garde and the manifestations of national art in general", Oiticica wrote back in 1968.⁶⁰ Focusing on the liminality between art and life, he advocated an *anti-art*, one that should be sensorial, turn passive spectators into active participants, and consider the world out there as the true museum (Oiticica, 1999a). In *General Scheme of the New Objectivity*, the catalogue text for the exhibition, he sees the artist as a proposer, and wonders: "In Brazil, the roles take on the following pattern: how to, in an underdeveloped country, explain and justify the appearance of an avant-garde, not as a symptom of alienation, but as a decisive factor in its collective progress?" (Oiticica, 1999b, p41).

⁵⁹ Canejo takes issue with Caetano not knowing Oiticica's influential work at the time, as "considering the intercommunication within the fairly compact art world in Brazil and the impact that Oiticica's *Tropic' alia* stirred, it is possible that Caetano had not seen Oiticica's work personally, but almost certainly he would have heard of it through the media" (2004, p66).

⁶⁰ Entitled *Tropicália*, the text published on March 4th 1968 is available at: <http://tropicalia.com.br/leituras-complementares/tropicalia-3>

Certainly not by the commodification of such praxis, Oiticica would contend. His concern about Tropicália being itself devoured by consumerism was part of the game since the threshold of tropicalist debates. One year after the *New Brazilian Objectivity* show, the artist-proposer was confronting market-oriented art consumption: “And now what does one see? Bourgeois, sub-intellectuals, cretins of all kinds, preaching Tropicalism, tropicália (turned into fashion) – finally, transforming into consumption something that they do not quite know what it is” (Oiticica, Tropicália website). Canejo immediately singles out his approach by affirming that “Oiticica’s use of tropical elements was different from the strictly marketable colourful banana and mango creations that began to appear” (2004, p66). In drawing on Andrade’s cultural anthropophagy, the scholar argues that Oiticica took a step further in pursuing the deconstruction of the myth of a Brazilian tropical paradise under the yoke of a rising capitalist economy. Interestingly, Nagib reminds one that Andrade himself, after committing to the communist ideology, was soon to put his cultural strategy under scrutiny in the early 1930s, “rejecting his youthful enthusiasm for anthropophagy” (2017, p8).

4.1.2. Beyond anthropophagy: commodification and neoliberalisation

Prior to discussing the risk of Tropicália being turned into a commodity, Marxist critic Roberto Schwarz (2005) famously took issue with the conceptual genesis of the movement. For him, Tropicália’s ability to blend political and aesthetic issues hindered the fight for national liberation, because “lack of food and lack of style can hardly be of the same order of inconvenience” (ibid, p294). To a certain degree, one could say Schwarz identified and anticipated that risk from the outset:

Once this anachronistic conjunction has been produced, along with the conventional idea that this is Brazil, the ‘ready-made’ images of the patriarchal world and of imbecilic consumerism start signifying on their own, in a shameless, unaestheticized fashion, over and over again suggesting their stifled, frustrated lives, which we will never get to know. The tropicalist image encloses the past in the form of images that are active, or that might come back to life, and suggests that they are our destiny, which is the reason why we can’t stop looking at them (ibid, p295).

Regardless of Schwarz's skeptical understanding of the tropicalist allegory, Dunn claims that the critic did recognise its potential, but "was troubled by its propensity to advance a fatalistic 'atemporal idea of Brazil' that seemed to negate any potential for social transformation" (2001, p4). In an attempt to clarify its ambiguous nature, the author resorts to a hypothetical distinction between the terminologies *Tropicália* and *Tropicalismo*.⁶¹ "Since the late 1960s, critics have argued that *Tropicália* represented the moment of invention and innovation, while *Tropicalismo* denoted a subsequent moment of dilution, stereotype, and massification" (Dunn, 2016, p21). Wisely pointing out the two sides of the same coin, Ivana Bentes encapsulates the contradiction in what she calls "anthropophagy in the era of technical reproducibility" (2005, p100), an alternative way to perhaps unpack "certain practices of Tropicalism". For Carlos Basualdo, the cultural anthropophagy nurtured by the likes of Andrade, Oiticica, and Caetano – one translated into *Tropicália* poetics and aesthetics – will exist "as long as there is the possibility that creative work will not be completely absorbed by the logic of capital and converted into alienating labor" (2005, p23).

Unsurprisingly, the debate that took place amid the rotten military modernisation of Brazil reached its peak in the neoliberal period. Much in tune with that debate, perhaps no other scholar has been so emphatically critical of the dangerous neoliberal tactics in relation to cultural anthropophagy than Rolnik (2006, 2011). She contends that the politics of subjectivity and cultural production of the 1960s and 1970s were co-opted by transnational finance capitalism. Furthermore, in countries like Brazil, "paralyzed by the micropolitics of dictatorships, such experimentalism was reactivated with the establishment of cultural capitalism only to be directly channeled into the market" (Rolnik, 2011). As paradoxical as it may seem, if the tropicalist anthropophagy "played a role in the radicality of the counter-cultural experience of young Brazilians in the 1960s and 70s, it now tends to contribute to a soft adaptation of the neoliberal environment". This is partly because when cultural capitalism enthusiasts seem to celebrate notions of fluidity,

⁶¹ Caetano (2017) says it was journalist Nelson Motta who first coined the term in the late sixties. By giving *Tropicália* the suffix '*ismo*' ('ism', in English), he tried to identify and interpret the common characteristics in the movement as a whole, while unwittingly implying a shallow pattern to be followed.

flexibility and hybridisation, they are actually undermining the creative forces that used to depend on that triad, “since it came to constitute the dominant logic of neoliberalism and its society of control”. On that note, it is the unexpected reverse that takes place: “creation can result from a refusal to listen to chaos and the effects of otherness on our body”, hence what could prevail is “the consumption of ready-made ideas and images” (ibid).

In 1998, conscious of the role of postcoloniality within the globalisation of the art world, the 24th São Paulo Biennial focused on investigating the Brazilian notion of anthropophagy as a concept and a method while challenging the Western European canon by using the rhetoric of cannibalism. In spite of conflicting reviews, the event was a watershed in terms of re-thinking and re-situating anthropophagy as a cultural strategy, one that could be even more controversial in the wake of the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, as Lisette Lagnado and Pablo Lafuente (2015) point out. According to Mirtes Marins de Oliveira, both the press and academia identified a *polarity* in the exhibition curated by Paulo Herkenhoff: “its insertion in an anthropophagic order and, through it, in an order promoted by the international circuit of exhibitions that, in the 1980s and 90s, proposed a revision of the idea of the ‘primitive’ and its modern appropriation (...)” (2015, p176). Oliveira’s essay on the event mentions historian Annateresa Fabris’ account of the conceptual crossroads, as she problematised “whether the ‘Manifesto antropófago’, decontextualised from its modernist origins, could articulate a contemporary vision”. Moreover, Oliveira asks, “was adopting a concept defined in relation to a national identity appropriate in a moment of redefining the national under the pressure of globalisation?”. It is symptomatic, however, that the debate only drew widespread attention some ten years after the 24th Biennial took place – proof of its relevance and potential to reverberate, but also proof of neoliberal power and consolidation.

Writer and visual artist, Pedro Neves Marques, has recently taken up the argument considering the turning of cultural anthropophagy into a neoliberal commodity per se. Moreover, Tropicália turned into a shallow, if not empty, image of Brazil, interested in the *other* just to nullify its *difference* in the name of the so-called anthropophagy. “Commodified, it becomes synonymous with a Neo-Darwinist

mode of predation, precarious, and individualistic” (2014, p65), losing its collective strength. Indeed, his view mirrors Rolnik’s critique, when she blames the country’s elites and middle classes for giving in to the neoliberal regime, which succeeded in truly “making its inhabitants, especially the city-dwellers, into veritable anthropophagic zombies” (Rolnik, 2006). For her, the legacy of the 1960s and 1970s can still be helpful if only to problematise the contradictions of progress and (under)development today, “but not to guarantee their access to the imaginary paradises of capital” (ibid) – a re-assessment that Solomon (2017) recently attempted, as mentioned earlier.

Following on from that, this chapter dwells on present-day experimental documentary films which potentially reverberate tropicalist-like values. To some extent, the films under analysis seem to hint at those values, though in very different ways, to reflect upon the contradictions of progress and (under)development in Rio de Janeiro, the city where Oiticica exhibited, Glauber screened, and Caetano once led Tropicália. More specifically, they do this by rendering visible an architecture of failing projects dating back to the rotten military modernisation up until the neoliberalisation of construction sites. In this sense, I argue that documentary-makers also seem to echo Lévi-Strauss’ attitude towards the city’s social and urban planning, an attitude that Caetano himself mobilises in his own work, as discussed.

The ruinous Brazil that Lévi-Strauss (1973) so poignantly describes through the façades of the New World, as highlighted in chapter 2, resonates with contemporary documentary-makers keen to scrutinise Rio as a paramount case study. Curiously, Lévi-Strauss was most unimpressed when he arrived in Rio. “Despite his mental efforts, the scenario offended his sense of classical proportions. The Sugar Loaf and the Corcovado mountain were too big in relation to their surroundings, like ‘stumps... in a toothless mouth’, as if nature had left behind an unfinished, lopsided terrain” (Wilcken, 2010, p47). In fact, Caetano (1989) straightforwardly referred to Lévi-Strauss’ infamous first impression in another of his songs, *O Estrangeiro* (The Foreigner): “*O antropólogo Claude Lévi-Strauss detestou a Baía de Guanabara/Pareceu-lhe uma boca banguela*”

(“The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss hated Guanabara Bay/It seemed to him like a toothless mouth”).

Less concerned with the natural landscape, contemporary documentaries, rather, seem to focus on the human-made landscape subject to the cycles of excitement and depression in a city like Rio. Thus, when Rolnik poses the question of “how to reactivate in our times, in each situation, the political potential inherent in artistic activity, its power to unleash possibles” (2006), I reason that these diverse yet in-dialogue outputs find a way out precisely by exposing the ruins of underdevelopment on screen. These images thus articulate a critique of the modern and neoliberal processes which result in architectonic failures. If Glauber once said that “Tropicalism is the acceptance, the rise of underdevelopment” (2005, p277), what are then the resonances of its intermedial, multi-sensorial aspects in conceptualising an aesthetics of ruins in contemporary documentary? Even more, what are these ruins capable of doing, if anything, to take back the radical power of artistic contribution?

4.2. The rubble as the legacy: a ruin for the World Cup and the Olympics

Rio de Janeiro has been at the forefront of political measures driven by the neoliberal regime, very much criticised by Rolnik (2006, 2011) and marked by foreign capital interests and strong real estate speculation which transformed the landscape. Stemming from a critical perspective on that socioeconomic model, current visual elaborations take account of the city as an ongoing (de)construction site. Seemingly inspired by a Lévi-Straussian conception, contemporary documentary-makers have shed light on failing projects as a means of questioning controversial notions of progress and (under)development. In this case, a (de)construction site is not to be regarded as a mere metaphor. As soon as Brazil was elected to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup (in 2007) and Rio de Janeiro was chosen to host the 2016 Olympic Games (in 2009), the city immediately found

itself at the centre of gigantic projects.⁶² Former state governor, Sérgio Cabral⁶³ (2007-2014, currently in prison for corruption) along with former mayor, Eduardo Paes (2009-2016) started a neoliberal crusade to prepare the city to welcome the world, with an outdated discourse of modernisation.

Throughout the twentieth century, that same endeavour towards the new and the modern was the excuse for certain government policies to be implemented. Mayor Pereira Passos (1902-1906), for instance, was responsible for allowing what became historically known as ‘Bota-abaixo’ (literally, ‘Tear-down’), a policy that displaced people from the city centre to allow the government to build a Parisian-inspired Central Avenue to please the growing *carioca* bourgeoisie. For that to happen, many of the displaced working-class had to move to the hillside (namely, the *favelas*) or the distant suburbs – once again, placing the wreckage as a synonym for progress in Benjaminian terms. As suggested by the lyrics of Caetano (1971) in *Maria Bethânia*, written while exiled in London during the military dictatorship: “Everybody knows/That our cities were built/To be destroyed”.

Focusing on the advent of modernity in the then capital of Brazil, Maite Conde (2012) relates its modern landscape to division. “Social relations were expressed through the very space of the city: Rio’s urban redevelopment articulated the divisive nature of Brazil’s modern identity” (ibid, p65). On that note, she sees the arrival of the cinema⁶⁴ – the modern achievement par excellence – as a means of questioning that division. In her view, “the cinema was inextricably linked to changes taking place in the country’s social and urban landscape, articulating and responding to transformations taking place in everyday life” (ibid, p95). Conde points out the contribution of iconic early twentieth-century chronicler, João do

⁶² The New York Times published a report claiming the legacy of the Rio Olympics was, in fact, a series of unkept promises. For more details see Anna Jean Kaiser (2017): <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/sports/olympics/rio-stadiums-summer-games.html>

⁶³ O Globo published an extensive, investigative work on Sérgio Cabral’s corruption scandals. For more details see Chico Otavio and Daniel Biasetto (2016): <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/a-tormenta-de-cabral-20478798>

⁶⁴ For a complete analysis of the first years of cinema in Brazil see Vicente de Paula Araújo’s referential work *A Bela Época do Cinema Brasileiro* (1985).

Rio, who understood modern man as *homo cinematographicus*, relating modernity's unstoppable cycles of construction and deconstruction to cinema's ability to frenetically cut and juxtapose images. "Far from a negative characteristic, the cinema's superficiality and absence of memory are seen by João do Rio as ideally suited to the new urban environment, with its rapid transformation and *destruction* of the past" (ibid, p42, emphasis added). Cinema, thus, if not completely, was able to find ways to embed this kind of discussion, as "what was needed was another narrative of modernity, one that could forge a different relationship between the past and the future, between Brazil and the rest of the world" (ibid, p168) – a role that contemporary artists seem to take upon themselves.

Bearing Rio's obsession with altering its divided landscape in mind, it comes as no surprise that, precisely one hundred years after 'Bota-abaxo', the local government resorted to similar strategies to deliver a modern Rio 'to the world'. In 2015, El País Brasil's website, for instance, posted an investigative article written by journalist Felipe Betim about the displacement of families from Vila Autódromo, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Rio, so the local government could start building part of the Olympic complex. "Most of the houses seem to have been bombed – and in this case, by City Hall itself. (...) Today, living in rubble, in a war scenario, 192 families (about 800 people) promise to fight until the end so they do not have to leave Vila Autódromo", Betim reported. "The history of Vila Autódromo symbolises a legacy of removals and expropriations left by the organisers of the Rio de Janeiro Olympics" (Betim, 2015).

Following that approach, Agência Pública published an award-winning story called *100*, reporting "100 stories, 100 removals, 100 houses destroyed by the Olympic Games". Like a journalistic marathon, according to the news agency, *100* aims to shed light on what the mainstream media seems to leave out and let the people themselves tell their own stories through videos and podcasts. Quotes like "They broke my entire house into pieces in front of me" or "Like with all progress, someone always has to lose for someone else to win" are comments made by interviewees targeted by a City Hall wanting to start construction work as soon as possible. The strategies used, however, were not always honest.

Architect and urban planner, Lucas Faulhauber, listed suspicious City Hall strategies to make the removals happen more efficiently. “(...) The visit of undercover government agents, under pretexts invented to measure and photograph the house and interview people; the repression of the municipal guard against residents; the demolition of houses which had already been negotiated, leaving the community a wreck (...)” (2016), Agência Pública reported.

Another ramification of this problem takes into account what happens when construction is approved and yet not completed. In this sense, one could argue that the art circuit was also somehow affected by this building impulse. “As Rio geared up for the Olympics, three huge new public museums also went into construction” (2016), says art critic Silas Martí, referring to what could initially be seen as a positive aspect of the mood of the city. “The Museu de Arte do Rio and architect Santiago Calatrava’s Museu do Amanhã (Museum of Tomorrow) arose along the city’s revamped old port. The Museu da Imagem e do Som, designed by New York firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro, also started to take shape on Copacabana Beach”, commenting on the promising projects. Nevertheless, having also researched the relationship between urban ruins and contemporary art in his MPhil project,⁶⁵ Martí also points out that the other side of those building promises. At the same time as the construction projects were very much part of the urban planning, it was as if they had brought a sense of decay within themselves.

On the surface, (...) things appear normal. But the rapidly decaying situation of museums in Brazil, especially the public institutions battling for the leftovers of contracting state budgets, seems to confirm the troubling pertinence of an observation Claude Lévi-Strauss made in the 1930s. (...) Indeed, even before Santiago Calatrava’s Museu do Amanhã opened in Rio, parts of its tortoise-like metallic shell had already rusted, like a corpse decomposing under the sun. Not far from there, in Copacabana, the Museu da Imagem e do Som’s Rio outpost was said to be sinking into the soft ground near the beach before its top floors were even completed (ibid).

⁶⁵ *Territórios de Exceção: Resistência e Hedonismo em Ruínas Urbanas* (Territories of Exception: Resistance and Hedonism in Urban Ruins, 2017).

In this context, artists themselves endorsed the view of Rio's sloppiness and abandonment. "In Brazil we have this modern syndrome which praises the new and abandons heritage. In Rio one can see this very clearly" (2018), claims director Luisa Marques via e-mail interview with me. "Rio has these layers of institutional destruction and unstoppable construction; the whole twentieth century was like that. And it happened again in recent years due to the World Cup and the Olympics. I guess that debate touched many people" (ibid), she is referring to filmmakers, artists and curators all absorbed in re-thinking the city. Intermixing a documentary instinct with her visual arts background, Marques addresses Rio's spatiality in *Tropical Curse* as the outcome of that sloppiness and abandonment. In her meditation on the Carmen Miranda Museum, the Flamengo Park, where the museum is located, is another example of Rio's construction obsession. Built in the early 1960s, the project required the destruction of the Castelo, Querosene, and Santo Antônio hills, so that they could be used to fill in the terrain where the park was to be constructed. Oddly enough, the park was opened to the public in 1965, but not quite – since the original project was never fully completed, the park was never officially inaugurated. The director plays around with the idea of *developing* an area, a museum, or even a persona (Miranda herself) as part of that modern syndrome, as will be discussed.

Director Joana Traub Csekö concurs with Marques about the current spatial debate reaching the domain of the arts in an e-mail interview with me. "Thinking of Rio de Janeiro and, in particular, the recent mega-events that took place in the city (World Cup and Olympics) which have left a trail of corruption and obsolete buildings as their main legacy, we realise that underdevelopment and its power games are still issues we need to deal with" (2017). As a visual artist and filmmaker, she dealt with that tension firstly through a series of photographs of the Federal University hospital, and later, by directing *HU Enigma* along with Pedro Urano, a documentary about the unfinished yet already crumbling hospital, as I will point out. In Csekö's words, "*HU Enigma* aims to investigate an emblematic case through which (...) we witness this monumental building deeply immersed in underdevelopment. It seemed necessary to trace this story back to us, so that we, as Brazilians, can reflect on how we will not fall into the same traps again" (ibid). Both in her photo series and their documentary feature, there is

common ground that invites one to question the construction impulse embedded in projects like HU. Even if the capacity for preservation does not exist, one might wonder here if it is possible to at least finish the proposed building plans.

4.2.1. Imploding the Perimetral in *ExPerimetral*

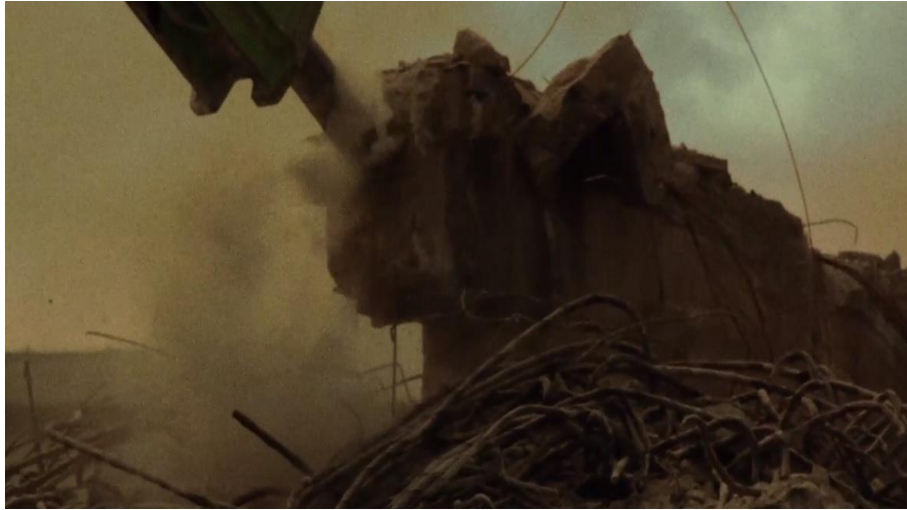
More recently, the collapse of the Perimetral certainly represented the most dramatic change in Rio's human-made landscape, as part of the (de)construction work for the international sports events. Although discussed in many articles and TV reportage, it is in *ExPerimetral* that the Perimetral and its debris actually come to the fore. "During the work for the World Cup and the Olympics, the city turned out to be a massive construction site, installing chaos on public roadways" (2017), says director Daniel Santos in an e-mail interview with me about the elevated highway. "And the curious thing is that the community involved in the history of these places does not benefit from the works; in fact, they end up being harmed and excluded" (ibid). The debris from the Perimetral is the image that Santos uses to encapsulate the harm and exclusion brought about by government policies. Right in the opening credits, one hears the sound of trumpets, like the sound of the trumpets of the apocalypse heralding the beginning of the end. What next appears could be the debris of war, and the remaining shells of bombed-out buildings. The camera of Santos wanders amid the rubble, filming fallen walls and damaged earth. Not until the last minute does the camera's gaze leave the debris behind and turn to the surroundings of that ruined place. An urban landscape appears, a horizon of standing buildings, an actual city. Rio de Janeiro is revealed.

In the frame, there is also an excavator, showing that that city is not precisely at war but under (de)construction. "Rio is a war scenario; and the conflict is evident in many spheres, not only in the *favelas*, where the conflict is permanent". On the other hand, the war scenario shaped by, among many other factors, the implosion of the elevated highway should not be seen as an asset restricted to Rio. "The city appears just at the end because I see these redevelopment projects, mainly present in historical areas of cities, as a global phenomenon" (ibid). As they usually take place in historical areas, such redevelopment projects often end up facing history

itself. During the work in the harbour zone, for instance, archaeologists found many African amulets and religious objects dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Cais do Valongo (Valongo Wharf),⁶⁶ as the area was then known, gave anchorage to many ships bringing enslaved Africans to the New World at that time.



⁶⁶ The archaeological finds were the outcome of excavation work that took place because of the Porto Maravilha construction site. After that, the Valongo Wharf area was officially designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2017. For more details see BBC News (2017): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-40552282>



Figures 38, 39, 40 and 41 – The debris of the Elevado da Perimetral in *ExPerimetral*

In *ExPerimetral*, Santos highlights the past through a graffiti inscription captured amid the rubble, which reads: ‘*nossa senzala*’ (‘our *senzala*’, a slave camp in colonial Brazil). The contemporary graffiti amid the rubble actually points to a past that some have tried to bury deep down, but literally returns from the ashes urging to be included in the account of history. “I only noticed that image during the editing. It was quite symbolic, as the process of colonisation started in that region, a territory crossed by many enslaved men and women”. His approach to the topic is much influenced by the work on race and history of black British artists, Isaac Julien and John Akomfrah, because of the way they play with the boundaries of cinema itself. In a sense, the collapse of that structure is also the collapse of African history in the country. In addition to the iconic concrete music of Iannis Xenakis, the percussive sound that invades the screen refers to African culture. The tangle of red, crumbling iron structures resembles human veins, while

the tangle of rusty iron structures looks like tree roots emerging from the ground: black blood; black roots. The debris turns into “the veins that connect, the roots that were ripped out and exposed to sunlight” (ibid), as Santos metaphorically puts it.



Figures 42 and 43 – The veins and the roots: the second image shows ‘*nossa senzala*’ graffiti at the bottom left

The imagery itself might be sufficient for one to grasp the atmosphere of war-like Rio. Nevertheless, Santos’ decision to add mayor Eduardo Paes’ speeches from the Official TED Conference,⁶⁷ in 2012, and the Columbia Global Debates,⁶⁸ in 2013, increases the critical potential of the nine-minute documentary. Talking

⁶⁷ Full Eduardo Paes’ Official TED Conference presentation available at: https://www.ted.com/talks/eduardo_paes_the_4_commandments_of_cities

⁶⁸ Full Eduardo Paes’ Columbia Global Debates presentation available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1qw3aLVHgA>

about the significant role played by mayors in shaping people's lives, Paes' discourse ends up having an awkwardly unplanned tragicomic effect, as his words do not match reality. "(...) We call Rio a very democratic city, with great open spaces where people can meet and you cannot see the social differences when you go to the streets or to the beach in Rio", he says whilst one sees a Rio immersed in rubble. "With his *tupiniquim* brand of English, (...) he was there to be praised and not questioned about his project, (...) showing his commitment to private initiative rather than public management" (ibid).

That specific situation seems to acutely echo what Avelar (2009) refers to as *neoliberal ruin*, when claiming social life has become a commodity followed by the economic and political collapse that it entails. That is, multi-layered wreckage based on the conflation of public and suspect private interests, the wreckage that takes centre stage in today's society. The Porto Maravilha Urban Operation,⁶⁹ one of the main reasons for the Perimetral to be imploded, was presented by the former mayor as the most fitting project to revitalise the Port Region of Rio de Janeiro – and is also the most fitting example of the relationship between private initiatives and local government. In *ExPerimetral*, a sort of response to "the destructive utopia of privatization" (ibid, p192), as Avelar puts it, Santos' imagery encompasses the contradictions of (de)construction through the debris of the Perimetral. In this regard, the World Cup and the Olympic (de)construction works can be read as emblematic images of the present-day dynamic of capitalist extraction, at the same time embodying a "palimpsest of multiple historical events and representations" (2006, p8), as Huysen's imaginary of ruins is defined.

In a sense, the neoliberal ruins of Avelar (2009) seem to be the next stage for the notion of *creative destruction* originally developed by Joseph Schumpeter (1976) in the context of 1940s modernity. Drawing on Marxist theory, the need for construction, deconstruction and then reconstruction could be the very motto of capitalism, a dynamic that would maintain the system's relevance. Since then, this notion has been explored by many scholars, from David Harvey (1990) to Manuel

⁶⁹ The project was much criticised by the local communities, international and alternative national media, and academic writing. For more details see Valerie Viehoff and Gavin Poynter's *Mega-event Cities: Urban Legacies of Global Sports Events* (2015), and Anne-Marie Broudehoux's *Mega-events and Urban Image Construction: Beijing and Rio de Janeiro* (2017).

Castells (1996), and expanded to the present context. Already immersed in the neoliberal era, those authors reflect on the profitability of that dynamic and the implications for the built environment and social relations. Evoking this prime contradiction of classical capitalism in the title of his influential book *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, Marshall Berman could have been referring to the Porto Maravilha Urban Operation when he says:

“All that is solid” – from the clothes on our backs to the looms and mills that weave them, to the men and women who work the machines, to the houses and neighborhoods the workers live in, to the firms and corporations that exploit the workers, to the towns and cities and whole regions and even nations that embrace them all - all these are made to be broken tomorrow, smashed or shredded or pulverized or dissolved, so they can be recycled or replaced next week, and the whole process can go on again and again, hopefully forever, in ever more profitable forms (1983, p99).

The Perimetral’s original construction per se was not devoid of contradiction. Developed in stages between the 1950s and 1970s, it became an easy target for political (and architectural) debate. Built in the harbour zone, its presence blocked the views from the land; neither could ship crews see the land properly. A car-oriented development, it symbolised the modernity that the 1950s and 1960s wanted to emulate, regardless of the pedestrian experience in public spaces. By the end of the twentieth century, the Perimetral had lost its *raison d’être* at the same time as traffic became unbearable due to the growing number of vehicles on the highway. Outdated as a project, “like stands in a fairground or the pavilions of some international exhibition, built to last only a few months” (Lévi-Strauss, 1973, p118), the solution was to simply replace it rather than try to find a new purpose for it.⁷⁰ Demolished in stages between 2013 and 2014, its tearing down was, in reality, intrinsically related to the Porto Maravilha Urban Operation, a highly-criticised gentrified project for a so-called degraded area. “These projects cause the gentrification of historical areas, putting local history at the service of tourism and of the capital for entertainment” (2017), as Santos claims in his interview.

⁷⁰ Unsurprisingly, international projects New York’s High Line and Paris’ Promenade Plantée were mobilised as inspirations to Porto Maravilha. For more details see Ricardo Neves (2012): <http://colunas.revistaepocanegocios.globo.com/foradacaixa/2012/10/04/salvem-o-elevado-perimetral-no-rio/>

In terms of tropicalist intermediality, the case of Daniel Santos is exemplary. Born and raised in the outskirts of Campinas, São Paulo, he has been involved in projects mixing cinema with performance and sound art. Aware of the effects of that blurring in his creative process, Santos claims that, above all, his work “points to the hybridity of languages and artistic tools”. The *ExPerimetral* project, for instance, started not as an experimental documentary, but as what he calls a live performance experience. “At the time, I already had the idea of making the film, but wanted to explore other exhibition platforms for the same project”. In art galleries, he put together scaffolding, covered with voile fabric to serve as a screen for images to be projected on. Interested in exploring sound art as well, the soundtrack for the art gallery was a mixed acoustic-electronic piece created by the De Repente Acidente collective, of which he was part at the time. “I have a lot of interest in sound narrative and I see it as an infinite possibility in the perception of ideas, an open possibility for the free interpretation of the viewer” (ibid). Moving from gallery space to the cinema screen, the director then incorporated the concrete music influence of Iannis Xenakis into the soundtrack. Interestingly, the Greek-French composer, who was also a civil engineer, worked with the modernist, Le Corbusier, and absorbed many of his architectural concepts into later compositions. Symptomatically, Xenakis’ body of work was mobilised in a project devoted to questioning the dynamics of (de)construction in Rio.

4.2.2. An alternative anchorage in *The Harbour*

The port, therefore, became a symbol encapsulating the ever-changing atmosphere of Rio, whereas the debris of the Perimetral is the debris of a city attached to its *peripheral modernity* (Prysthon, 2002). Throughout the last decade, the harbour has been visualised as a controversial cinematic space in projects like *ExPerimetral* and others connected with concerns that come into play in Santos’ output. With the most straightforward title, *The Harbour*, for instance, is a collective experimental film directed by Clarissa Campolina, Julia de Simone, Luiz Pretti, and Ricardo Pretti on the eve of the Olympics. As in *ExPerimetral*, it departs from the indexicality of Rio’s harbour zone to create an alternative

perception of reality via manipulation of image and sound. More than actual ruins, *The Harbour* constructs a dreamy atmosphere that may lead to or be the result of ruination. The port is the scenario for the exploration of a city lost in time, perhaps emerging from opposite Guanabara Bay.⁷¹ In this sense, the insertion of Porto Maravilha Urban Operation digital mock-up enhances the nightmarish tone: the virtual renovation of the harbour zone *is* the ruination per se. In other words, the asepticism of the technology points to a project clearly detached from reality that will turn the area into a neoliberal commodity, or better still, a *neoliberal ruin* (Avelar, 2009).



Figures 44 and 45 – Digitally, the Elevado da Perimetral gives way to aseptic trees in *The Harbour*

⁷¹ Film critic Victor Guimarães reads *The Harbour* as a visual translation of Chico Buarque's famous song *Futuros Amantes* (Future Lovers), in which Rio is depicted as a romantic, submerged city. For more details see Guimarães (2014): <http://revistacinetica.com.br/home/o-porto-de-clarissa-campolina-julia-de-simone-luiz-pretti-e-ricardo-pretti-brasil-2013-em-transito-de-marcelo-pedroso-brasil-2013/>

Although even more experimental than *ExPerimetral*, *The Harbour* is very much a commentary on the transformations of the real Rio. In an e-mail interview, Ricardo Pretti (2019) argues that there is a sense of exhaustion with regards our models of city and society, with no room for new ideas to emerge. “The problem is that this repetition becomes a lower copy of the past. We live in a sloppy copy of the past, and so we bury the true past. Even the ruins already have an air of copy”. The ruins of the Valongo Wharf come to the fore again as an image of that exhaustion, an overlooked historical area soon to be swallowed by the Porto Maravilha. The harbour that used to anchor slave ships in the past is the same one that now welcomes luxury transatlantic cruise ships, as a sequence shot filmed from the Perimetral viewpoint reveals – perhaps one of the last ones before the elevated highway was swallowed, too. Here, the camera takes nothing for granted; rather, it frames everything as if discovering another space-time dimension. “Filming in Rio de Janeiro becomes much more interesting when you extract your excessive familiarity, to let what is unusual remain. Rio can be unusual” (ibid).





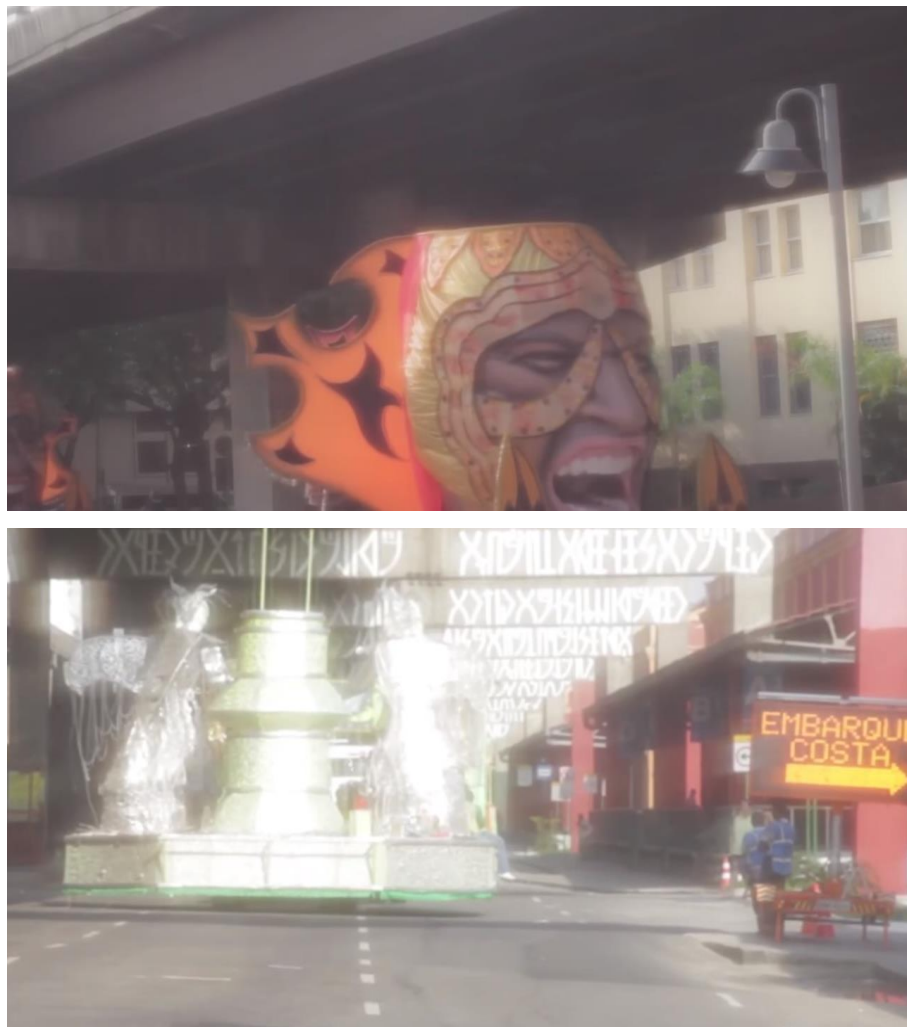
Figures 46 and 47 – The Valongo Wharf for historical ruins and luxury cruise ships

In *The Harbour*, the dialogue with the visual arts is very much present on the surface of the image, as the film threads experimental shots exploring the harbour zone, with no voice-over or any other kind of verbal information. In addition, it could be argued this dialogue might be prompted by co-director Clarissa Campolina's own artistic experimentation. In 2010, she exhibited *Rastros. A Paisagem Invade* (Traces. The Landscape Invades), a video installation about the human relationship to the city environment. Purposely displayed in a gallery located in a former fabric factory, the artwork condensed many of the concerns reverberating in *The Harbour*, from the urban space topic to the intermedial approach to the arts.⁷² As in *ExPerimetral*, the image of the city is also directly constructed through the use of sound, as if image and sound were not combined but rather merged into one another. Here, the anthropophagic aspect is fed by a *carioca* funk beat alongside the experimental work of Swedish saxophonist Mats Gustafsson. The outcome is a mysterious soundscape that reaches its peak during the appearance of the Porto Maravilha Urban Operation digital mock-up.

Incidentally, at the film's climax that sequence plays with a videogame-like aesthetics and its aseptic trees. Nevertheless, more than simply drawing on another media, the digital mock-up is brought to the fore as a critical means of commenting on the neoliberalisation of public spaces, as discussed above. It is the aseptic animation that conveys the lack of engagement with the local communities

⁷² For more details see <http://www.teia.art.br/br/obras/rastros-a-paisagem-invade/br>

and their actual needs. Hence, it is not about an accumulation of media, but an intermedial fusion per se (Pethő, 2010). More than a fusion, for Pretti there is a tropicalist flavour in “the cinematographic apparatus being *devoured* by other apparatuses, means and sensibilities”, something that seems “necessary to make our cinema breathe better” (2019, emphasis added), as he underlines in his interview. To a certain extent, one could say that the tropicalist flavour materialises in two of the film’s sequences in which carnivalesque allegorical cars move down the road located beneath the elevated highway. Seemingly out of service, those cars gain a phantasmagorical appearance as being completely out of place in the harbour zone. If *Tropicália* used to reference popular national iconography via the use of signs, colours and textures, the precarious parade under the Perimetral flirts with a faded version of Tropicalism, one framed in the light of the harbour zone’s ruination.



Figures 48 and 49 – Phantasmagoric carnival parade in the harbour zone

4.3. The Carmen Miranda ruinous spaceship in *Tropical Curse*

Luisa Marques' *Tropical Curse* engages with the tropicalist intermediality in a much more explicit way, as will be discussed. Like Santos, Marques is based in Rio, but is not originally from there. Her family comes from Fortaleza, Northeast of Brazil, where she was born. Living in Rio for more than a decade now, she still considers herself more of an observer than a local. Furthermore, both directors were students at the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage, a well-established visual arts school in Rio. Although a cinema graduate (having worked at the Museum of Modern Art Cinematheque), Marques' trajectory thus far also overlapped with the visual arts.⁷³ In 2011, she went to Amsterdam to study Fine Arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie – a turning point in her artistic development. “Since then I think I have made video experiments more inclined towards the domain of the visual arts than to Cinema with a capital C” (2018), Marques said via e-mail interview.

Indeed, her early works *Manassés* (2009), *Star Power Ready* (2011), and *Toda Cor Abandonada É Violenta* (Every Abandoned Colour Is Violent, 2014) were already within the video art and experimental cinema tradition. In this sense, Marques also draws on international references to conceive a work whose aim is to dwell on quintessential national tropes. North-American filmmaker, Kenneth Anger, for instance, has left an imprint by her blurring of cinematic boundaries. She mentions *Scorpio Rising* (1963) and *Lucifer Rising* (1972) as major references in the crafting of *Tropical Curse*. “In *Lucifer Rising* there are pyramids, and I thought that the modernist, brutalist constructions were types of unidentified objects. They are kind of mysterious like the pyramids” (ibid), Marques says referring to the modernist style of the Carmen Miranda Museum, the backdrop for *Tropical Curse* to unfold.

⁷³ In analysing Tropicália's echoes in *Tropical Curse*, I find it interesting that both the Parque Lage and the Museum of Modern Art intersect with Marques' career, as the former appears as one of the main locations in Glauber's *Entranced Earth* and the latter was where Oiticica's *Tropicália* was first exhibited.

In her experimental documentary, the Carmen Miranda Museum, a spaceship-like project designed by Affonso Reidy landed in the middle of Flamengo Park,⁷⁴ represents a sort of contradiction. While this museum should represent national modernism through architectonic forms, its history is one of sloppiness and abandonment. In reality, the modernist construction erected in the mid-twentieth century was not planned to house a museum but to be a sort of playroom, recreational space within the park designed by the famous self-taught Brazilian architect, Lota de Macedo Soares. The initial plan, however, did not quite work out. The building ended by being abandoned until the idea of paying tribute to Carmen Miranda came up in the mid-1970s. In 1976, the museum was inaugurated, but again it was never really part of the dynamics of the park or the cultural life of the city. Abandoned for a second time, it was finally shut down in 2013. The current promise is to transfer the archives to the new Museum of Image and Sound – which has been under construction since 2011, although it was expected to be completed in time for the Olympics, as mentioned earlier by Martí (2016). “Here everything seems/It was still under construction/And is already a ruin”, Caetano (1991) echoes in a loop. The museum is an example of architecture that failed – *Tropical Curse*, the visualisation of that failure.

The construction itself came to the fore as a consequence of Marques’ interest in researching national identity and gender issues through the figure of Carmen Miranda. No coincidence, she says that her interest became stronger while studying abroad. “I felt quite uncomfortable with a certain stigma of what it is to be a ‘Brazilian woman’ (and in my case, non-White) in Europe. So, this cliché pops up into our heads, right? Because Carmen Miranda – although not Brazilian, or precisely because of that – incorporates all these contradictions” (2018), says Marques in her interview. Originally from Portugal, Carmen Miranda⁷⁵ moved to Brazil at the age of one. She is historically regarded as the most successful Brazilian artist of all time in Hollywood, being its highest-paid actress in 1946.

⁷⁴ Caetano actually wrote a song about the Flamengo Park itself. Considered one of his first tropicalist lyrics, *Paisagem Útil* (Useful Landscape) points out “the almost science fiction effect of its [Flamengo Park] modernist traits” (Veloso, 2017, p140).

⁷⁵ For more details about Carmen Miranda’s film career and star persona see Lisa Shaw’s *Carmen Miranda* (2013), considered the first book in English on the subject.

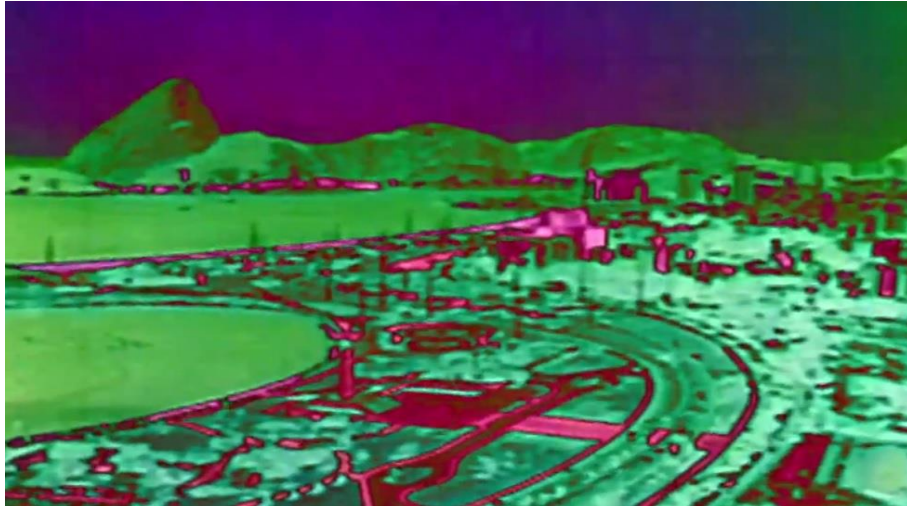
On the other hand, her image has always been controversial. Considered a product of the Good Neighbour Policy implemented by the United States towards Latin American countries, she was consequently accused of commercialising a stereotypical Brazilian woman. Presenting a controversial Brazilian/Latin American identity to the world, her artistic persona, whether genuine or fabricated, has been widely associated with the fruit-covered hat outfit she wore in her most celebrated films and concerts. “More than her biography, it is her image and what it carries that interests me” (ibid), Marques underlines.

Therefore, *Tropical Curse* illustrates the friction between two nation-building projects forged for a country aiming to finally be seen as modern and developed, drawing on Tropicália references in order to question the failures of Brazilian modernism/modernity. Here, Marques manages to explore the modernist building she was already familiar with as a Rio-resident, in light of Carmen Miranda’s contradictions. The imagery of her experimental documentary plays with the double modern iconography through overlapping the modernist architectural forms with the singer’s scenographic tropical fruits. On screen, one sees archival photographs of the Flamengo Park construction site, with pineapples and bananas superimposed upon it. The manipulation of light and colours helps to build a dreamlike, retro-futuristic atmosphere. In this sense, North-American visual artist Paul Sharits’ *T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G* (1968) contributed a great deal. Marques digests his film to use its colour and strobe effects to create a different texture for her psychedelic narrative. Undoubtedly, the building of a cinematic texture is at the core of Marques’ filmmaking. As the vast majority of the images come from archives (she only shot a few additional scenes), *Tropical Curse* is mostly a montage film. Marques, a film editor herself, overlaps different bits of films gathered online (from random searches at Creative Commons and Archive.Org, for instance), in order to play with the materiality of those archives. “The layers of time and history are in a landscape through which the film wanders with delusional intensity but are also in the materiality of the images. The files that have come to me have been somewhat distorted, compressed, lost some features and gained others” (2018), she contends via e-mail interview.

Significant to Marques’ film practice is the debate about art and moving images in

the digital age. More specifically interested in the intersection of cinema and archival practice, Domietta Torlasco has focused on “the relation between memory and creation – between the persistence of the past and the emergence of the new – in films and installations that adopt digital technology and simultaneously appropriate analog materials” (2013, pxi). Her interest precisely mirrors Marques’ strategy to refer to and update *Tropicália* via the digital manipulation of colours, textures and superimpositions. In gathering different bits of films online, Marques deals with two different aspects of artistic practice in the digital age: firstly, the attractive possibility of dealing with old analog material that had been digitalised, and secondly, her own digital use of that material combined with other techniques. Marques’ practice only relies on the archive to resignify it, attesting to “‘archiving’ as intervention – not the systematic preservation of film materials but the creative reelaboration of cinema’s aesthetic and ideological complexities” (ibid, pxiii).





Figures 50, 51, 52 and 53 – Colours, textures and superimpositions in *Tropical Curse*

4.3.1. Tropicalist intermedial flavour: flying saucers, ghosts and *gringos*

As pointed out earlier, Carmen Miranda became a sort of Tropicália darling, as her figure was attuned to the tropicalist desire to activate colourful national symbols in a cheerful yet critical fashion. Marcelo Ikeda (2017) underlines Marques' appropriation of Tropicália in the way the director addresses the legendary artist, puzzlingly halfway between homage and parody. "What is at stake is a re-reading of the tradition of Brazilian modernism and the updating of Carmen's presence by the Tropicalism of the 1960s and 1970s" (ibid). In many occasions, Caetano himself has expressed the importance of Carmen Miranda as an image/imaginary for the tropicalist attitude. In *Tropical Truth*, he refers to her as "a tropicalist emblem, a sign overwhelmed by contradictory affects" (2017,

p279). *Tropicália*, the song, for instance, carries her name in its vast number of references. "(...) I imagined putting side by side ideas, images and entities of the Brazilian tragicomedy, of the adventure at the same time frustrating and glittering of being Brazilian" (ibid, p201). In the new version of his book, there is an additional chapter entitled "Carmen Miranda Não Sabia Sambar"⁷⁶ (literally, 'Carmen Miranda Did Not Know How to Samba'). In it, Caetano points out that, until the revolutionary 1960s, singers, actresses and middle-class girls did not know the samba dance – Miranda, the great star, included. The anecdote is less a critique of her artistic skills than an observation about the power of popular culture (*Tropicália*, Cinema Novo, Cinema Marginal etc) from the 1960s onwards, and how it has profoundly impacted on national culture. In any case, once again, Carmen Miranda's figure is mobilised to embody the contradiction of being the most famous Brazilian artist yet not knowing how to dance to the most Brazilian of rhythms.

The assimilation of performance art plays a key role in the visualisation of contradictions in the film. The above-mentioned homage-parody in-between situation becomes visually represented by Darks Miranda,⁷⁷ a persona created and performed by Marques herself, covered in white fabric and dancing outside the museum. The first time she performed as Darks Miranda was for the video art installation *Equilíbrio de Frutas Sobre a Cabeça, Sob os Olhares de Carmen Miranda* (Fruit Balance Over the Head, Under the Eyes of Carmen Miranda, 2012-2013), exhibited at Galeria de Arte Ibeu, in Rio. In the film, the performance attempts to emulate the spirit of Carmen Miranda – hence the pineapple on her head. This sort of Third-World, precarious ghost image leaves a bittersweet impression, adding a tone of parody to the sequence. In addition, light and colour effects enhance the B movie atmosphere. In fact, the hints of B movie culture brought into play here form a bridge to a song called *Carmen Miranda's Ghost*

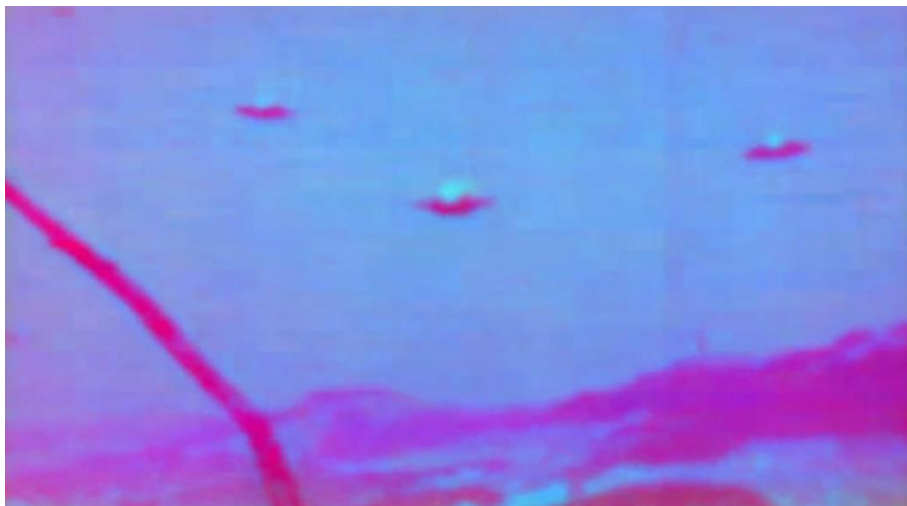
⁷⁶ Apart from this chapter being named after her, the idea of writing the book itself came after Caetano had written a 1991 New York Times article about Carmen Miranda called "Caricature and Conqueror, Pride and Shame".

⁷⁷ The name Darks Miranda was inspired by a video that went viral called *Hola Soy Darks [Original]* (EISopi, 2012), in which a sort of gothic drag queen introduces herself as being 'darks'. The use of the surname Miranda is self-explanatory. Full video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfymiZED5KU&t=17s>

(1985), by another North-American artist, the anarchist musician, Leslie Fish. In the song, Carmen Miranda is, indeed, a phantasmagorical figure in a sort of sci-fi musical tale, a song Marques herself had listened to *ad nauseum*. “Carmen Miranda’s ghost is haunting Space Station Three/Not that we’re complaining, since the fresh fruit all comes free” (Weyrdmusicman, 2011), the lyrics humorously indicate. As if in an out-of-space, artistic partnership between creator and creature, Darks Miranda is also credited as director alongside Marques, which emphasises the performative aspect of *Tropical Curse*.

The tropicalist tone that Ikeda (2017) notes finds a parallel in Rogério Sganzerla’s output, a cinema much in tune with Tropicalismo, as Xavier (2012) famously suggests. The sense of chaos and dissonance found in the montage of Sílvio Renoldi in Sganzerla’s *The Red Light Bandit* (*O Bandido da Luiz Vermelha*, 1968) is echoed in Marques’ editing role in her ability to build a narrative through fragments of sounds and images. Interestingly, the images of flying saucers seen in the final sequence of *The Red Light Bandit* (turning Sganzerla’s film into a collage of parodic sci-fi and B movie references all at the same time, as mentioned in comparison with Adirley Queirós’ *White Out, Black In*, in chapter 3) also make a special appearance in *Tropical Curse*. While Marques’ experimental documentary points to that same cinematic universe, her flying saucers play with the imaginary of futurism in a film aimed at discussing, with somewhat humorous elements, the future of Rio de Janeiro – or precisely the past of a future that has never arrived.

Here, she forges a dialogue with Sganzerla’s film through the insertion of random flying saucers found in her online excavation, giving them a different cinematic meaning. Seemingly drawing on Torlasco again, in her case “any gesture of interpretation entails assuming a position that is internal to and transformative of the very relational network posited as object – it requires opening the past of the archive to mutations that belong to the future” (2013, pxiv). The films were screened together as part of Solomon’s (2017) Tate Modern film season *Tropicália and Beyond: Dialogues in Brazilian Film History*, underlining their connections by alluding to the contradictions in both Rio and São Paulo (the setting of Sganzerla’s directorial debut).



Figures 54 and 55 – Flying saucers: from *The Red Light Bandit* to *Tropical Curse*

Apart from that, I argue that the Third-World, precarious ghost performed by Luisa Marques/Darks Miranda might represent another echo of Sganzerla's filmography. In *Copacabana Mon Amour* (1970), Sônia Silk, played by famous Cinema Novo/Cinema Marginal actress Helena Ignez, is a tormented prostitute followed by a ghost on the beach in Copacabana. Much like Marques' ghost, the phantasmagorical figure is almost child-like. There is a man playing with a piece of long, white fabric over his head, provoking less fear than indifference in his human target. While Silk walks around Copacabana, with the miserable ghost just behind her, the voice-over says a few words about a person's underdeveloped condition being related to a necessary madness in order to deal with reality: "(...) the sun of Copacabana drives Brazilians like us crazy in a very few seconds, leaving us completely perverted, astonished and silly; the supernatural forces

paralyse us, the hungry ghosts of the planet”. In her interview, Marques (2018) claims there was no intention to evoke that specific sequence in *Tropical Curse*, but acknowledges that her unconscious might have done a good job.



Figures 56 and 57 – A Third-World ghost in *Copacabana Mon Amour* and *Tropical Curse*

In his brief yet insightful commentary on the short film, Ikeda, however, links *Tropical Curse* to Sganzerla’s legacy in a more direct way. He points out that the director’s trilogy about Orson Welles⁷⁸ was a similar exercise to Marques’ handling of Miranda’s public figure. “For both, these artists are a way of talking about the contradictions of a project of progress in our own country” (2017). Furthermore, if one thinks of *All is Brazil* (*Tudo é Brasil*, 1997), the last instalment of Sganzerla’s documentary series, Welles and Miranda even have an

⁷⁸ For more details about Orson Welles and his relationship with Latin America see Catherine L. Benamou’s *It’s All True: Orson Welles’s Pan-American Odyssey* (2007).

on-screen encounter. They appear in constant interaction through the juxtaposition of photographs and the use of a radio broadcast made by Welles, when he was American cultural ambassador to Latin America, from Rio de Janeiro's Cassino da Urca, in 1942, and in conversation with the Brazilian starlet. Apart from exploring the manipulation of cultural stereotypes, the film uses the dialogue between Welles and Miranda to emphasise what their personas bear in common: a trigger for investigating Brazilian identity, especially from the point of view of the foreigner or outsider.

Similarly, Carmen Miranda appears in another documentary from the 1990s whose historical background is set in the 1940s, except this time, she is the main subject of the film. One of the few female Cinema Novo directors, Helena Solberg,⁷⁹ made *Carmen Miranda: Bananas is My Business* (1995) as a means of going behind the scenes to unmask the myth for the film audience. Solberg mixes conventional, talking-head documentary with fantasy sequences performed by Eric Barreto, who was famously known as a drag queen who portrayed the singer. One of his performances in the documentary was chosen by Marques for use in the audiovisual thread that *Tropical Curse* is. It is no coincidence that performance is again mobilised (this time through the montage) as an intrinsic element of the experimental documentary. Significantly, this is a sequence filmed inside the Carmen Miranda Museum, still in operation at the time. Barreto plays a Miranda mannequin that comes to life and flees the museum. The ghost (Darks Miranda) then appears dancing in the gardens, as if freed from the gallery in which it was kept. The narrative effect here comes from the original sequence suggested by Marques' montage.

⁷⁹ For more details about the director's remarkable trajectory in Cinema Novo see Burton's *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America: Conversations with Filmmakers* (1986).





Figures 58, 59, 60 and 61 – Montage effect: Carmen Miranda/Darks Miranda escapes the modernist museum

In viewing the contradictions of Carmen Miranda’s persona through Brazilian modernist architecture, the above-mentioned foreign viewpoint inevitably becomes a central issue. From Le Corbusier’s modernist guidelines to a Portuguese-Brazilian-Hollywood star, the story told by Marques seems to come from an outsider perspective throughout. Brazilian progress and development at the mercy of either European colonisers, North-American imperialists, or flying saucers from a faraway galaxy. It is precisely in this sense that the director makes use of literary excerpts from Claude Lévi-Strauss, Pablo León de la Barra, and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster in the documentary. In fact, she freely alters the originals, creating her own meaning *from* what they have written. “No wonder these are texts written by three *gringos* who somehow had a relationship with Brazil and whose imaginaries were also formed by this country. This ‘foreignism’ is in the text and in the film. It is in Carmen Miranda, in science fiction, in the beings from other planets and unidentified objects” (2018), Marques argues in her interview. Here, literature plays a dual role: it is mobilised as both a source of knowledge and a sort of raw material for Marques to elaborate upon. Moreover, the assimilation of literary excerpts goes hand in hand with the assimilation of visual arts and performance elements into this intermedial experimental documentary. In this regard, it is the tropicalist intermediality that renders visible this ruin of underdevelopment: a museum hovering between sloppiness and abandonment, the rotten modernisation that erected it and the neoliberal regime that cannot sustain it.

Of the three *gringos*, the contribution of Lévi-Strauss matters greatly.

“Doubtlessly we are on the other side of the Atlantic and the Equador, and quite near the tropics” is one of the sentences borrowed from Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes Tropiques* in the voice-over. Though a minimal citation, it carries the sense of location that underpins the anthropologist’s study and his transatlantic arrival at *the fresh decadence, or decayed freshness*, of the New World, as discussed in chapter 2. This time, there would be no ship’s crew to lead the way. Travelling on one of those flying saucers, Lévi-Strauss would land in a tropical, ultramodern construction site, with viaducts, bananas, stairs, and pineapples. Forms and curves; flora and fauna. Wandering in the green area, the small, concrete spaceship in the middle of Flamengo Park would presumably catch his attention. A spaceship from the past, an abandoned museum, a forgotten playroom. A ruin from the future. If he does not feel frightened by the hungry ghosts from this planet, perhaps he might even glimpse Carmen Miranda dancing to a Caetano Veloso song. But definitely not a samba.

4.4. A lame-leg architecture: half hospital, half ruin in *HU Enigma*

As mentioned earlier, Joana Traub Csekö has much in common with Daniel Santos and Luisa Marques. She is also a Rio-based artist originally from elsewhere – Csekö was born in Denver, United States, into a Brazilian family of European origins. To a certain degree, she therefore situates herself as an insider-outsider practitioner – not so much because of her origins (in fact, she moved to Rio aged two) but because she claims it is impossible for one person to fully grasp any kind of city. Like her peers, she seems to be interested in exploring the boundaries between cinema and the visual arts, particularly the intersection of documentary and photography, in the making of *HU Enigma*. A visual artist herself, the documentary feature she co-directed with Pedro Urano was initially a photographic series developed as part of an MPhil’s degree at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, in 2008. As will be discussed in this section, her photographic series deeply influenced the documentary’s aesthetics of resorting to the use of photography as an intermedial strategy. In a way, as her MPhil included

practice-led research, the project was also the outcome of another liminality, this time between artistic practice and academic research.

Her MPhil project aimed at discussing the notion of *point of view* in art production. She began her investigation from two specific and familiar viewpoints: her own personal perspective as a contemporary Brazilian artist, and the geographical location of Ilha do Fundão, the area designated for her photographic experiment to take place. The Ilha do Fundão environment is an artificial island located in Ilha do Governador, a suburb in Rio's North Zone. Like the area of Flamengo Park, the island is the result of an earthworks process (1949-1952) led by the then President, Getúlio Vargas. The work joined up eight existing islands to literally create the terrain for the construction of the future Federal University. It is where the Hospital Universitário Clementino Fraga Filho, the university hospital commonly referred to as HU, is located. As the most outstanding yet unfinished modernist building in the region, Csekö's perspective relies on a key element of its construction: the fact that half of it is a hospital and the other half is empty, "condemned to be forever simultaneously *construction and ruin*" (Csekö, 2008, p38, emphasis added), echoing Lévi-Strauss' perception of São Paulo's Praça da Sé, "the cathedral square, halfway between a building site and a ruin" (1973, p121), as mentioned in chapter 2.

According to Celeste Olalquiaga and Lisa Blackmore (2017, 2018), Latin American mid-twentieth century modernist architecture has the potential to embody the contradictions of underdeveloped nations, as "while urban design gave material expression to development, the twentieth century's uneven urbanization, rapid population growth, and spasmodic economy all ran contrary to modern planning" (2017). The paradoxical condition of HU – partly a hospital in operation, partly a crumbling building – is a key example of the authors' point. Once planned to be an outstanding modernist achievement, HU and, in fact, other "iconic modern designs were repeatedly undercut by contingency and precariousness, leading them to take unexpected detours (...)" (ibid). Here, one could also think of failed projects like the Perimetral (inaugurated in 1960 and expanded in 1978) and the Carmen Miranda Museum (opened to the public in 1976). The authors also shed light on the construction of Brasília and its mix of

formal (Le Corbusier style) and informal (satellite city style) architecture, as extensively explored in chapter 3. For them, these projects are *living ruins*, a type of construction “lapsing into the very opposite of its futuristic thrust as the sites turned either into unplanned spaces or outright ruins” (ibid). From an artistic viewpoint, Smithson referred to this paradox as *ruins in reverse*, anti-picturesque ruins part of “a kind of self-destroying postcard world” (1996, p72), as highlighted at the opening of this chapter.

Now Csekö’s own viewpoint as a contemporary Brazilian artist was to find inspiration in the first wave of postmodern art made in Brazil – to a certain extent, an art that scrutinised the certainties of modernism. Interested in mobilising perspectives related to the establishment of a national territory for art, she inevitably draws on the contribution of Tropicália and Cinema Novo. As discussed in chapter 2, this is a territory eagerly explored by Glauber Rocha, a filmmaker and intellectual concerned with scrutinising underdevelopment and its manifold manifestations. Rather than merely arguing for a national cinema, Glauber believes that Brazilian malaise (hunger, misery, violence) must be turned inside out in order to conceive a genuine national cinema – a painful yet urgent artistic process that the tropicalist trigger *Entranced Earth*, for instance, attempts to accomplish. Csekö, therefore, acknowledges Glauber’s effort to give birth to a national viewpoint within underdevelopment, something she pursues in her practice, more specifically in the still and moving images relating to HU. “How can we handle, transmute, approach the Brazilian reality from which to produce art, when shortcuts, precariousness, adversity, poverty, immediacy, celerity are often impeding or overpowering factors, and can easily lead to feelings of despair or impotence?” (Csekö, 2008, p26).

Unsurprisingly, Csekö then heavily draws on Hélio Oiticica’s perspective. What strikes her most is his keenness that the role of the artist is to be an active, social body within a given reality, as elaborated in his *General Scheme of the New Objectivity*. In other words, the artist should engage with society and contribute to establishing a national point of view (which by no means should be an isolated point of view, but one in dialogue with international strands, in a very tropicalist methodology). As pointed out in the opening section of this chapter, Oiticica also

wondered “how to, in an underdeveloped country, explain and justify the appearance of an avant-garde, not as a symptom of alienation, but as a decisive factor in its collective progress?” (1999b, p41), a question that resonates with Csekö’s visualisation of underdevelopment through the ruination of HU. For both Oiticica and Csekö, that visualisation lies in the contact between art and life, as in Oiticica’s famous proposition. “I propose here to move it, update it, articulate it to other thoughts and stances, aiming to give free continuity to this attempt to come, which is to think how the artist can participate in his/her era (in his/her time, in his/her reality)” (Csekö, 2008, p28). In this sense, *HU*, her photographic series, covers two major aspects: firstly, it scrutinises and exposes the underdeveloped condition (Glauber’s Brazilian malaise) materialised through failed architecture (the hospital building itself); secondly, it considers what a visual regime (photographic, cinematic, artistic) is able to articulate and effectively communicate (as Oiticica pondered). Furthermore, I also argue that *HU Enigma* takes a great deal from Oiticica’s tropicalist intermediality to expose the HU condition.

Intrinsically attached to the photographic series, the conceptualisation of *HU Enigma* was built upon what Csekö had already articulated in her still images: a critique of the modern(ist) project and the emphasis on the overlap between imagery and architecture. The photographic series-documentary connection points to a true fusion, not an accumulation, of media expressions drawing on Pethő’s (2010) definition of intermediality. Pedro Urano, filmmaker and her friend, decided to push forward a documentary project about HU after finding out about the research study she was conducting at university. Initially, the project was a medium-length documentary sponsored by DOCTV, an important government scheme linked to the Ministry of Culture that helped support independent audiovisual productions, as mentioned in chapter 2. Later on, it was turned into a full-length documentary – the final cut version under analysis here. Considering the language Csekö had developed in her photographic work, their basic choice of dividing the screen in half comes from the way Csekö conceived her diptychs in the gallery. Thus, the documentary image has an unusual 2:1 aspect ratio, that is, the width of the frame is exactly double the height of the frame.

To deal with two square-format screens in most of the sequences, Urano and Csekő had to take extra care in positioning the interviewees for the camera. Right in the middle of the frame, they appear with the highest headroom possible for photographic framing so the directors can create an analogy and visually refer to the modernist architecture where they were actually filming. Also, each time one of the interviewees appears, their name and job title are immediately written on screen, a strategy which emphasises the importance of the *function* of each person – again, a modernist reference. On that note, apart from photography, it could be argued that architecture itself plays a fundamental role in the documentary-making, enhancing Pethő’s approach to intermediality as a “sensual mode” that entices the viewer to also perceive a film through its “architectural forms and haptic textures” (2011, p5). In this sense, *HU*, the documentary, is also a reflection of HU, the building, as the latter directly influences the contours of the former. Ultimately, the visual composition makes it easier to feel the power of institution over individuals, something that becomes visible through the interview *mise-en-scène*. In an e-mail interview with me, Urano (2017) also suggests that that cinematic approach somehow wanted to challenge the role of the interview⁸⁰ as a means of creating intimacy between interviewer and interviewee, something that was much in vogue at the time.



⁸⁰ Considered Brazil’s most important documentary-maker, Eduardo Coutinho (1933-2014) developed a powerful cinema centred on the role of the interview. In the wake of his successful filmography, Brazilian documentaries started to indiscriminately employ that strategy. Bernardet (2003) says the overuse of the interview turned it into a mere stunt, mania or cacoethes. For more details see his *Cineastas e Imagens do Povo* (2003).



Figures 62 and 63 – Split-screen interviews in *HU Enigma*

The history of HU, the building, dates back to 1950, when construction started. Designed by modernist architect, Jorge Machado Moreira, the new university hospital had been planned to be Latin America's largest hospital of 220,000 m² to replace the former hospital building located in Rio's South Zone, far from Ilha do Fundão. When President Getúlio Vargas committed suicide in 1954, the construction came to a halt due to the subsequent political crisis. With Brasília about to be inaugurated as the country's new capital, Rio (and in this case, HU) felt the impact of a lack of investment. Work only resumed in 1972, taking six more years for HU to finally function as an operating hospital (Oliveira, 2005). Ironically, it took twenty-eight years for a single building to be constructed, whereas Brasília was built from scratch in less than five, as discussed in chapter 3. In fact, the building was never fully constructed, as one half remained unfinished, hence abandoned. In a clumsy attempt to raise money for the construction to be concluded, the government authorised the demolition of the former hospital, so the land could be sold off (Rocha, 2003). Consequently, Rio lost one of the city's foremost neoclassical architectural examples – and HU was never finished.

4.4.1. A fractured building is a fractured ethos

The 1970s' modernist fever definitely had a dual impact on the urbanism of Rio, providing evidence of both its prestige and subsequent dereliction in the much delayed inauguration of HU. Focusing on the paradox of being a monument yet a

ruin, *HU Enigma* encapsulates “the decrepitude of the new” (Jaguaribe, 1998, p101) that Brazilian modernism would be, sooner or later, forced to acknowledge. The discussion proposed by Beatriz Jaguaribe accords with that of Mexican scholar, Rubén Gallo, when he argues “many modernist projects have not aged well and have now become architectural ruins themselves” (2009, p108) in the context of Mexican society, one also devoted to countless cycles of tearing down and re-building throughout history. When Jaguaribe makes a similar claim, she also considers the Gustavo Capanema Palace, the former Ministry of Education and Health headquarters in Rio. Designed by Lúcio Costa and supervised by Le Corbusier, the project is considered to be the first public modernist building in Brazil. Apart from its modernist style per se, Jaguaribe claims that both the Gustavo Capanema Palace and the Ilha do Fundão building-complex sadly share the same state of abandonment. They are both “allegorical ruins of the modernist collapse” (Jaguaribe, 1998, p112), or the *living ruins* of Olalquiaga and Blackmore (2017).

More significantly, Jaguaribe links the decayed architecture to the fractured ethos of a country that has not come to terms with itself. Those were buildings planned to embody a sense of nationalism so it was quite unexpected yet meaningful that they were abandoned – or even left incomplete. In this sense, Jaguaribe (1998) refers to the conceptual analogy *building/Nation* coined by Maurício Lissovsky and Paulo Sérgio Moraes de Sá (1996), when investigating the ideological disputes before the approval of architectural projects, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, a period marked by elaborations of what a sense of Brazilianness meant. The duality of a decayed architecture and a fractured ethos is even more prominent in *HU Enigma*, which Csekö had already addressed in her dissertation. The documentary explores the fact that half the building actually operated as a hospital to provide a commentary on that fractured ethos. Even though doctors manage to attend to patients, Urano and Csekö underline the precarious situation the hospital actually faces. The lack of investment and the overcrowded corridors create a hellish environment. If, at first sight, the split-screen strategy seemed to emphasise the opposing halves of the same building, a second look allows one to catch the subtle commentary. The hospital-half actually mirrors the emptied-half – or the lame-leg, as people refer to the abandoned area. They are both in the

process of ruination. In this case, the *asymmetric symmetry* (Csekö, 2008) that the camera angles and the juxtaposition of images use give the impression that the decaying architecture *is* the fractured ethos.



Figures 64 and 65 – Two square-format screen: two halves of the HU building

In fact, the HU is depicted not only as the materialisation of that fractured ethos, but as an organism representing the nation itself. The parallel between the concrete structure and the human body is activated right from the opening sequence. Firstly, one sees a surgical team preparing to operate on a patient. The surgery starts. An endoscopic procedure allows the doctors (and the audience) to see inside the patient's body. Sequentially, another camera (Urano and Csekö's camera) wanders in a dark room. There are lots of long, rusty pipes, water leaking, a little mouse running across the frame. Now, one is seeing the innards of the building-body. This association comes and goes throughout the documentary. At

another moment, for instance, medical students attend a lecture in one of the building's auditoriums. The professor shows images of skin diseases and the following scene presents details of peeling, muddy walls; the skin of the HU. The idea of exposing these elements of the building is also a cinematic strategy to reveal its decaying structure. The inside-out revelation tactic is highlighted by Edensor in his analyses of the state of post-industrial ruins:

Ruination produces a defamiliarized landscape in which the formerly hidden emerges; the tricks that make a building a coherent ensemble are revealed, exposing the magic of construction. The internal organs, pipes, veins, wiring and tubes – the guts of a building – spill out, as informal and official asset-strippers remove key materials such as tiles and lead. They key points of tension become visible, and the skeleton – the infrastructure on which all else hangs – the pillars, keystones, support walls and beams stand while less sturdy material – the clothing or flesh of the building – peels off. And the hidden networks are laid open, released from their confinement behind walls and under floors (2005, pp109-110).





Figures 66, 67, 68 and 69 – The human body, the HU body

This sick part of the building-body is treated as a restricted zone in the documentary, as if the lame-leg really forbids access to the general public. The enhanced sense of a thriller atmosphere here draws on Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), a major reference for Urano and Csekö and considered by Habib to be

“the most original, complex and radical formulation of ruins in Tarkovsky’s filmography” (2008, p269). Moltke also sheds light on Tarkovsky via Hartmut Böhme’s argument that “ruins are ‘the aesthetic center of his films’” (2010, p412). In this Soviet, sci-fi tale (loosely inspired by the sci-fi novel of Arkady and Boris Strugatsky *Roadside Picnic, Tale of the Troika*), a guide leads two men through an area known as the Zone, when they seek a room that has the capacity to grant their innermost wishes. The Zone, however, is an area of quarantined land. Filmed during the Cold War, it is a forbidden area, controlled by the government and covered with industrial debris in a post-apocalyptic scenario. It bears a sense of mystery and interdiction that fascinates Urano and Csekö which translates into the way they approach the HU’s lame-leg. Provocatively, they film and interview people (from medical students to architects) inside the restricted zone, as if testing the limits of the ruined area.

With grass growing and birds randomly flying around the restricted zone, nature takes over a human-made landscape, as if illustrating a Georg Simmel’s prophecy. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the contribution of the German sociologist who famously discusses the central role played by nature in the process of ruination of human-made landscapes in his landmark essay “The Ruin”, originally published in 1911. Albeit “in some ways still a Romantic conception of the ruin” (2011, p13), as Dillon ponders, Simmel’s argument saw architecture as “the only art in which the great struggle between the will of the spirit and the necessity of nature issues into real peace” (1965, p259), materialising the equilibrium of all contradictions. Nevertheless, nature is expected to take control eventually, providing “a certain imaginative perspectivism in its hopeful and tragic dimension” (2011), as Boym puts it. That is, Simmel’s ruins unfold what *should have been* that has no chance of being, hence the neo-romantic prospect is still latent. From a postmodern perspective, Dillon (2005-2006), however, questions that approach. “The ruin is not the triumph of nature, but an intermediate moment, a fragile equilibrium between persistence and decay” (ibid). Striking a similar note, Boym argues that “present-day ruinophilia is not merely a neoromantic malaise and a reflection of our inner landscapes. Rediscovered, off-modern ruins are not only symptoms but also sites for a new exploration and production of

meanings” (2011), which seems to be the case with Urano and Csekö’s exploration of the documentary.



Figures 70 and 71 – Nature takes over: film characters wander amid the ruins

If Tarkovsky’s *Stalker* already hinted at Csekö and Urano’s endeavour to mobilise international references, the influence of North-American artist, Gordon Matta-Clark, underlines the relevance of that kind of mobilisation even more. In this case, not only is there a digest of foreign art, but also of other types of art practices. This is a strong echo of Oiticica’s multi-sensorial approach to the arts domain. In fact, Oiticica and Matta-Clark were collaborators in 1970s New York, when the Brazilian was in exile for seven years there. Struggling to formulate the category of the subterranean, Oiticica wrote *Subterranea* in 1971, a book made of fifteen sections dedicated to North and South American artists especially devoted to urban engagement. Matta-Clark was one of those artists. As in Rio, in New

York, Oiticica “subverted the supremacy of the museum/gallery as the defining space of the art object, and, instead, brought work to the streets” (Sussman, 2016, p132), hence “the affinity with Matta-Clark’s inventive play and experimentation, paramount opportunities for knowledge and experience available to the body in action” (ibid, p137).

With a relevant body of work ranging from performance to film and photography, Matta-Clark became notorious for his ‘building cuts’ interventions in existing abandoned buildings, mainly in New York. He would slice into and literally open the building up, as if transforming it into a walk-through sculpture to challenge the human perception of things and relationships. Coming from an architectural background, he saw himself as an *anarchitect*,⁸¹ derived from the term *anarchitecture*, coined by the artist himself to refer to both his architectural expertise and site-specific artworks. The camera in *HU Enigma* latently pays homage to the relationship between architecture and contemporary art developed by Matta-Clark. In fact, his influence was such that Urano and Csekö made a sort of epilogue or follow-up to *HU Enigma. Tribute to Matta-Clark*⁸² (Homenagem a Matta-Clark, 2015) is a short documentary exclusively focused on the engineering work that had to be done after the structural failure had compromised the building as a whole. In 2010, the structural failure urgently demanded the physical separation of the north and south wings. Over the course of four months, a twenty-meter wide section of the monumental concrete structure was demolished – heavy work that the directors filmed making a clear allusion to Matta-Clark’s famous ‘building cuts’.

Installation art has thus also established an intermedial dialogue through Csekö and Urano’s moving images. To a certain extent, the soundscape of *HU Enigma*

⁸¹ For more details see Antonio Sergio Bessa and Jessamyn Fiore’s *Gordon Matta-Clark: Anarchitect* (2017).

⁸² The documentary was first shown in Rio de Janeiro in the exhibition *Depois do Futuro* (After the Future, 2016), at Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage. Curated by Daniela Labra, it reunited international artworks aimed at investigating the chaotic, imminent future ahead. For more details see the online version of *Curador Visitante* (2016) available at: <http://eavparquelage.rj.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/CuradorVisitante-DanielaLabra.pdf>

refers to Brazilian conceptual artist Cildo Meireles' *Através* (Through),⁸³ conceived between 1983 and 1989. Deeply influenced by the likes of Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, and Lygia Pape, all indebted to the Neo-concrete movement, Meireles' famous piece is a beautifully crafted installation made of prison bars, curtains and fences – barriers to be overcome. On the floor, shattered glass for one to walk upon creates a nerve-wrecking, destructive sound. In his interview, Urano (2017) links it to work made by sound editor, Edson Secco, in charge of capturing diegetic sound in *HU Enigma*. Secco is also a musician and recorded the sound of rusty bits of iron found in his wanderings around the lame-leg. The melodic piece ended up being used as extra-diegetic sound for sequences where the characters walk as if in a restricted zone. For the director, the combination of sound and image here creates a bridge to Meireles' artwork. The use of sound, however, is paradoxical in one of the final sequences when there is actually no sound whatsoever. When HU's south wing finally collapses, the sequence is shown mute. Only after a minute or so, when the screen goes completely dark, is the aggressive noise of the building's implosion heard. The climax is a blank space. "This temporal disjunction of sound and image concerns my experience of the event. The image captured by the camera played at normal speed and synchronised with the sound did not resemble the experience of the implosion that I had in my mind" (ibid). After the screen goes back to normal, dark smoke spreads across the city sky.



⁸³ In her HU photographic series, Csekö also entitled one of the images *Através*, potentially establishing a dialogue with Meireles' work.



Figures 72 and 73 – The final collapse of the lame-lag

Framed by the modernist glass window of HU, the Rio de Janeiro which appears on the horizon is nothing but an unattainable postcard. The dreams of modernism never succeeded in keeping up with the so-called Marvellous City that the broken window frame reveals. Whilst walking through the lame-leg, architect Margareth Pereira wonders where modernist architecture went wrong if the HU project balances light and shadow, among other assets. In this sense, it is quite meaningful to hear one of the medical students regretting the misuse of the hospital while visiting the lame-leg. “We don’t really need more hospitals...There are too many already”, he says in an ironic, unhappy tone. The paradoxical “this is way too big” is what he hears as the answer from one of his peers. Restorative nostalgia (Boym, 2001) has no room and it is also trashed by Urano in his interview when he criticises the *tabula rasa* logic of modernism: “there is no way of fixing Brazil by ignoring its past” (2017). Indeed, as discussed in chapter 3, Holston (1989) explains that one of the main features of the modernist pattern is to dismiss the national colonial past and think of a revolutionary architecture starting from ground zero, a strategy that turned out to be both controversial and unsatisfactory. “The ruin, not only of the HU, but also of public health and education in Brazil, is a project. Every day we spend a lot of energy, money and lives to keep our backwardness. It is not the work of chance, it is not an accident, it is a project. The point is to ask ourselves: who is benefiting from it?” (2017), Urano inquires.

In *HU Enigma*, as in *Tropical Curse*, *The Harbour*, and *ExPerimetral*, contemporary documentary-makers seem highly aware of these controversies and dissatisfaction. Drawing on intermedial tactics with tropicalist resonance, these experimental documentaries find their mission in exposing the precarious condition of an elevated highway, a museum, and a hospital. They aimed at articulating a critique of the modern and neoliberal processes that resulted in failing projects, connecting these ruins in the same imagetic thread. They discuss an architecture that failed in Rio de Janeiro – a city that passes from freshness to decay without ever being simply old, a city to which the passage of time brings degeneration instead of improvement, a city perpetually young yet never healthy (Lévi-Strauss, 1973). Furthermore, these artists question so-called progress and (under)development while shedding light on historical aspects usually not taken into consideration. On that note, I argue that this critique is precisely enhanced by the updating of tropicalist-like values through the fusion of multi-sensorial media expressions on screen, even though to different degrees. In contrast to the commodification of moving images in neoliberal times, their cinematic ruins of underdevelopment reclaim the radical power of artistic contributions, “to reactivate in our times, in each situation, the political potential inherent in artistic activity, its power to unleash possibles”, as Rolnik (2006) hoped.

Rio de Janeiro, 1967. Caetano saw *Entranced Earth* for the first time. He had recently moved from Bahia to live there not long before. Glauber, who was originally from Bahia as well, was also living in Rio at the time. Likewise, visual artist Hélio Oiticica, a *carioca* himself, displayed his ground-breaking installation art at the city’s Museum of Modern Art – the very first time the word *Tropicália* had been used. Rio was also one of the main settings of Cinema Novo films, including *Entranced Earth*. No longer the capital of Brazil, Rio has managed to remain the capital of Brazil as far as the world is concerned. Unlike any other Brazilian city, it paradoxically encapsulates beauty (despite Lévi-Strauss’ indifference) and exclusion (*the higher you live, the lower your status*, to refer to the French anthropologist again). The city has witnessed innumerable demolitions and renovations, chasing first a Paris and then a New York kind of urbanism. Rio

erected an elevated highway in 1960, a spaceship-like museum in 1976, the lame-leg hospital in 1978. The elevated highway collapsed, the museum closed, the hospital imploded. Ultimately, is it the Marvellous City or *a toothless mouth?*

5. The longstanding ruination: indigenous territory in dispute

This chapter compares the representation of indigenous territories in Cinema Novo films with that of the Vídeo nas Aldeias project. In discussing a territory under threat, the visualisation of indigenous land contains embedded layers of time echoing the past of colonisation, the military modernisation, and present-day neoliberal agenda. I argue that that territorial dispute is rendered visible precisely through images of ruins in this context. Firstly, I delve into the contribution of Cinema Novo in addressing indigenous imagery as damaged territory as a critique of so-called progress and (under)development in the wake of the military coup d'état. Next, I introduce the VNA project born amid the emergence of indigenous media elsewhere, with a special focus on reclaiming land boundaries through politically committed documentary-making, both by non-indigenous and indigenous affiliated directors.

The third and fourth sections scrutinise documentaries specifically centred on images of ruins as a means of exposing the historical struggle. The third section is focused on VNA leader Vincent Carelli's *Corumbiara: They Shoot Indians, Don't They?* (Corumbiara, 2009) and how it constructs its spatial representation while wandering amid devastated indigenous villages. The last section explores collaborative indigenous documentaries *Tava, The House of Stone* (Tava, A Casa de Pedra, 2012), *Two Villages, One Path* (Duas Aldeias, Uma Caminhada, 2008), and *Guarani Exile* (Desterro Guarani, 2011), films concerned with problematising the Tava São Miguel tourist ruin complex and advocating a new understanding of history.

Discussing the indigenous territory within Brazilian cinema necessarily means shedding light upon Vídeo nas Aldeias, a seminal project founded in 1986 by anthropologist, activist and documentarist, Vincent Carelli. As will be discussed, VNA is a non-governmental organisation aimed at supporting the indigenous people's struggles to protect both their culture and territory using audiovisual resources. In 33 years, it has mapped, contacted and engaged with no less than 40

indigenous groups in Brazil. In brief, special attention is given here to this initiative for two main reasons. In the first place is its impressively high productivity: more than 80 videos and films, half of them produced along with indigenous communities (Fulni-ô, Kuikuro, Guarani Mbya and Xavante, among others) as the outcome of filmmaking workshops provided by VNA members.

Secondly, but by no means less importantly, the political role of VNA in fighting for indigenous rights through moving image militancy, particularly with regard to the urgency of land demarcation for groups, such as the Guarani Kaiowá (in Mato Grosso do Sul state) and the Kanoê (in Rondônia state), to name but two. Land, indeed, has always been at the very heart of indigenous people's struggles. While violent territorial disputes can easily refer back to the arrival of Portuguese colonisers in 1500, it can also refer to ongoing quarrels between indigenous peoples and farmers, politicians and agribusiness entrepreneurs. In this sense, VNA advocates for Native peoples' rights to their ancestral territories through the documentary representation of these now damaged territories.

5.1. Setting the ground: Cinema Novo and indigenous representation

Early Brazilian cinema was not much interested in discussing indigenous issues. Fiction films, in fact, romanticised the Indian personae using idyllic adaptations of writer José de Alencar, such as *The Guarani* (1857), *Iracema* (1865), and *Ubirajara* (1874). Thus, the Indian was portrayed as a naïve yet brave warrior, the so-called 'noble savage', while the European characters appeared as peaceful conquerors. Their encounters consequently mythologised the narrative of nationhood⁸⁴ rather than problematising it. Ironically enough, "while the actually existing Indian was destroyed, marginalized, or eliminated through miscegenation, the remote Indian was idealized" (2003, p209), as Stam points out. In terms of nonfiction, Luiz Thomaz Reis, military man and documentarist of the

⁸⁴ For more details see Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (1991).

Rondon Commission⁸⁵ (1907-1915), became well-known for documenting evidence of indigenous groups at that time, as seen in his landmark documentary *Bororo Rituals and Feasts* (*Rituais e Festas Bororo*, 1917). Although Fernando de Tacca (2001) points out the ethnographic appeal in Reis' body of work, the actual aim was to construct an official Indian image for the recently unified Republican nation.

Apart from at the threshold of the twentieth century, the portrayal of indigenous figures only properly re-emerged in the 1970s, as Brazilian cinema spent the decades of 1930s,⁸⁶ 1940s, 1950s and 1960s paying more attention to black than to Indian (mis)representation, as Stam (1997) claims. Interestingly, it is no coincidence that this cinematic hiatus was interrupted by the contribution of Cinema Novo, especially after 1968, when the military coup d'état of 1964 became more repressive with the advent of the Institutional Act N°5, which pushed the country (and *cinemanovistas*) into an abyssal identity crisis, as pointed out in chapter 2. Even though commonly referred to as a white, male-led movement, it was with Cinema Novo that the critique of progress and (under)development was visually articulated for the first time within the national production. It was in this context that the indigenous imaginary was taken account of again as part of the problem brought about by the underdevelopment under investigation. When that kind of production came about, the romanticised Indian was appropriately left behind and State-oriented filmmaking was set to be challenged. Furthermore, indigenous groups were portrayed not only as a component of the country's identity, ready to be scrutinised, but as intrinsically affected by the destruction brought by progress – two strong areas of interest to Cinema Novo.

⁸⁵ The controversial government initiative was aimed at installing an electrical telegraph system in isolated areas of Brazil, as well as 'civilising' the indigenous groups found while territorial expansion was taking place. The creation of the Cinematography and Photography Section (1912) worked to provide imagery of that 'integration' and to document habits that would shortly be eradicated.

⁸⁶ This does not mean Indian representation was entirely absent from Brazilian cinema. Humberto Mauro's iconic *The Discovery of Brazil* (*O Descobrimento do Brasil*), for instance, was released in 1937. Commissioned by the National Institute for Educational Cinema, the film is a visual translation of Portuguese Pero Vaz de Caminha's famous first letter, considered Brazil's birth certificate.

In this sense, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's *Macunaíma* (1969) successfully encapsulated part of that discussion through a tropicalist⁸⁷ mode of filmmaking. According to Xavier (2012), the director chose to acknowledge the crisis in which the country was immersed by adapting Mário de Andrade's novel of the same title. Praised as the Brazilian modernist novel par excellence, *Macunaíma* (1928) the book was effective in articulating a narrative based on apparently opposing poles (the modern and the primitive, represented by the metropolis and the countryside) to hint at the formation of a modern national character. Both the writer Andrade and the filmmaker Andrade resort to a series of foundation myths, folklore objects, and Afro-Brazilian references to produce a sense of Brazilianness – with the idea of modernisation as a key part of that unveiled identity, as Prysthon (2002) underlined in her analysis of the novel. Although four decades separate each artwork, the assimilation of Andrade's novel into the film project was part of Cinema Novo/Tropicália's strategy to open a dialogue with the anthropophagy debate of the 1920s. In fact, the cultural rescue that Caetano Veloso and his contemporaries accomplished gave the modernist movement led by Oswald de Andrade⁸⁸ and Mário de Andrade (to mention but two of the leading artists involved in the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week) a kind of popularity it had not acquired before, as discussed in chapter 4.

In Shohat and Stam's (1994) view, modernist *anthropophagy* (a word referring to the anthropophagic or cannibalistic indigenous ritual that famously characterised the Tupinambá people) is imbued with a double sense: at the same time that it advocates the decolonisation of the mind (or *de-Vespuciasation* of the Americas/*de-Cabralisation* of Brazil), it finds the cultural interchange between the so-called centre and periphery inevitable. The result of that interaction, therefore, must be a cannibalist artistic stance: "the artist in the dominated culture

⁸⁷ That is, a true blend of artistic and cultural references. Musically speaking, the soundtrack gives an accurate example: the song list goes from Luiz Gonzaga and Dalva de Oliveira to Roberto Carlos and Villa-Lobos.

⁸⁸ Andrade's last film, *The Brazilwood Man* (O Homem do Pau-Brasil, 1982) is loosely based on Oswald de Andrade's public life and critical thinking. For José Geraldo Couto (2018), the director had the idea during the shooting of *Macunaíma*, when he realised the modernist writer had much in common with that character.

should not ignore the foreign presence but must swallow it, carnivalize it, recycle it for national ends (...)” (ibid, p307). In this regard, the alliance between the novel and the film (regardless of their dissimilarities) takes into account a particular idea of modernity interested in that continuous flow of references. That is, one interested in the *dialectics of cosmopolitanism* (Prysthon, 2002) in the periphery of the Western world. “Peripheral cosmopolitanism will be defined by the modernists precisely as this ability to assimilate and reprocess all the origins and cultural influences within the metropolis” (ibid, p46). It is important to bear this in mind because the indigenous imaginary, particularly in this film, is articulated precisely in relation to the building of a critical (and commonly parodic) imagery for modern/modernised Brazil.

Even though indigenous origins and influences are not overtly present in the film, *Macunaíma* decidedly mobilised elements of indigenous culture in an emblematic way at the end of the turbulent 1960s. Macunaíma, initially played by black actor, Grande Otelo, soon smokes a magic cigarette⁸⁹ and turns into white actor, Paulo José. While the cast/characters allegorically point to the miscegenation factor attached to Brazil, neither of them is indigenous. His name, however, along with his brothers’ names, Jiguê and Maanape, are. They live in the jungle, in an imprecise location, and their home is a *maloca*, a kind of community Indian hut, whose Tupi-Guarani definition is war house or Indian ranch. Furthermore, mother and children sleep in hammocks and spend the day surrounded by nature. Rather than designing an authentic indigenous environment, the construction of that atmosphere comes into being as the outcome of history itself. “Colonisation, economic expansion, migrations, extraction fronts, renewed conflicts between Aborigines and invaders, miscegenation, everything has already occurred and these processes have left their traces on the lands (...)” (2012, p239), as Xavier puts it. Certainly, the wrecked structure of that environment works as a reflection of Macunaíma’s wrecked identity – *a hero without character*, as indicated by the novel’s subtitle.

⁸⁹ Not by coincidence, the soundtrack is *Peri e Ceci*, an old carnival march whose title refers to José de Alencar’s famous characters in *The Guarani*: Peri, a Guarani Indian, and Ceci, a Euro-Brazilian woman.

In tune with modernist-tropicalist references to cannibalism, Stam (1997) famously claims that *Macunaíma* explores the concept's negative aspect. In his influential analysis of the film, instead of emphasising aboriginal matriarchy and utopian communalism, he believes Andrade "made cannibalism a critical instrument for exposing the exploitative social Darwinism implicit in 'savage capitalism' and bourgeois civility" (ibid, p239). The director's point of view considers the social, political, economic and work relationships established in the context of the 1960s' military dictatorship as relationships guided by power and consumerism, as if the nation was *devouring* its own people. When Macunaíma flees to the big city in the second part of the film, these aspects are enhanced by the character's initial difficulty in relating to the metropolis's multiple machines and flashing lights. After some time, however, Macunaíma starts to benefit from living in a spacious apartment full of electrical goods representing the 'economic miracle' of the military regime. Surprisingly, it is as if his laziness and individualism fit perfectly into that shallow, modern environment. Aimless in the metropolis after acquiring the *muiraquitã* (a Tupi-Guarani word meaning stone-carved artefacts) talisman he was looking for, he decides to leave for good. Yet, Andrade refuses to allow him redemption on his return, as one would expect. The search for national identity is not found in the gesture towards nature; rather, a stand-off situation is produced. According to Xavier, in essence, "the journey of Macunaíma (...) is a parable of migration without return, of the contact between two worlds that exhibit the same rules for devouring" (2012, p262).

The failure of modern progress is not reserved to the metropolis alone, as the final sequences in the forest demonstrate. On their way back home, Macunaíma, along with his brothers and girlfriend, navigate a river. The boat is filled with electrical wares: a TV, fan, blender and an electric guitar, the legacy from his urban experience. As they sail along, he even carelessly suggests building a bridge to make people's lives easier, a comment that makes explicit his *nouveau-riche*, developmental mindset. Once ashore, they find their *maloca* has now become a *tapera* (an old house or abandoned village in Tupi-Guarani). Macunaíma seems unworried about his damaged territory. He lies down in a hammock, while the others go to catch fish, find birds to be hunted, and corn cobs to be harvested. Nothing is found, though. Next morning, the three are gone and Macunaíma is all

by himself. The *tapera* looks even more precarious, “in complete abandonment”, stresses the narrator. The thatched structure collapses. Naked in the jungle as an Indian would be (he actually covers himself with a green-military jacket, a modern national symbol at that time), there is not much he can do. His death is imminent and there is no one to mourn him but a parrot. When he finally disappears beneath the water in the river, his green-military jacket floats covered in his blood. In this closing sequence, the classical Villa-Lobos’ *Desfile aos Heróis do Brasil* (Parade to the Heroes of Brazil) plays, but it is a joke. There is nothing patriotic about it; on the contrary, “the end projects onto the back of Macunaíma all the burden of rejection of the nationalist myths appropriated by the military regime: the exaltation of nature and heroism, the myth of the tropical paradise and the great destiny of the nation” (Xavier, *ibid*, p265). It has all ended in ruin.





Figures 74, 75, 76, 77 and 78 – Macunaíma and the ruined-*tapera* sequence

Instead of indigenous cooperation and harmony with nature, Macunaíma represents the exact opposite, just how ready he is to inhabit the modern world – that is the sad yet humorous conclusion. If the indigenous approach is limited inasmuch as there is no direct mention of the cause, the film, however, is clearly

structured upon the conceptual duality of cannibalism/anthropophagy. Challenging the way the military dictatorship took possession of national symbols, Andrade uses the indigenous imaginary as a parody in the mode of tropicalism. Moreover, he makes use of the anthropophagic motif to question the national predatory class structure, as he himself states cited in Shohat and Stam: “Cannibalism is an exemplary mode of consumerism adopted by underdeveloped peoples” (1994, p311). In this sense, the film invests in a debate very dear to the new left represented by the Tropicália movement: the assimilation of consumer society values by a Third-World nation like Brazil and what can be made of that. Closing the 1960s by building up to that kind of discussion, *Macunaíma* was emblematic of this period’s modernist tactic of playing around with an allegorical Brazilian figure which, as anthropophagy itself postulates, swallowed and recycled indigenous elements in order to critique the so-called progress and (under)development advocated at the time. Setting the scene, Andrade portrays indigenous lands invaded by rotten modernisation, with a ruined *tapera* as its emblem.

5.1.1. The (absent) figure of the Indian

In the same year *Macunaíma* was released, Walter Lima Jr. depicted Brazil in the aftermath of a Third World War that had destroyed the Northern Hemisphere. In *Brazil Year 2000* (Brasil Ano 2000, 1969), the periphery was finally taking centre stage, but that did not bring redemption; on the contrary, it only reiterated national failure, according to Xavier (2012). In the film, a mother and her young son and daughter wander in the partially devastated landscape until they come across a city allegorically called ‘I Forgot’. There, preparation for a rocket launch mobilises the remaining citizens ironically unveiling the precarious infrastructure of the project. The apparent modernisation proceeds, but filled with backwardness. “In an ironic way, the catastrophic consciousness of underdevelopment privileges here, as its target, the mystification of ‘the country of the future’” (ibid, p232), a false belief in a future that would finally place Brazil in a privileged position, but, of course, this is a future that never comes. “The parody of modernisation slips into the diagnosis of general incompetence, as in

*The Red Light Bandit*⁹⁰ (ibid, p224), with the fantasy of being a country predestined to progress actually preventing it from overcoming underdevelopment.

In that post-apocalyptic yet satirical scenario, it is quite meaningful that the (absent) figure of the Indian plays a central role. In terms of space, in opposition to the rocket platform, there is an indigenous reserve. However, if the rocket platform delivers underdevelopment rather than cutting-edge technology, the spatial representation of the indigenous reserve is also controversial. When the migrant family arrives at what used to be the Indian Education Service, they meet an indolent old employee moaning that although he “educated” eighteen tribes throughout his career, they have all disappeared. The young son wants clarification and asks who the people are he is talking about. “They are not people, they are Indians”, replies the old man. Because the general is coming to visit I Forgot (and the old man is afraid of losing his now pointless job), he makes an offer: if the family agrees to pretend to be Indians, they will have food and a roof over their heads. The farce makes visible the absence of Indians in the post-apocalyptic Brazil (that is, in military Brazil of the 1960s – and one might argue in present-day Brazil as well). Moreover, the family’s role-play renders the figure of the Indian a metaphor for inferiority. “Absent, unknown, an emblem of defeat on the level of history, he can only assume here the clichéd figure of another, unrecognised and stigmatised by the winner, but strong and pertinent as a ghost of origins” (Xavier, ibid, p231).

⁹⁰ Xavier, however, argues that *The Red Light Bandit* evokes the tropicalist mood in a much more creative and innovative way than *Brazil Year 2000*, as Lima Jr.’s film shies away from “a provocative space of ambiguity” (2012, p219).





Figures 79, 80, 81 and 82 – White brothers turned into Indians in a devastated Brazil

In *Brazil Year 2000*, one could argue there is no Indian and no indigenous reserve, as if they and their territory had been so badly damaged that they had vanished. Nevertheless, Lima Jr. is not necessarily suggesting that as the outcome of the world war. Although speculating about a dystopic future, the film is commenting on that situation in the present of when it was made. “In this sense, despite the imagined atomic catastrophe and the future crisis, it would be naïve to speak about ruins or fragments (...)” (ibid, p207), Xavier stresses. In other words, that situation depicted is not the result of a catastrophe but a permanent state. I would argue, however, that, precisely because it is a permanent state and not the result of catastrophe, speaking of ruins in that context could hint at something else. Other than an unexpected consequence, the ruined territory in both the fictional future and what was the current dictatorial present is, rather, the unchanging condition of underdevelopment. Embedded in that situation, the indigenous territory that had vanished in *Brazil Year 2000* was to reappear under similar circumstances in other Cinema Novo outputs. In Arnaldo Jabor’s *Pindorama*⁹¹ (1970), for instance, Pindorama is an allegorical land representing Brazil, where the indigenous territory is the target of an exploitative system and the Indians are exiles in their own land. On the other hand, Nelson Pereira dos Santos’ *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* (*Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês*, 1971) comments on that by cinematically subverting the oppression. Mainly spoken in Tupi Guarani, here the

⁹¹ For more details see Carlos Eduardo Pinto de Pinto’s “Quatrocentos Anos num Filme: Pindorama (Arnaldo Jabor, 1971) e a Relação dos Cinemanovistas com a História” (2014).

Tupinambá people capture a French conqueror, and his tragic end represents historical redemption through an anthropophagic⁹² critique of European colonialism.

5.1.2. The Coca-Cola-Indian allegory

Ultimately, that critique reached its peak in the mid-1970s with *Iracema*⁹³ (*Iracema – Uma Transa Amazônica*, 1974-1981).⁹⁴ Jorge Bodanzky and Orlando Senna's production turned out to be a milestone film, mixing fiction and nonfiction in a kind of fictional documentary heavily drawing on Cinéma Vérité techniques. While the title might suggest yet another adaptation of José de Alencar's famous novel, the film actually plays with the literary reference to deconstruct the Romantic main character. Iracema is not a virgin Indian as in the novel. Played by Edna de Cássia, a non-professional actress, the character here is actually a young Indian woman working as a prostitute, displaced from a safe environment. Her European saviour is, in this case, a Brazilian truck driver called Tião Brasil Grande, played by professional actor Paulo César Pereio, who treats her as merely a sexual commodity. His character is the embodiment of a military, conservative Brazil, whose mindset follows the guidelines of developmentalism at any cost. Even his name (in English, Tião Big Brazil) refers to the depiction of the country as an unbeatable, oppressive nation. Although the interaction between them is fiction, his behaviour with others includes that of being a reporter or interviewer asking questions and provoking passers-by in an interactive documentary style.

Without a linear storyline, the narrative sews random events together as Tião and Iracema cut through the Trans-Amazonian Highway, an extensive and symbolic

⁹² For more details see Nagib's "Antropofagia e Intermidialidade: Usos da Literatura Colonial no Cinema Modernista Brasileiro" (2018).

⁹³ *Iracema* was not the only documentary focusing on the indigenous issue at that time. Amalia Córdova (2014) mentions *Ronkonkamekra, vulgo Canela* (Walter Lima Jr., 1974), *Raoni* (Jean-Pierre Dutilleux and Luiz Carlos Saldanha, 1978), *Pankararu de Brejo dos Padres* (Vladimir Carvalho, 1977), and *Terra dos Índios* (Zelito Viana, 1979), among others.

⁹⁴ Completed in 1974, the film was only released in 1981 due to military censorship.

engineering project dear to the military ‘economic miracle’ discourse. “Nature is the highway”, as Tião sarcastically informs a local, while felled trees are being turned into sales products. In conversation with Iracema, Tião also states that he had cut through the highway before, in a faraway past in which “one could fear the presence of Indians”, as if he was referring to an extinct wild animal. Iracema, who denies being an Indian, lets it go. She sees herself as a white girl born to Brazilians. She lives in a *palafita*, a stilt house commonly built in the Amazon rainforest region. Iracema is the Indian of the peripheral modernity – if drawing on Prysthon’s (2002) concept. She embodies the dialectics of cosmopolitanism in the sense that she is at once an Indian and a prostitute, natural and urban, idyllic and catastrophic. In one of the film’s famous stills, Iracema/Edna is wearing a top and microshorts with the Coca-Cola logo, standing opposite a truck. The image encapsulates the desire for modernity while taking account of the marginalised subject who is part of that desire as well. This so-called modernity, therefore, comes in the shape of human degradation, but also deforestation (the truck is in the frame, after all), an ecological catastrophe mistakenly seen as imperative for modernisation. As Stam claims, “in *Iracema*, ecological disaster and social exploitation configure an institutionalized hell” (2003, p218).



Figure 83 – Iracema and Tião Brasil Grande clamber over cut down logs



Figure 84 – Iracema is left behind by Tião Brasil Grande

On at least two occasions, the film frames massive areas affected by fire or industrial tractors: firstly, when the camera is positioned inside the truck, the damaged area is seen through the window; secondly, the point of view is from an airplane flying over the region. The truck and the airplane are two means of transportation symbolising modernity and also happen to signify the film's own perspective. At the same time, these specific framings help make the association between modernity and deforestation, therefore implying a critique of progress. The camera, however, is located inside the truck and the airplane, not exactly amid the debris. In pointing this out, I am not weakening Bodanzky and Senna's remarkable achievement but suggesting a gap in Cinema Novo's approach that perhaps only the emergence of an indigenous media would be able to fill. Vídeo nas Aldeias initiative, thus, could be deemed the first step in that direction. Apart from producing documentaries made by its non-indigenous members, VNA provides filmmaking workshops as a means of equipping indigenous people with the skills to produce their own films. Though these films are mainly made collaboratively by indigenous and non-indigenous, VNA has also prompted the creation of authentic indigenous film collectives, such as Coletivo Kuikuro de Cinema and Coletivo Fulni-ô de Cinema, which are not the focus of this particular study. Nevertheless, *Iracema* interestingly adds another layer to the depiction of indigenous territory: the film directs the discussion towards documentary strategies.



Figures 85 and 86 – Views of destruction from the truck and airplane viewpoints

In their different ways, *Macunaíma*, *Brazil Year 2000*, and *Iracema* worked to frame indigenous territories as territories damaged by the idea of development as advocated by modernity/modernisation during the military dictatorship, as I have attempted to briefly demonstrate. *Macunaíma* intermixed cannibalism with the consumer society in order to articulate an overlap between indigenous motifs and rotten modernisation – the final *tapera* encapsulating that tension. *Brazil Year 2000* is set nowhere else but in a post-apocalypse scenario, where the indigenous reserve has simply vanished and the (absent) Indian is both a sign of defeat and a reminder of the country's origins. *Iracema* portrayed ecological disaster and social exploitation as intrinsic to the Amazon forest environment, resorting to a Cinéma Vérité style, far from José de Alencar's romanticised tone. Through their critiques, *cinemanovistas* (not only in those films, but also in others, including *Pindorama* and *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*, as mentioned above)

brought to the fore an indigenous territory impacted by a (neo)colonialism stance disguised by a controversial development mentality, one that resonates to date. Characteristically, these films seem to mobilise the Indian figure through the allegorical register, that is, as an allegory of the imminent destruction of the nation itself. Macunaíma in his *tapera*, the white-family-turned-Indian, and the Coca-Cola Iracema are examples of that strategy. With this in mind, their contribution was responsible for forging an imaginary, not only to define how Cinema Novo narratively dealt with the topic, but an imaginary redefined from the 1980s onwards, as soon as social movements and video technology appeared as an alternative way to engage with the cause. This is the focus of the next section.

5.2. Vídeo nas Aldeias turning point: for an indigenous media to emerge

Just as Cinema Novo was seen as part of a major phenomenon in Latin America under the umbrella of Third Cinema, the birth of Vídeo nas Aldeias is intimately connected to a regional network that advanced the debate about the need for an indigenous media to rise from the wake of decolonial movements and video technology innovations. As Schiwy explains, the “indigenous media contest a process of colonial subalternization that has denied indigenous communities participation in the dominant discourses and practices that have shaped Latin American societies” (2009, p9), hence the urgency. Among those countries, Mexico⁹⁵ is considered one of the pioneers in terms of encouraging indigenous people to take part in the media field, especially in film and TV production. By the end of the 1980s, important bodies like the National Indigenist Institute, the Transfer of Audiovisual Media to Indigenous Communities, and the Latin American Coordinating Council for Indigenous Film and Media had succeeded in decentralising traditional film production, by providing filmmaking workshops, and granting greater visibility for that kind of initiative (Gleghorn, 2017).

⁹⁵ For more details see Erica Cusi Wortham’s *Narratives of Location: Televisual Media and the Production of Indigenous Identities* (2002).

Nearer Brazil, Schiwy (2009) highlights, for instance, the prominence of the Bolivian situation.⁹⁶ In 1989, filmmaker and activist, Iván Sanjinés, created the Cinematography Education Production Centre, aimed at providing indigenous groups with video equipment and filmmaking skills. The members also worked closely with members of the Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Audiovisual Council, an organisation dedicated to broadening the scope of action for indigenous groups living in the valleys, lowlands and highlands in the country. Together, “CEFREC⁹⁷ and CAIB⁹⁸ maintain a media network that connects over one hundred rural communities throughout Bolivia and in the transnational Amazon basin” (ibid, p5), producing reportage and music videos to short fiction films and documentaries. Worth mentioning at this point, Bolivia has indeed a certain tradition of ethnographic cinema. Jorge Ruiz's documentaries represent that tradition, in particular, *Come Back, Sebastiana* (Vuelve Sebastiana! 1953), considered the first indigenous film made in Latin America.

Retrospectively, Ginsburg (2002a) cites the ground-breaking work of Sol Worth and John Adair, back in the 1960s, when they attempted to give film lessons to Navajo students for them to develop their own way of filming. According to Ginsburg, it could be argued, however, that it was a “sterile and patronizing experiment” that did not succeed because “Worth and Adair failed to consider seriously potential cultural differences in the social relations around image making and viewing” (ibid, p214). From the 1970s onwards, apart from the conventions of cinematic representation, she argues that indigenous projects were also concerned with power-control over the production and distribution of images, a key theme for projects like *Vídeo nas Aldeias* and others. Nevertheless, *Navajo Film Themselves*, a 1966 series of seven short documentaries about the life of the Navajo Nation, inevitably stood as a reference for Latin American filmmakers to develop their own initiatives in the following decades (Córdova, 2014).

⁹⁶ For more details see Gabriela Zamorano Villarreal's *Indigenous Media and Political Imaginary in Contemporary Bolivia* (2017).

⁹⁷ Centro de Formación y Realización Cinematográfica.

⁹⁸ Coordinadora Audiovisual Indígena de Bolivia.

It was in that context that Vídeo nas Aldeias found fertile ground to grow in. Born to a Brazilian father and a French mother, Vincent Carelli moved from Paris to São Paulo aged five. A social sciences graduate, since 1973 he has been involved in projects supporting indigenous communities in Brazil. Initially, he worked for the Fundação Nacional do Índio (National Indian Foundation), a historically controversial State body “positioned on the knife edge of assimilationist and protectionist measures” (Gleghorn, 2017, p176) that had been founded in 1967, during the military dictatorship. Although aimed at protecting indigenous interests, many have argued that the National Indian Foundation has not been successful in preserving their culture and territory in the face of agribusiness harassment. In 1979, Carelli co-founded the independent, non-profit organisation, Centro de Trabalho Indigenista (Centre for Indigenous Advocacy). Alongside anthropologists and indigenous experts, the initiative sought to “develop projects based on local demands, aiming to support indigenous peoples in taking effective control of their territories, helping them understand the State’s role in their protection and the assurance of their constitutional rights” (Trabalho Indigenista website, no date). Within this context, Carelli went on to found Vídeo nas Aldeias as a branch of the activities already underway. The year was 1986, the first democratic year after twenty-one years of military dictatorship. Since 2000, VNA has been an NGO detached from CTI.

The main characteristic of VNA is to support the indigenous fight for rights through audiovisual resources. It started when Carelli visited the Nambikwara people, in Mato Grosso and Rondônia states, to film them with the purpose of making the material available for them to watch afterwards. That ground-breaking strategy not only produced material that enabled them to reflect upon their everyday lives through images, but the material was also available to circulate to other tribes, so that following generations could access their traditions and perhaps keep them alive. In this first attempt, Carelli made *Girl’s Celebration* (A Festa da Moça, 1987), a short documentary about a Nambikwara ritual about the celebration of a young girl’s menarche. In seeing the images of the ritual, the Nambikwara suddenly realised they were carrying it out differently from how they used to. About 30 Indians had their lips pierced as they used to, something that had not happened for 20 years. After that, they decided to regain and follow

tradition more closely, as if the film had provoked that kind of reaction – what Carelli calls the *mirror game* or *mirror effect* (Cesar, 2013). *Girl's Celebration* gave room to other documentaries be produced by other VNA members, such as Dominique Gallois, Virgínia Valadão, Tiago Campos Torres, and Ernesto de Carvalho. In establishing a close relationship with those communities, VNA hoped to call attention to their vulnerable situation in face of the Brazilian State.

In 1997, there was a turning point in the VNA trajectory when the first filmmaking workshop took place in the Xingu Indigenous Park, in Mato Grosso state. Step by step, training programmes devoted to supporting indigenous peoples interested in developing filmmaking skills were implemented. “VNA staff distributed display equipment and video cameras to these communities, which ended up creating a distribution circuit for the videos they were producing. That developed and generated new experiences, such as promoting the in person encounters of people who had met through video (...)” (Vídeo nas Aldeias website, no date-a). In a way, that set up was enhanced after visual anthropologist, filmmaker and editor, Mari Corrêa, joined VNA in 1998. Having worked at the well-known Jean Rouch’s Atelier Varan⁹⁹ in Paris, Corrêa helped to conduct both filming and editing workshops. VNA teams move to indigenous villages and stay there for approximately three weeks to explain technical know-how in the first week, start filming in the second, and finishing up in the third.

In a Skype interview with me, Carelli (2018) argues that three weeks is indeed the minimum amount of time needed to establish a sense of confidence between indigenous and non-indigenous participants. “There is a language barrier and intimacy barrier. You arrive in a village and, even if you know the people, it takes a week for them to get used to your presence (...). You’re entering other worlds”. As there is no script, the themes are usually chosen by the trainees based on their daily life experience, and the facilitators encourage them to explore the topic and experiment with the camera. At the end of the day, the material shot is screened in the village so that everyone can discuss it and think about ways to improve it. The

⁹⁹ The project started in 1978, when Rouch provided his first documentary workshop in the newly independent Republic of Mozambique. Three years later, Atelier Varan was founded in Paris with the mission of teaching non-academic, collaborative documentary practice. Workshops still run, covering countries like Algeria, Bolivia, Morocco, Norway, South Africa, and the Philippines.

VNA teams return to the village a second time (usually for a month) to edit the material along with the villagers and eventually shoot additional sequences. “That also changed when digital revolution came along. In the first workshops, production was still analog, so we had to take the people to edit at VNA headquarters. After the digital revolution, it becomes possible to edit in the villages” (ibid). Once the material is ready, it is screened in the village and circulates to other villages, as VNA is interested in intertribal relationships and the effects on self-image. Some of the videos are also sent to schools, a strategy to support the incorporation of indigenous knowledge and make indigenous students feel represented in the classroom.

The workshop model has matured through years of practice and engagement. The first filmmaking workshop, for instance, had a nationwide appeal, gathering indigenous groups coming from a variety of Brazilian states. Later on, VNA experimented by offering regional workshops focusing on peoples living in the same territorial area. Finally, meetings started to happen in each village at a given time, allowing each group of participants to be fully immersed in the experience. In situ, places were offered to individuals previously selected by the local community. “The participants are usually youngsters appointed by the community. (...) In any case, there’s the commitment to the collective, as the collective is the one that suggests”, Carelli affirms. However, sometimes attendees give up in the middle of the process when they realise the work is harder than they could have imagined. “It is tough. It requires immersion in the project on their part. (...) There are those guys who enjoy filming, but just once in a while. And there are those guys who make a profession out of it” (ibid). Scholar Rodrigo Lacerda suggests that the learning process ends up being two-way procedure: non-indigenous trainers have high-levels of technical and artistic knowledge but know much less about the community, whereas indigenous students may know nothing about filmmaking but know their own culture in depth. Consequently, it works out as an “interlaced learning process” (2018, p4). It is worth pointing out that more than two decades after the first workshop, it has now become more common to have indigenous as trainers as well, such as Divino Tserewahú and Kamikia Kisedjê.

Initially, funding for the workshops (and the project as a whole) came mostly from international foundations, mainly North-American ones (Guggenheim, MacArthur, Rockefeller, Ford), and also the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. In the first decade of 2000, Brazilian public investments through the Ministry of Culture during President Lula's mandates (2003-2010) gave VNA a boost in terms of productions and visibility. At that point, the production was a mix of VNA members' films and collaborative films made by indigenous and non-indigenous crews. At the same time, the output produced as the result of investment started to circulate in film festivals, reaching national and international audiences beyond the villages. These films were mainly interested in presenting indigenous cultures, like Komoi Panará's *Prîara Jõ – After the Egg, the War* (*Prîara Jõ – Depois do Ovo, a Guerra*, 2008), focusing on Panará indigenous children at play, and reclaiming territory, like Divino Tserewahú's *The Struggle Goes On* (*Vamos à Luta!* 2002), centred on the recognition of the Makuxi Indian reserve. The project is still underway, although funding for VNA is currently scarce. Norway has stepped down and public investment, if any, relies on punctual financial compensation from big national corporations, such as Eletrobrás and Vale, due to the ongoing economic crisis in Brazil. In 2018, for instance, VNA managed to launch an online platform (videonasaldeias.org.br/loja) for the renting and purchase of 88 videos and films.

5.2.1. An integral process for a kind of Faustian dilemma

As mentioned above, apart from producing pro-indigenous documentaries directed by non-indigenous documentarists, VNA became internationally known for conducting filmmaking workshops for indigenous peoples that wanted to explore image-making as a political tool. Even though not an indigenous film collective per se, it could be argued that VNA democratises access to digital technology and supports new perspectives of history through collaborative film projects. By having three key objectives – training, production and dissemination – “VÍdeo nas Aldeias provides technical and financial support for the emerging indigenous audiovisual production and its diffusion among indigenous peoples, as well as in the national and international media circuit” (VÍdeo nas Aldeias

website, no date-b). If the circulation of these images were already important in the context of local communities, crossing geographical boundaries enabled them to acquire an even stronger political meaning, as indeed “indigenous media projects have often been a site for activist participation (...)” (Ginsburg; Abu-Lughod; Larkin, 2002, p8).

Curiously, when those images reach new audiences (more precisely, white audiences), they immediately create a debate that questions not only the political claims embedded in the images, but the authenticity of the images themselves. Ginsburg has widely written on that topic, with the following provocation as a guideline: “Is it indeed possible to develop an alternative practice and aesthetic using forms so identified with the political and economic imperatives of Western consumer culture and the institutions of mass society?” (2002a, p210). In response to her own question, Ginsburg argues that indigenous peoples inevitably face what she famously calls *a kind of Faustian dilemma*:

On the one hand, they are finding new modes for expressing indigenous identity through media and gaining access to film and video to serve their own needs and ends. On the other hand, the spread of communications technology such as home video and satellite downlinks threatens to be a final assault on culture, language, imagery, relationship between generations, and respect for traditional knowledge (1991, p96).

In the face of such a dilemma, she sides with the first alternative. Ginsburg claims that “indigenous people, scholars, and policymakers have been advocating indigenous use of media technology as a new opportunity for influence and self-expression” (ibid, p97). Furthermore, the author resorts to a Freudian analogy to elaborate her argument. The term *screen memories*, originally used to describe how individuals tend to protect themselves from trauma by obfuscating memory, is subverted in the sense that “indigenous people are using screen media not to mask but to recuperate their own collective stories and histories – some of them traumatic – that have been erased in the national narratives of the dominant culture (...)” (Ginsburg, 2002b, p40). Her claim does not limit the debate to being only a matter of narrative. Rather, the scope of her analysis takes serious account of the political economy and the commercial media scenario behind the indigenous peoples’ struggle to control their own images.

Criticism in relation to the capacity of Indians to actually make films has been strenuously challenged by scholar Terence Turner¹⁰⁰ (2002). Interestingly, he first argues that it is not because an outsider hands over video cameras to Indians that their discourse will be univocal and free from controversy – that would be an understanding that implied all indigenous people think and act alike, overlooking their differences and particularities. “The production of social and political reality, as well as the representations through which it is mediated by and to its producers, is a multivocal process in which the participants draw in different ways upon their common cultural stock of ideas, symbols, tropes, and values” (ibid, p77). Turner finds it even more problematic that using a video camera is customarily seen as *a poison pill*, “too much for ‘their’ culture to withstand, while ‘we’ remain robustly impervious (and indifferent) to all forms of cultural contact with ‘them’” (ibid, p80). Apart from being ethnocentric, such a viewpoint seems to disregard the “capacity for creativity and aesthetic judgement” (ibid) of an Indian cameraperson and/or editor.

Bearing this in mind, Schiwy (2009) attempts to broaden the perception of this topic, which is commonly applied to indigenous image-making but seldom to other media domains. She argues that interest in the idea of joint authorship of projects is nothing new, as historically “film is linked to industrial labor and the fragmentation of the creative process. Or, to put it in different terms, film has long been a collective enterprise that sits uneasily with the idea of authorship” (ibid, p63). Even though she acknowledges the so-called cult of the author, usually embedded in the figure of the director, Schiwy reminds one that the producer frequently has the power to intervene. Therefore, she argues “the Hollywood industry, socialist and testimonial third cinema, as well as indigenous video share from the outset a certain disenfranchisement of the author as creator” (ibid, p64). In order to face the idea of subalternity entailed in indigenous collaborative projects, Schiwy gives the example of Bolivian indigenous films, whose credits replace the term *director* with *responsible* or simply *producer*. “Omitting the

¹⁰⁰ As an anthropologist, Turner (2002) was in charge of the Kayapo Video Project with a grant from the Spencer Foundation and in cooperation with the Centro de Trabalho Indigenista in São Paulo. On that occasion, VNA made its editing studio and its video storage space available to help with the work.

word director in the credits places emphasis on the *collaboration* between indigenous communities, CEFREC, and CAIB” (ibid, p69, emphasis added).

Indigenous filmmaker, Ariel Ortega, a VNA-workshop attendee in 2007 and one of the names behind *Two Villages*, *One Path*, *Guarani Exile*, and *Tava*, *The House of Stone*, understands that debate as symptomatically attuned with a Western point of view. “It is a collective work and for the collective. It is very Western to push that question. Again, we will be talking about property, what is mine, what is my authorship, what is my idea. It is not very collective to think in this way”, Ortega (2018) observes via WhatsApp interview with me. Ortega feels uncomfortable claiming he is the director of any of the above documentaries. “Everybody did a bit of everything. (...) I can’t simply put it down as something of mine or of my authorship because others may have the same point of view about the work”. Although credited as the director, he claims that sometimes he would be responsible for operating the camera and even the sound recording equipment. In addition, “I have always taken part in every editing. When Ernesto [*de Carvalho, editor and member of Vídeo nas Aldeias*] could not come to the village, I would go to Olinda, in Pernambuco [*head office of VNA*], and stay there for a couple of weeks, mainly to help translate the material” (ibid).

In his interview, Carelli (2018) agrees with Ortega about the authorship question. “If this is an issue, it is always an issue on our side”, referring to the non-indigenous side. “They think VNA workshop films are too good to be true. Like a fake diamond. I don’t know what is the interest in that discussion, but anyway...”. In a way, Carelli’s comment is an answer to those who criticise the initiative and try to undermine it by being suspicious of the collaborative process. More importantly, he believes that VNA’s dynamics comprise a variety of “inputs that run in a very open and fluid way” (ibid), which is not to say free of tension and nuance. When analysing VNA’s hybrid dynamics, Lacerda claims “collaboration is not a technique, it is not even a methodology. It is, above all, an aesthetic-ethic that relies on human (and non-human) relationships, including affections and dislikes, and openness to new situations and proposals” (2018, p10). This approach is at the very basis of VNA workshop practice. Lacerda explains that a workshop usually consists of six to eight trainees selected by the community. The

facilitators usually suggest each participant chooses a resident in the village ‘to follow’ with the camera for two main reasons. Firstly, it is a practical strategy to encourage students to make choices and develop a cinematic focus; and secondly, it prompts interaction between residents and allows them to see a bigger picture of the topic initially selected. In this respect, “the film is constructed from these various narratives and relationships that often intersect and give rise to an inner picture of the community and the village” (ibid, p6).

On that note, Schiwy (2009) suggests that cases like VNA should be seen as an *integral process*, since the word *integral* has a sense of collectivity in itself. “The *proceso integral* strives to tie communities, video makers, and independent filmmakers into relations of reciprocity and a research ethos of accountability”, hence it “points to a new conceptualization of collaborative epistemic processes that has its historical roots in indigenous scholarship” (ibid, p69). In arguing this, Schiwy not only opens a discussion that may relate to many indigenous collaborative projects, such as VNA in Brazil, but, most importantly, positions the Indians as agents, not passive.

The media activists utilize their nonindigenous collaborators while also taking their advice into account. This is not the same as submitting to the guidance of an educated elite. Similarly, the communities make use of the video makers’ ability to filmically address issues of concern. Again, this shift in epistemic agency did not occur spontaneously but correlates with the growing importance of indigenous scholarship and social movements (ibid, p73).

In this sense, the discussion about authorship and collaboration was crucial to the establishment of the cinema of the 1960s and 1970s (that is, Cinema Novo) and contemporary output (VNA) as two distinct forms for representing indigenous territories on screen. Although both cinematic initiatives can be taken as politically charged and concerned with society’s hierarchical structure, Schiwy remarks that Third Cinema filmmakers “did not permanently include members of the impoverished or indigenous communities they worked with” (ibid, p74), that is, collaboration was not necessarily the premise for their filmmaking. On the other hand, the belief in an authorial cinema was greatly in vogue at that time. “Third cinema filmmakers and film critics continued to ascribe creative and

critical force to the director, or at least to the production crew” (ibid). On the other hand, Gleghorn (2017) highlights the unique contribution of Bolivian, Jorge Sanjinés and the Grupo Ukamau as well as Colombian, Marta Rodríguez and Jorge Silva. Gleghorn claims that, although they had “embraced discourses of revolution” of Third Cinema, “from their respective contexts these directors engaged with reformulating the idea of the national, which crucially acknowledged Indigenous populations” (ibid, p170), in films like *Blood of the Condor* (Yawar Mallku, 1969) and *Planas: Testimony about an Ethnocide* (Planas: Testimonio de un Etnocidio, 1971), respectively.

Juan Salazar and Amalia Córdova go deeper into that topic by specifically relating Julio García Espinosa’s notion of *imperfect cinema* – discussed in his 1969’s “For an Imperfect Cinema” manifesto – to the contemporary indigenous media, as “imperfect media is about the constant search for new languages, languages unconcerned with technical perfection or conventional rules and modes of representation and narrativization” (2008, p50). Salazar and Córdova argue, however, that the contemporary indigenous media is not strictly against nor subject to mainstream cinema, as Third Cinema certainly was in the past. In fact, that duality obscures the complexities of this emerging mode of production. Rather, Latin American indigenous output looks for a representational space of its own, positioning itself “as a signifying practice separate from national cinemas, popular and community video, and tactical media practices” (ibid, p43). In this sense, its interest is in creating “parallel circuits of production, dissemination, and reception of cultural materials, which for some indicate the end of the hegemony of the literate and the beginning of a decolonization of the intellect” (ibid). Whilst contemporary mainstream Latin American cinema has shied away from many of the discussions prompted by the revolutionary cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, projects like VNA and the indigenous film collectives that emerged due to its support seem to be taking up that role.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Maori filmmaker, Barry Barclay went a step further and conceptualised the notion of *Fourth Cinema* to refer to indigenous media output, inspired by, yet opposing the Third Cinema concept developed by Solanas and Getino in 1969. Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart (2008) remind us that the term *Fourth World* was first used in 1974 by George Manuel and Michael Posluns to indicate a growing international interest in the indigenous worldview and activism.

5.2.2. *Un Indien, Tonacci and Cowell*

Although documentaries made collaboratively have gained considerable attention, like *Bicycles of Nhanderu* (Bicicletas de Nhanderú, 2011) and *I've Already Become an Image* (Já me Transformei em Imagem, 2008), VNA's most successful productions are Carelli's documentary feature films, *Corumbiara* and *Martyrdom* (Martírio, 2017, co-directed by Ernesto de Carvalho and Tatiana Almeida). Both films won prestigious awards¹⁰² and helped VNA to become highly regarded as an important branch of contemporary Brazilian cinema. In acquiring this sort of recognition, VNA's reputation for supporting indigenous communities through moving images gained prominence nationwide – its unusual participation in the 32nd São Paulo Biennial¹⁰³ best symbolises that achievement. Not by coincidence, the main topic of both documentaries is the ownership of indigenous land. That is, both narratives follow indigenous groups' struggles to defend their ancestral territories – the Kanoê in Rondônia state and the Guarani-Kaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul state.¹⁰⁴ That is, at the core of both projects is the dispute over land and the will to reclaim ancestral territories. As Amalia Córdova claims, “the documentary has proven to be by far the weapon of choice for recording subaltern histories, contesting multinational extraction and development projects, and denouncing human rights violations on Native lands and bodies” (2014, p124).

Carelli is both an anthropologist and activist. His connection to documentary-making was developed simultaneously with the setting up of VNA as a project.

¹⁰² *Corumbiara* won Best Film at the 2009 Gramado Film Festival in Brazil, while *Martyrdom* won Best Latin American Film at the 2016 Mar del Plata Film Festival in Argentina. Both films were awarded Best Documentary by the traditional São Paulo Association of Art Critics in 2012 and 2018, respectively.

¹⁰³ Curated by Jochen Volz, the 2016 edition was entitled *Incerteza Viva (Live Uncertainty)*. *The Natives' Brazil: An Open Archive* (O Brasil dos Índios: Um Arquivo Aberto) was built from images produced by VNA since 1986 (Carelli, Carvalho and Almeida, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ In *Corumbiara*, Carelli explores violent episodes suffered by the Kanoê in the context of the wood extraction industry of the 1980s up to the soy production beginning in the 2000s. In *Martyrdom*, the directors have a more ambitious mission: to cover the historical territorial struggle of the Guarani-Kaiowá from colonial times up to the agribusiness era of today.

“My learning of the cinematographic language occurred at the same time as I offered the chance to register and access images of other peoples and leaders that I admired for their vision of the future, for their discourse of resistance” (2004), Carelli explains in a confessional text entitled “Moi, un Indien”,¹⁰⁵ an attempt to bring himself and the Indian figure closer together. “I learned by doing, intuitively” (ibid), he adds. Also, Italian-Brazilian filmmaker, Andrea Tonacci,¹⁰⁶ greatly influenced Carelli’s work and contributed to a change in how indigenous peoples were depicted in Brazilian documentaries. In the late 1970s, the director contacted Carelli when he was already involved in the Centre for Indigenous Advocacy to develop a video project named Inter Povos. Tonacci’s idea was to enable the exchange of images produced by Indians, that is, “an intertribal communication project through video” (Carelli, 2011, p46). Because of the low-level technology available back then, Inter Povos did not come about. However, Tonacci’s genuine interest in exploring what would be the Indian way of seeing did not only influence but inspired Carelli to pursue a video project in the near future. Even though Inter Povos had to be suspended, Tonacci did release two productions whose impact has been remarkable to date: *Conversas no Maranhão*, a documentary feature filmed in 1977 and released in 1983; *Os Arara*, a three-episode TV series made in 1980; and *Hills of Disorder*¹⁰⁷ (Serras da Desordem, 2006), his last cinematic contribution to the indigenous debate in the country.

The documentary tells the story of Carapiru, an indigenous man who survived the massacre of his tribe in 1978, and who had been wandering in the hills of Central Brazil for a decade. Playing with re-enactment and archive imagery, Tonacci invited Carapiru to participate in the film as himself to relive key events. It is most certainly a multi-layered approach to his story/history, but Carelli found something was lacking. “I think it is lovely! But there are things I do not understand: why does Carapiru have no voice?” (Carelli cited in Brasil et al, 2017, p256). Although a range of documentary methods were explored to portray

¹⁰⁵ The title is a clear reference to Rouch’s ethnofiction film *Moi, un Noir* (1958).

¹⁰⁶ For more details of his body of work’s impact on Brazilian cinema see Devires journal special edition *Tonacci*, organised by André Brasil and Cláudia Mesquita (2012).

¹⁰⁷ For more details see Daniel Caetano’s *Serras da Desordem* (2008).

Carapiru's journey, *Hills of Disorder* apparently did not tackle the matter of the *place of speech* that Carelli had envisioned. Of course, the problem of (self)representation has been critically explored in documentaries like Silvio Back's *Our Indians* (Yndio do Brasil, 1995), Sérgio Bianchi's *Should I Kill Them?* (Mato Eles? 1982) or even Arthur Omar's *Triste Trópico* (1974), this one permeated by the anthropophagy tension between Natives and conquerors. It is the territorial issue, thus, that stands as a common theme among Tonacci's and Carelli's efforts, and that was put forward by VNA.

Apart from Tonacci's significant contribution, it is worth mentioning that the damaged indigenous territories were also at the core of Adrian Cowell's prolific documentary production. The Chinese-born British filmmaker spent the second half of the twentieth century registering the destructive impact of the State and private company projects upon the Amazon region. "Progress, as ideology, was the enemy" (2013, p323), as Felipe Milanez claims. Mainly sponsored by British TV channels, Cowell developed series of TV documentaries focused on the disastrous consequences of such initiatives – many of them shedding light on the indigenous situation amid the chaos, as in the emblematic three-part series *The Last of the Hiding Tribes* (1967-1999). Although not institutional, Cowell's approach was very informative (because it was devoted to the conventional television format) rather than an experiment in documentary-making. Years later, the VNA team used some of Cowell's documentaries to review the indigenous attitude to their devastated lands. For instance, Carelli and Corrêa's *Back to the Good Land* (De Volta à Terra Boa, 2008) draws on Cowell's *Returning from Extinction* (Fugindo da Extinção, 1998), part of *The Last of the Hiding Tribes*. "If in *Returning from Extinction*, the testimonies make up Cowell's narrative, aiming to confer legibility to the history of the Panará, in *Back to the Good Land*, they seem to drive the narrative even more strongly, which works to construct an internal point of view (...)" (Brasil, 2016a, p81).

Coming full circle now, this VNA production could be said to be in dialectical position regarding Cinema Novo. While Cinema Novo set the ground for a critical representation of indigenous territories through allegorical Indian figures, there was no room to invite indigenous groups to be part of the artistic process taking

place. Here, one might recall Bernardet (2003) arguing that the so-called *other* would still be the *other* until the day he/she truly takes ownership of the means of production. Though there is a long way ahead, VNA makes an important move in that direction by providing financial and technical support for an indigenous media to eventually emerge, as it was the case with Coletivo Kuikuro de Cinema and Coletivo Fulni-ô de Cinema, among others. VNA's collaborative documentaries could also be seen as partial progress in that sense. At the same time, it could be argued that Carelli's authorial voice as a documentarist (as mentioned above, in dialogue with the work of Tonacci, himself considered an author)¹⁰⁸ preserves a certain aura typical of Cinema Novo/Cinema Marginal directors, though to a different degree.

In pointing out the production mode of the 1960s and 1970s, I am by no means ignoring the historical context of these decades or the limited technology that barely enabled *cinemanovistas* themselves to film. Indeed, Cinema Novo has the merit of being a pioneer in covering a variety of national themes with social revolution as its motto. It was a movement formed by different filmmakers with different styles, whereas VNA has a very distinct NGO background and with very specific aims. In addition, Carelli's project benefitted from the advent of video and digital technologies, pivotal for offering filmmaking workshops to indigenous communities. As a consequence, there seems to have been a shift in the depiction of their damaged territory: instead of the allegorical Indian figure parodying the modernisation of Brazil in Cinema Novo films, VNA documentaries shed light on what that rotten process left behind. In neoliberal times, VNA puts the spotlight on damaged lands as *ruins of underdevelopment*. Ultimately, what brings Cinema Novo and VNA closer together is their willingness to take on the critique of progress in relation to the indigenous territories and the understanding of film as a militant tool to change society.

5.3. “Here, in this scenario of destruction...”: territory of ruins in *Corumbiara*

¹⁰⁸ A Cinema Marginal author, Andrea Tonacci (1944-2016) directed *Blabláblá* (1968) and *Bang Bang* (1971).

Focusing on VNA documentaries specifically interested in illuminating the territorial dispute, my analysis will be divided into two parts. In this section, I dwell on VNA leader Vincent Carelli's *Corumbiara*, a documentary feature film that interweaves his engagement in the project with the political struggle to reclaim the indigenous territories under threat. In the second, I look at collaborative documentaries developed by indigenous and non-indigenous crew, the outcomes of VNA filmmaking workshops. All the projects have in common the aim to make images of ruins visible as a means of questioning notions of progress and (under)development in relation to the indigenous history of Brazil. In this sense, *Corumbiara* stands out as one of VNA most relevant cinematic contributions, as previously mentioned. Even though Carelli had first called attention to the cause with his short *Girl's Celebration*, it was the award-winning documentary which consolidated both the reputation of VNA and its way of depicting indigenous territoriality as an area of dispute. "In relation to the indigenous issue, everything is a dispute. Territory, resources, space, lands. This is the eternal struggle. Today the image has become a tool of dispute" (2018), Carelli observes in his interview.

In fact, the development of the *Corumbiara* project is intrinsically linked to the *Girl's Celebration* as it was during the shooting of the latter that Carelli first heard of the massacre of the Kanoê and Akuntsu¹⁰⁹ groups in the Corumbiara territory, in Rondônia state, Northern Brazil. In the late 1960s, the military government auctioned off the lands within the territory of the Kanoê and Akuntsu to businessmen from São Paulo, all members of one family, at a derisory price. Since then, these groups have been reportedly hunted by gunmen hired by farmers interested in wood extraction in the region. In 1986, Carelli was informed of this situation by his friend, Marcelo Santos, a progressive voice within the National Indian Foundation. They arrived in the area and were able to confirm the destruction of the indigenous village, but were prevented from proceeding with

¹⁰⁹ In *Corumbiara*, although the main focus is on the Kanoê people, the documentary does take account of the Akuntsu as well, a group which appears later in the film. In fact, *akuntsu* is actually a word the Kanoê people use to refer to 'other Indians', not self-denominated members of the same group (Alvarenga, 2017).

filming by the farmers' lawyer, Mr. Flausino. The State did not carry out any investigation of the case. The documentary project was, thus, suspended.

In 2006, after being contacted by an international journalist to explain the case, Carelli decided to resume the project and finally complete the documentary. Between 1986 and 2006, the images he produced had a clear-cut purpose: to gather evidence of the existence of the Kanoê and Akuntsu in order to prove to the State that their roots were in that territory. Through voice-over narration, the director outlines a series of issues faced by the crew in attempting to contact the Indians as well as their dealings with politicians, farmers and agribusiness men from that region. Considered a *cinema-process*, a term coined by Cláudia Mesquita (2011) to refer to films not only made over several years or even decades but whose content is deeply affected by the passage of time, *Corumbiara* attests to that through Carelli's temporal reflections on the images and the way they acquired meaning over time. In this sense, the passage of time and his reflections upon it indicate both the engagement of the militant documentarist in the cause and the endless violence suffered by the Indians.

In its search for evidence, the film becomes a journey of devastation, from the Indians' *taperas* to the artefacts found along the way. Coincidentally, Argentinian, Andrés Di Tella addressed this sort of approach in an essay which he starts by bluntly affirming: "As a documentary filmmaker, I deal constantly with ruins" (2009, p87). This sentence refers to his nonfiction work on *La Conquista del Desierto* (or *The Conquest of the Desert*), an 1870's military campaign that exterminated at least 3,000 Indians in the Pampas and Patagonia regions of Argentina. "The question for me was to find a way to make a documentary about how that world disappeared. The answer of course was: *ruins*" (ibid, p88). The lack of proper "observable ruins" (ibid) prompted the director to develop a particular methodology for making (and writing about) the film. He chose abandoned forts (actually, celebratory reconstructions made by subsequent governments and already decaying), Indian skulls (reading the skull as a human, Hamlet-like ruin), archive photography (the majority taken by military photographers of the time), and papers (rare official letters exchanged between *caciques* and representatives of the State). In addition, Di Tella calls attention to

the fact that this is about a two-faced massacre – genocide and ethnocide – that is, the destruction of a people and their culture.

To a certain extent, Carelli's work resembles Di Tella's viewpoint, since both directors seem to wander over ruins struggling to cinematically address genocide and ethnocide as the consequences of 'progress', particularly with regards to land exploitation. André Brasil tackled this when analysing Carelli's latest documentary *Martyrdom*: "in the well-known Benjaminian formula, there is no image of progress that is not at the same time an image of barbarism" (2016b, p147). Indeed, *Martyrdom*, Carelli's second documentary feature, is an attempt to didactically expose the mechanisms of barbaric progress so dear to Benjamin's (1968) understanding of history. Simultaneously, the film performs an act of resistance in inviting the audience to stand up for the cause. *Martyrdom* demands justice for what happened to the Guarani-Kaiowá people, the subject of the film. In other words, in spite of the horror faced by the Guarani-Kaiowá, *Martyrdom* succeeds in standing up against that horror.¹¹⁰ In contrast, the power of *Corumbiara* lies in telling a story of defeat while exploring territoriality as devastation – and this is precisely why I have chosen to focus on this particular film. As Carelli claims in an interview to Brasil et al, "*Corumbiara* is the end of the line. We arrived late. It is a people who can no longer reproduce (...), it is extermination. They did not kill everyone, but little by little, everyone will disappear" (2017, p254).

In Victor Guimarães' reading of the documentary, "after countless unsuccessful attempts to turn the images into evidence of the massacre suffered by the Indians, what was left for the film to do was to collect the fragments and to provide a possible narrative of a process that had lasted for twenty years" (2016). That is, all that was left for Carelli to do was to "deal constantly with ruins" (2009, p87), as suggested by Di Tella in his essay. Interestingly, Guimarães (2016) then relates the editing work of VNA member, Mari Corrêa, to the ruins found throughout the film's production. In dealing with a time span of twenty years or so, Corrêa had to

¹¹⁰ Mariana Cunha (2018) has recently discussed how *Martyrdom* addresses the Guarani-Kaiowá territoriality in the article "The Right to Nature: Contested Landscapes and Indigenous Territoriality in Martírio".

actually gather *fragments* of images (VNA previous videos, TV news and newspaper extracts) from different years to compose the two-hour nonfiction film. “The fragmentary nature of the montage was based on the accumulation of ruins – ruins of the world, ruins of History – that the film aimed to gather (...)” (ibid). With this in mind, I would suggest *Corumbiara* is the epitome of the visualisation of indigenous territory as damaged territory – an imaginary previously foregrounded by Cinema Novo, as discussed in section 5.1. *Corumbiara* not only renders visible a territory made up of fragments, but seems to have its own documentary language structured upon them.

5.3.1. A four-sequence pilgrimage

To begin with, it could be argued that the dynamics of spatial representation in *Corumbiara* foreground the indigenous village framed as a destroyed and abandoned space. Indeed, this is the main staging of the documentary, where many of the sequences and most of the interaction take place. For analytical purposes, I will employ four of these sequences, as they add meaningful layers to what is being framed. After a brief voice-over introduction and the opening credits, the camera goes on to introduce Corumbiara territory. As previously mentioned, Carelli explains how the area was auctioned off by the military government to influential businessmen at the end of the 1960s. Since then, what used to be indigenous land has been turned into large private estates, mainly focused on wood extraction and livestock. On the margins of the road, deforestation and huge areas of felled timber are visible. Shortly after, Carelli asks and Marcelo Santos confirms that the road was built with the sole purpose of destroying the indigenous settlement. Santos talks to both Carelli and the camera while pointing to the debris from the torn-down houses. He even finds a broken piece of clay pot as evidence.

The Indian accompanying them walks through the area, an area so degraded that it seems indeed to have been targeted on purpose. In this regard, when the camera shows an airplane flying overhead, the viewer may even wonder if a bomb could drop from the sky at any moment. Mr. Flausino, the farmers’ lawyer, arrives and

engages in debate, challenging the relevance of Carelli and Santos' claim as well as the prior existence of Indians in that area. They are forced to leave. According to Leandro Saraiva, *Corumbiara* has the "ethics of political action" (2009, p43), that is, the documentary is precisely built upon an alliance of confrontational relationships in regard to the indigenous cause. It is overtly a documentary project centred on independent investigation, anthropological fieldwork, left-wing militancy and a crystal-clear political agenda. An ethics that, Saraiva claims, ends up shaping the film's aesthetics itself, as its political action is registered by the camera.





Figures 87, 88, 89 and 90 – The first sequence exploring ruins frames the damaged indigenous territory as a consequence of ‘progress’

The above sequence was recorded in 1986 and many of its characteristics are revisited again throughout the documentary. That is, use of a hand-held camera, dialogues between on-screen and off-screen characters (Carelli is doing the filming), voice-over comments providing explanatory information, and, above all, what is left of the indigenous territory taking centre stage. Interestingly, the assumption that indigenous territory is damaged territory is supported by the brief sequence that comes after. In 2006, Carelli visited Santos. They are no longer amid the Corumbiara ruins, but at Santos’ house in Goiânia, Goiás state. The sequence starts with the prosaic yet meaningful comment made by Carelli to Santos and his wife: “We tweak things a little here to set up the scenario”. To which she replies: “Scenario?”. And he says, referring to her husband: “Yeah, we just have to put the victim there”. They laugh as friends in the comfort of a white-

family domestic space, far from Corumbiara, even though profoundly connected to the subject matter. These prosaic comments are meaningful for two reasons: firstly, the reference to that specific space through the use of the word *scenario*, which appropriately, considering the filmic context, also bears within itself the sense of a film set; and secondly, it creates an ironic analogy as that they “set up the scenario” in Santos’ house, since they had been accused of creating a scenario of destruction in Corumbiara in the past. Most importantly, that safe, white-family domestic space appears in the documentary as a counterpoint to the indigenous villages constantly at risk.



Figures 91 and 92 – Carelli (left) at Santos’ house

From their encounter, one learns that the National Indian Foundation, a State body supposedly created to protect Indians and their cultures, has suspended both the investigation and the temporary prohibition of trespass the area, regardless of the

evidence presented. A 1986 aerial shot gives an idea of the environmental damage caused in the territory. In the voice-over, Carelli, however, notes that, in spite of the heavy deforestation, the Indian crops bravely insist on sprouting. The camera shows small green areas from above, as if they were spreading and reclaiming their land. In this sense, Georg Simmel's (1965) famous interpretation of nature taking over architecture as a sign of ruination acquires an additional meaning: the take-over does not endorse a *what-could-have-been* discourse; instead, it praises nature as the opposite of decay. Here, it is not the return of architecture to nature, but the return of nature to nature itself.

After their meeting, Carelli and Santos decide to resume the project abandoned a few years before in order to complete the documentary. Non-chronologically, the film then moves back to 1995 to show their second visit to an indigenous village. Carelli and Santos are accompanied by Alemão, Santos' assistant, and two journalists. At that time, Santos was head of a federal programme aimed at protecting isolated Indian settlements (or simply "isolated Indians", as the film crew refers to them) and was therefore allowed to access private property. On a visit to one, the framing is similar to the earlier set-up, except for the absence of the Indian, who had since passed away. Wandering amid the deforested land, the camera zooms-in closely on discovering what looks like an Indian *tapera*, a new element in the frame. They manage to get in and find a variety of artefacts, probably left behind in a hurry. What happens next adds another layer to the spatial representation. The team hears human sounds. Santos panics and wants to leave. Carelli persuades him to stay with the promise that they will wait for the Indians to approach them, not the other way around. This is a sequence that Clarisse Alvarenga (2017) has thoroughly analysed as a first-contact sequence between indigenous and white characters – an essential part of her broader investigation of *films of contact*.





Figures 93, 94, 95 and 96 – In the second sequence, a *tapera* is incorporated into the frame

Her analysis focuses on mobilising Viveiros de Castro's (2004) concept of *equivocation* to unpack the on-screen encounter as one not just between two different world-views, but two different worlds per se. For the Brazilian anthropologist, "an equivocation is not an error, a mistake, or a deception. Instead, it is the foundation of the relation that implicates, and that is always a relation with an exteriority" (ibid, p9). In other words, the equivocation lies in the difference that brings together distinct worlds, not as an issue but as the very basis of their interaction. Positively, the idea of equivocation implies that one needs "to communicate by differences, instead of silencing the Other by presuming a univocality – the essential similarity – between what the Other and We are saying" (ibid, p10). In fact, a vast and complex discussion comes from Viveiros de Castro's (2004, 2014) theory of Amerindian perspectivism.¹¹¹ The key concern in this specific filmic context is that the encounter between VNA members and indigenous individuals is nothing more than the opportunity to visually represent *equivocation*.

¹¹¹ "Perspectivism supposes a constant epistemology and variable ontologies, the same representations and other objects, a single meaning and multiple referents. Therefore, the aim of perspectivist translation – translation being one of shamanism's principal tasks, as we know (Carneiro da Cunha 1998) – is not that of finding a 'synonym' (a co-referential representation) in our human conceptual language for the representations that other species of subject use to speak about one and the same thing. Rather, the aim is to avoid losing sight of the difference concealed within equivocal 'homonyms' between our language and that of other species, since we and they are never talking about the same things" (Viveiros de Castro, 2004, p5).

According to Alvarenga, “the world that the Natives describe with their understanding is different and irreconcilable with the world the farmers describe. What divides them is not the way they understand, but the worlds their understandings foreground” (2017, p186). She mentions the lack of a common language to communicate and the inability, or better, that it was impossible for Carelli to film clearly the unexpected encounter (his unstable hand-held camera fails to properly frame the Indians), two issues attached to the concept of *equivocation* in the scene. Although my focus is not this first-contact sequence, it is interesting to stress the role played by the Indians in that encounter. Like a spectral apparition, Tiramantu and Purá, two Kanoê brothers, slowly become visible in front of the camera lens. They walk towards the crew, as if to make clear who is in charge of that piece of land. They act like guards coming to inspect what is going on: Indian-guardians. If fear is the first feeling experienced by the crew, it fades away when the Indians take them by the hand and lead them to their village. Not far from there, the scene is bleak. The remaining *taperas* are surrounded by fire-ravaged trees. Carelli and his team found the Indians amid the debris and could not do much.





Figures 97, 98, 99 and 100 – The encounter with the Indian-guardians and the remains of the village

The third sequence in an indigenous village is marked by the presence of visiting anthropologists, including Carelli's wife, Virgínia Valadão. Together, they decide to explore the area surrounding the settlement where the film crew had installed a

camping hub. The scene is war-like, already familiar to the audience. The diegetic sound is made up of bird calls, which somehow intensify the bleakness of that environment. Virgínia is getting along well with Tiramantu and Umoró, two female Indians. They offer her fruit and even play the flute. They all walk back to the white man's settlement. At this point, linguist, Inês Hargreaves, tries to identify whether they speak Kanoê, so the language barrier could finally be lifted. Consequently, there is a sense of cordiality in the air, scenically enhanced by the vibrant yellow tarpaulins in the camp which help to convey a feeling of festive partnership. Upon arrival, the Indians keep touching Santos' arms as a sign of affection. They also interact with the linguist who shows them images in a book in attempting to communicate better. The sense of cordiality reaches a peak when Tiramantu inspects the camera with her own hands, and what the spectator sees is her face fairly close to the lens – an intimacy allowed by the cordiality of the encounter. Considering the specific spatial dynamics of this event, it is worth underlining how the white-man's space provides a safe atmosphere here, even if in the middle of the decaying jungle. Once again, as happened in the sequence at Santos' house, the framing of that kind of space seems to re-endorse the indigenous territory as one in total opposition.





Figures 101 and 102 – Two frames, two realities: the white space and the indigenous space

Later in the film, the fourth and final sequence I wish to discuss shifts from this virtually peaceful environment to perhaps the most tense. One year later, Carelli is informed that an indigenous *maloca* had been found 40 km from his settlement. An interesting decision is made: he invites members of the Kanoê people to accompany him in his field research as co-worker. What they encountered had never been seen or “mentioned in the literature before”, Carelli claims: the Indians of the hole. This is what he called them after finding a big hole carved out inside the *maloca*. There is no one there but plenty of evidence of their existence. In a nearby locality, the team discover not a single hole but dozens of them, both inside the *malocas* and scattered throughout the plantation. “This was a village”, the astonished Santos states. Deeply bothered by their presence on the land, a farmer sends his henchmen and the police to find out what they are doing there. Carelli explains they have legal permission to be there, but the police argue that the camera is a problem. Carelli is detained but released soon after the episode. This is but a prologue to the most tense moment yet.





Figures 103, 104, 105 and 106 – Finding holes in ruined villages

Two years later, Carelli and Santos had their last chance to prove at least one Indian was living in that isolated area, before the farmers take over the land again. The remaining *maloca* they finally find is, in fact, a *tapera*, one that resembles many they had found before, about to collapse like the *tapera* of Macunaíma, isolated in the jungle and covered by a green-military jacket, in faraway 1969. Inside, there is no Macunaíma but a trapped Indian. The climax builds up to the confrontation between the solitary Indian inside the *tapera* and the film crew: the Indian with a bow and an arrow; Carelli with a camera. “Unlike all other contacts with isolated Indians that are filmed in *Corumbiara*, the encounter with the Indian of the hole stands out for its incisive radicalism” (Alvarenga, 2017, p202). The Indian of the hole establishes a limit to contact, as if trying to establish a boundary to the land. As a consequence, the documentary per se cannot access that space and turn it into an on-screen space. It is the end of the line. Moreover, the Indian personifies a boundary, not between two different cultures, but two different natures, as Viveiros de Castro (2004) would claim. After six hours of impasse, Carelli and his team give up and leave. Later on, they find out that the Indian vanished after the encounter, and they realised he was moving from place to place precisely because of their persistence. Apparently, by digging holes in the ground, the Indians were trying to hide from white men. In other words, through that unexpected act they were trying to hide from the violence and destruction generated by constant harassment from agribusiness.



Figures 107 and 108 – The Indian of the hole and the hole after he had vanished

If the ruined *tapera* calls *Macunaíma* to mind, one could argue that the roads in *Corumbiara* might allude to *Iracema*. In both documentaries, apart from the airplane viewpoint shots, roads are more than a means for the characters to travel along; they are significant in themselves. The difference in their meaning in each case, however, is sharp. Whereas, in Bodanzky and Senna's Cinema Novo output, roads are the means for Tião Brasil Grande to transport felled timber for sale; in Carelli's VNA project, they have quite the opposite function. Both Carelli and Santos drive from one place to another searching for evidence of criminal activity, so that wood extraction can come to an end. Roads, therefore, enable them to go into action. In addition, they function as a marker of time in the film. In most of the temporal jumps, the first image to appear on screen is a frame of the road from inside a vehicle. Interestingly, the glass window itself turns into a screen by allowing Carelli, Santos and the audience to catch glimpses of reality out there. In

this sense, the sequence of the first visit to an indigenous village mentioned earlier does the same thing. As discussed, the window allows the viewer to witness the deforestation and more, from inside the car. In fact, this method of framing permeates the narrative as a whole. When the window-screen reveals, for instance, an extensive, burned-out area, it connects *Corumbiara* to *Iracema* once again, as if showing the result of a long sequence of fires burning the trees in Bodanzky and Senna's film. The difference, however, is that *Corumbiara* also wanders amid the debris, in an effort to film from within and better develop its pro-indigenous perspective. In one of the scenes shot inside the vehicle, the radio is on and one particular song can be heard. *País Tropical*, a big national hit by popular singer, Jorge Ben Jor, has a strange, discomfoting effect, as the lyrics "*Moro num país tropical/Abençoado por Deus/E bonito por natureza*" ("I live in a tropical country/Blessed by God/And beautiful by nature") by no means concurs with what can be seen through the car windows.





Figures 109 and 110 – The views from the airplane and the ‘window-screen’ of *Corumbiara*

Interestingly, the evidence found in the outside space reverberates inside the minds of both Carelli and Santos. It is no coincidence that the documentary makes two references to nightmares, reflecting the perils seen and lived by the pair. When they discovered the abandoned indigenous village in 1995, Santos had a bad dream that night of a tractor destroying the village they had found. An image one can easily picture could occur in the film when watching it. Later, in 1998, after Carelli was confronted by the Indian of the hole, the director dreamed of anaesthetising that Indian in order to finally gain access to him and his *tapera*, a bad dream which represented his bad conscience about trying to force a contact that never happened. In this regard, Alvarenga wisely reads this sequence keeping in mind that “the encounter of the camera with those who have remained at a distance – this intense moment¹¹² – defines not only the direction of the film but also the history of these other forms of life that *development and progress* ceaselessly try to annihilate, to put an end to them” (2017, p207, emphasis added). Unsurprisingly, it is also in the name of progress that Mr. Flausino, the lawyer of one of the farmers in the Corumbiara territory, shockingly says at a certain point: “What do you not do to develop a region? (...) Make an Indian reserve. Because the US after killing all its Indians, wiping out its Indians in the West, in the Mississippi Valley, became the largest grain producer in the world”.

¹¹² Alvarenga (2017) discusses *Corumbiara* in terms of its extensive movement (the temporal, narrative arc per se) and intense moments (as in the above-mentioned sequence).

In her analysis of Peruvian territories, scholar Jill Lane stresses how “national space has long been imagined as a geographical container for contiguous but separate regional ethnic identities” (2009, p137), referring to the division between indigenous and white social groups. Furthermore, she points out it is only when violence crosses spatial lines that divisions start to matter to everyone. In this sense, she is particularly interested in the use of space made by artwork projects as a reflection of the great importance of space for ethnic identities at risk. Lane understands “the production of social memory as explicitly *embodied* and *social* practices, ones in which embodied performance negotiates and potentially alters the ways in which power, identity, and difference are spatially distributed” (ibid, p136). That is, the space that stages action is key to conveying the dynamics of the historical struggles of indigenous groups, which *Corumbiara* insightfully renders visible. Filmmaker Andrés Di Tella claims “if ruins provoke meditation, it is because they are evidence of something that is no longer there” (2009, p94). Thinking of the ruins of the Kanoê people and conscious of the damaged space/staging in which he circulates, Carelli also manages to find beauty amid the degradation. His delight at finally having the chance to hear the rare call of the legendary uirapuru bird means more than luck. For him, it means hope in the prevailing of nature. “Here, in this scenario of destruction, the bird used to come along every day at sunset to say goodbye”.

5.4. Made of stone and ruins: indigenous filmmaking in *Tava*, *The House of Stone*, *Two Villages*, *One Path*, and *Guarani Exile*

Corumbiara may be the epitome of Vídeo nas Aldeias’ representation of indigenous territory as damaged territory but it is definitely not the sole example. As a result of VNA filmmaking workshops, many collaborative projects also explore the territorial issue. Little by little, film critics and well-established directors started to pay attention to the “breath of fresh air” (2008, p101) those films represent, as Caixeta de Queiroz claims. He argues that “VNA films bring gestures and scenes of everyday life, they are not limited to interviews, they produce new ways of representing the ‘other’, reveal the other without exoticising him/her (...)” (ibid). Caixeta de Queiroz endorses indigenous media scholarship,

understanding VNA documentaries as a *cinema of co-authorship*. In this sense, he refers back to Jean Rouch's ethnographic outputs that transformed everything and everyone captured by the camera into subjects and co-authors of the projects in what became widely known as *shared or reflexive anthropology* (Stoller, 1992; Henley, 2010).

For Bandeira (2017),¹¹³ *The Hyperwomen* (As Hipermulheres, 2011) is truly a milestone in this regard. Co-directed by non-Indians Carlos Fausto, Leonardo Sette and Indian Takumã Kuikuro, the documentary is the outcome of a VNA project in partnership with Coletivo Kuikuro de Cinema, a film collective created in 2002 and run by Kuikuro since 2011. Bandeira agrees that "(...) unlike the traditional Brazilian view – and imposition –, indigenous peoples are not just made the subjects, but themselves guard their respective autonomies (political regime) and authorship (aesthetic regime)" (ibid, p136). Kuikuro's autonomy and authorship, for instance, is a well-regarded skill employed in *The Hyperwomen*, as in his subsequent film projects, such as *Karioka* (2014) and *London as a Village* (2017). *The Hyperwomen* won Best Editing and the Special Jury Prize at the 2011 Gramado Film Festival, one of the most important film festivals in Brazil, in addition to other awards elsewhere.

In a way, the path opened up by this co-authored or collaborative indigenous cinema is the result of a complex historical dispute about representing indigenous peoples, which I have attempted to address throughout the chapter, with particular interest in the dynamics of indigenous spaces. At this point, the question posed by Brasil seems to encapsulate the stage which this kind of production is at: "What happens when the phenomenological machine of cinema meets the shamanic machine of the Amerindian peoples?" (2016c, p127), he wonders relating the experience of moving-imaging to that of shamanic trance. More importantly, this enquiry seems to acknowledge the originality of these documentaries within the context of Brazilian cinema. That is, whatever may come in future, they will

¹¹³ Although not the focus of this study, during Bandeira's presentation at the VIII AIM Annual Meeting (Aveiro, Portugal, 2018), I asked him if it could be said a truly autonomous indigenous cinema was underway in Brazil. Despite the growing number of indigenous-directed films, he believes it is too early to identify common features in those films and arbitrarily define a particular aesthetics for them.

inevitably function as a development (and perhaps as a response) to previous films with the problem of representing indigenous territories at their core. From Bodanzky and Senna's *Iracema* to Tonacci's *Hills of Disorder*, these and many other films mentioned above all question, in their particular ways, the place available for the voices of indigenous peoples to be heard within the Brazilian documentary, and how indigenous territories could then be visualised on screen. As Bentes claims, the place might be in "the discovery of a form of audiovisual thinking, a global audiovisual village, in which the uniqueness of Brazilian Indians meets the uniqueness and vigor of documentary and of contemporary cinema issues" (2004).

When Caixeta de Queiroz (2008) decided to explore what could potentially become an indigenous cinema, he retrieved Lévi-Strauss' *savage mind* dual argument.¹¹⁴ While indigenous thought has been elaborated from fragments, residues, parts that, once mobilised, form a structure, it is also willing to constantly undo and then to redo itself. That is, "savage because always ready to be constituted from the pieces of what was demolished or destroyed" (ibid, p117). Caixeta de Queiroz then moves forward to compare this indigenous ontology to documentary-making itself, an artistic practice "attentive to what happens in front of the camera, picking up pieces (that is, images) of a 'whole' (material, corporeal) and an 'everything' (an imaginary)" (ibid, p118) – not forgetting that the montage itself can be read as a collection of loose ends. I would then argue that when it comes to representing indigenous territory, the idea of *pieces of what was demolished* as well as *picking up pieces of a whole* resonate with greater significance. A territory historically disputed is a territory in pieces that need to be reclaimed – and VNA collaborations represent a means to achieve that. With this in mind, it is not surprising that *Tava, The House of Stone* stands as an accurate example of these dynamics precisely because it places a tourist attraction ruin complex under scrutiny.

This 2012 documentary feature was co-directed by Indians, Ariel Ortega and Patrícia Ferreira, former VNA trainees, and non-Indians, Ernesto de Carvalho and

¹¹⁴ For more details see Lévi-Strauss' *The Savage Mind* (1972).

Vincent Carelli, VNA facilitators. Ortega and Ferreira are married and live in Aldeia Koenju, an indigenous village in São Miguel das Missões, a town in Rio Grande do Sul state, Southern Brazil. They were introduced to VNA work back in 2007, when the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute) commissioned VNA to make videos about historical landmarks in the region. Ortega then took part in the first workshop, with Ferreira accompanying him informally. “In Guarani culture, there are things only for women and things only for men” (2017), she explains in an interview to Itaú Cultural available on YouTube. In 2008, however, she decided to push the boundaries and participate in the second workshop. “I wanted to hold the camera and make films” (ibid). A teacher in the village, today she is one of the few indigenous female filmmakers active in Brazil.¹¹⁵ *Tava* is already her third documentary made alongside Ortega. It follows an investigation of the construction of *tavas*, grand stone-built sacred indigenous temples, and the ruins of these constructions, particularly in their hometown. Furthermore, the film uses this investigation into the origins of the *tavas* to shed light on the European-led colonisation process, marked by violence and slavery, in the mid-seventeenth century in that specific region.

Ortega and Ferreira are co-directors but also on-screen presences in the film. They visit about seven indigenous villages (in Brazil and Argentina) to interview their Indian residents about historical events relating to the *tavas*, so that their version of events could be recorded. White historiography teaches that Europeans landed and found the indigenous peoples were willing to give up their beliefs, after being persuaded by Jesuit priests. As a consequence, indigenous peoples were recruited (not enslaved) to participate in the construction of these church-like structures. For Ortega, a Guarani, like Ferreira, the project was also an opportunity to revisit his own (hi)story. “I always wondered if I was a descendant of the Guarani who stayed or the Guarani who fled to take shelter in the jungle” (2018), says Ortega via his WhatsApp interview. Ortega and Ferreira, as well as their interviewees, question not only the official version but the invasion and capturing of indigenous

¹¹⁵ Sophia Ferreira Pinheiro (2015) focuses her research on investigating the cinema production made by indigenous women in Brazil. Looking, in particular, at VNA production, she claims that there are 35 indigenous male directors and only 3 indigenous female directors listed on its website.

territory by white people. In presenting new arguments and pushing for a new understanding of history, the main purpose of these indigenous-oriented moving images is to reclaim land demarcation. In this documentary and in others co-directed by Ortega, “the main issue is territorial” (ibid) indeed. In this respect, as Córdova claims, “indigenous video productions are being used to rethink history, critically and creatively countering foundational narratives on indigeneity that emerged from the ethnographic documents since first contact (...)” (2014, pp123-124).

Fundamentally, *Tava* does this by disputing not only the narrative but the space itself. In this sense, it is quite emblematic that the space in dispute here is a ruin complex per se. A UNESCO World Heritage site since 1983, the ruins of the Jesuit reduction¹¹⁶ São Miguel Arcanjo is more than just a symbol of seventeenth-century colonial architecture. In truth, in its form, it should be seen as the outcome of indigenous slave labour; whereas its state signifies the result of destruction and abandonment in the wake of the Guarani War (or War of the Seven Reductions) in the mid-eighteenth century.¹¹⁷ Not until the twentieth century did this area draw attention again: in the late 1930s, modernist architect, Lúcio Costa (who later idealised the urban planning for Brasília, as pointed out in chapter 3) was responsible for evaluating the site and its potential for being preserved as a historical site by the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage. Part of a major complex, which includes the Museu das Missões, a museum project of Costa, the ruins have been under government administration, and access is restricted to paying visitors. In other words, indigenous people, the Guarani living on the margins of the São Miguel ruins, are not considered an intrinsic part of that tourist narrative or even allowed inside their own lands.

¹¹⁶ Jesuit reductions were indigenous settlements administered by Jesuit priests in the New World, as part of their so-called civilising and evangelising work. Founded in 1687, São Miguel Arcanjo was considered the most prominent of the seven Jesuit reductions in Southern Brazil.

¹¹⁷ For more details see José Hansel’s *História dos Sete Povos das Missões* (1951) and Mário Simon’s *Breve Notícia dos Sete Povos* (1987).



Figures 111 and 112 – Tava São Miguel and the indigenous population living on the margins

At one point, Ortega and Ferreira, accompanied by Indian Mariano Aguirre, visit a historic monument in Caaró, Rio Grande do Sul, a Christian sanctuary that pays tribute to the Jesuit priests involved in the Guarani War when the reduction was under European siege. The camera covers all three of them, interested in their facial and bodily expressions while reading the text engraved in the monument. Ortega reads the words of gratitude out loud but cannot help laughing. “They describe in detail how the priests died. But they never write anything about the Indians”, he remarks. The figure of Sepé Tiaraju, the Indian leader who fought in the Guarani War, for instance, has only a brief mention in the text. The monument, in fact, is just one of the tactics mobilised to corroborate the convenient official narrative, a sort of *restorative nostalgia*, as Boym (2001) would put it, more concerned with institutionalising national identity than problematising different perceptions of history. Roland Joffé’s *The Mission*

(1986), another example of the conservative status that nostalgia can acquire, is also part of the narrative in *Tava*, as the film is screened for the Guarani people to watch. Starring Jeremy Irons and Robert De Niro, the feature film fictionalises the Jesuit-Indian interaction and was awarded a Palme D'Or for that. A British period drama, *The Mission*¹¹⁸ actually wipes out the Indian perspective, carrying a European-biased discourse that promptly collapses once *Tava* had created the conditions for the Indian perspective to be effectively heard. The screening for the Guarani people implies willingness to expose the white narratology for what it is and subsequently challenge it. The formal strategy of recording Natives watching their misrepresentation on screen seem to underline two points: first, it problematises the sort of audiovisual material usually taken for granted as impartial and accurate; second, it suggests the urgent need for indigenous image-makers to contribute their points of view. In doing this, as Ferreira argues in the Itaú Cultural interview, the image “functions as a mirror for us. (...) We don't realise what is happening to our village or ourselves if we don't look in the mirror and reflect upon it” (2017).



¹¹⁸ Sylvio Back's *República Guarani* (1981) could be a narrative counterpoint to *The Mission*. Instead of idealising the Jesuit priests, the Brazilian documentary portrays them as colonial imperialists with the mission of superimposing a Western mindset on Native tribes.



Figures 113 and 114 – Ortega (right), Ferreira and Aguirre look at the Christian monument

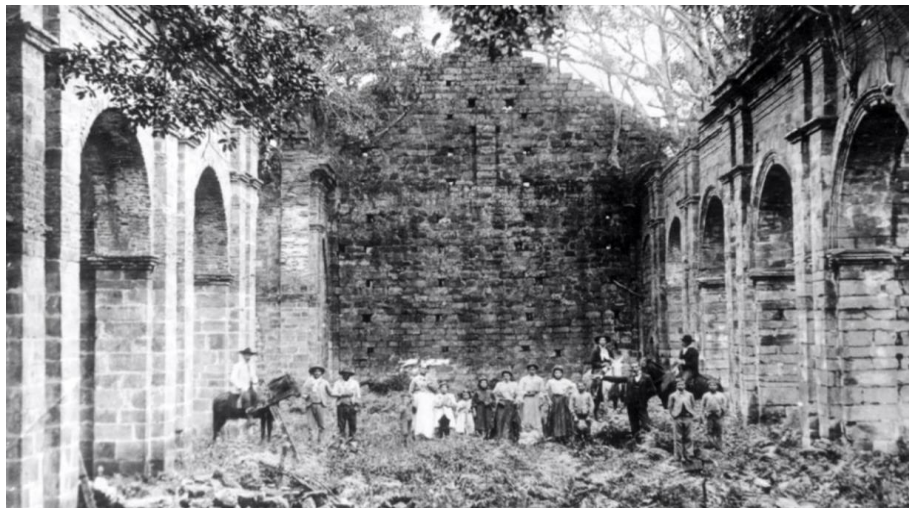
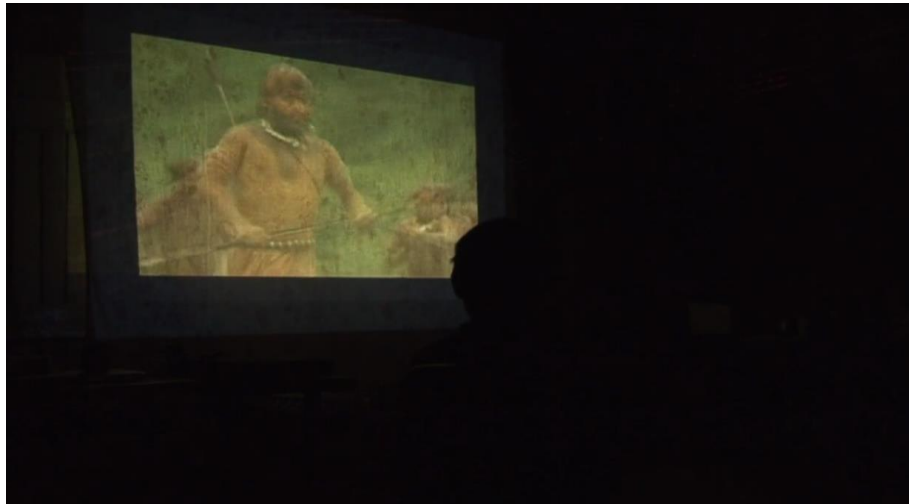
5.4.1. No fake ruins allowed: Guarani (hi)storytelling

The ruins of São Miguel Arcanjo constitute the central space of two other co-authored VNA documentaries: *Two Villages, One Path* and *Guarani Exile*, film projects also resulting from the above-mentioned partnership between VNA and the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage. Interestingly, the latter's title itself carries quite explicitly the main focus of the project: that of reclaiming indigenous land, as in Portuguese the word *desterro* relates to *terra* or *terreno*, meaning, in fact, that there is no land or terrain available for the Guarani. Co-directed by Ortega, Ferreira, Carvalho, and Carelli, *Guarani Exile* features many of the same sequences shown in *Tava*. While *Tava* is more focused on Ortega and Ferreira's pilgrimage through indigenous villages to allow the indigenous perspective of Tava São Miguel to bear witness, *Guarani Exile* is more didactic, concerned with the urgency for land demarcation, explaining through Ortega's voice-over, what is at stake. "We ended up moving back and forth between the few free spaces in this territory. As well as being invisible, we became foreigners in a land we had always inhabited". The innovation in *Guarani Exile*'s narrative is the use of archive material, especially TV reports about the Guarani struggle for land demarcation aired in the 1990s and regrettably still relevant.

The sequences in which *The Mission* is screened are also used in the final montage of *Guarani Exile* as part of its visual texture. This time, the Guarani

people are shown watching the film and the viewers hear spontaneous comments from the Guarani audience: “Look at the ruin”, one says; “The fake ruin”, adds another, when Tava São Miguel (or its Hollywood version) appears on screen. Challenging the conclusion of the film (a Spanish-Portuguese force exterminating the Guarani completely), Ortega poses a genuine question in the voice-over: “But if they all died, who are we?”. In addition, historical photographs belonging to the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage (probably dating back to the early twentieth century) show Tava São Miguel in a complete state of destruction, as its rehabilitation only commenced a few decades later. The images show white men and women amid the ruins (and the vegetation already taking over), as if they were indeed posing for the camera. In fact, these are photos also shared in *Tava*. The most relevant aspect of both the still images (historical photographs) and moving images (*The Mission*) is their use in the documentaries for the purpose of destabilising space. After all, São Miguel is neither as Roland Joffé portrays it nor what the archive images show.

To a certain extent, this kind of film seems to exemplify what Baron (2014) has called the *appropriation film* in her study of the archive effect. This notion helps one reflect on how a film may repurpose materials to challenge the perception of the past and, consequently, of history. That is to say, it can do this by using a temporal disparity strategy (the use of historical photographs, for instance, attests to the passage of time to prove an issue continues to be relevant) and/or by using an intentional disparity strategy (when film excerpts are incorporated to add another layer to the main narrative, excerpts not originally made or used for that purpose or in that context). “What is at stake, then, is precisely how certain film practices can help us to locate and trace the changing ways in which we think about history and our access to it and how we may be able to transcend reified notions about our relationship to the past” (ibid, p10). For her, “the use of archival footage can support or be disruptive of established historical knowledge” (ibid, p6). Considering the historical knowledge referring to São Miguel, disruption is what interests the filmmakers. The use of the above-mentioned archival images helps to infer that the São Miguel ruins should belong to the Guarani and they do not – and that is the real ruin. As Ortega says at the opening of *Guarani Exile*, “these temples, the *tavas*, are ruins that merge into our own history”.



Figures 115 and 116 – *The Mission* and historical photographs of Tava São Miguel are mobilised for the re-telling of history

In *Two Villages, One Path*, the directors are all Guarani. In addition to Ortega, Jorge Morinico and Germano Beñites also joined the project. It is no coincidence then, that the very title of the film is seen in Guarani language at the opening of the film, as if reaffirming their perspective: *Mokoi Tekoá Petei Jeguatá*. The film is, in fact, Ortega's first documentary (that is, the outcome of his first VNA workshop)¹¹⁹: one hour of material focused on two villages (Aldeia Verdadeira and Aldeia Alvorecer, in Rio Grande do Sul state) and the struggle of their peoples to survive regardless of their lack of allocated land. Of all three documentaries, *Two Villages* perhaps allows the camera more time in the villages

¹¹⁹ In his interview, Ortega said that, after finalising the edit of *Two Villages, One Path*, he realised that he could make more documentaries using the remaining material and shooting additional scenes. That is why *Guarani Exile* and *Tava, The House of Stone* came to be produced afterwards. "There are many issues that can be explored as there are many questions to be asked" (2018).

under threat of disappearing. In the first few minutes, a wide shot gives an idea of the ongoing situation: the growth and spread of the surrounding white city towards the Aldeia Verdadeira. Their camera zooms-in to emphasise the difference between the green area and the built environment. The first half of the film is mainly devoted to addressing this kind of problem. The territorial dispute is exemplified in sequences, for example, when an Indian man walks around a cleared area and speaks to the camera: “Here the white people cleared everything, and here they are already growing eucalyptus, and they will grow more. Look, all this does is ruin the land. They plant this because they only care about money”. But it is not just that. Interestingly, there is also a cinematic consciousness at the core of the territorial dispute, that is, an understanding that cinema must be courted as an ally. That is why one hears at a certain moment: “So, we have to show the white people how we live. Show the truth. Not just empty talk. Why is it that we are close to the city? Why don’t we have forests, and live in these houses? So that not just the white people speak for us, but you may film the things we really need to show”.

The second half of the film brings Mariano Aguirre back on screen, not only him, but Tava São Miguel as well, as Aldeia Alvorecer is located nearby. *Two Villages* follows the journey of the Guarani people to the ruin complex where they display craftwork to the occasional (white) visitors. More than in the other two documentaries, the ruins are framed from their tourist-attraction perspective, that recalls what happened to Machu Picchu, in Peru – a multi-layered discussion that Harrison has delved into, aware of the fact that “the ancient site has become a much contested space” (2009, p73). Likewise, in the São Miguel ruins, that kind of tension is implied in the film itself. Tourists accompanied by tour guides as well as students with school teachers visit the place and eventually meet the Guarani traders. As mentioned earlier, first-contact interaction between whites and Indians in that specific context was famously tackled by Alvarenga (2017) in her research. In this specific sequence, she emphasises Ortega’s self-assured response to a white visitor who questions the Guarani situation as craftwork sellers in the area.

When interviewed by Ortega, the interviewee says that the Guarani look dirty and dependent on the tourist's willingness to tip them. Operating a handheld camera, Ortega incredulously replies while filming the visitor: "Dirty?". The interlocutor seems a bit surprised but sticks to his opinion, claiming the Guarani charge for letting tourists take photos of them. "Do you think the Guarani are selling their image?", Ortega asks. When the interviewee says "yes", Ortega then explains, in a gentle yet confident way, that many white tourists come, do not buy Guarani crafts, take photos and leave – most of the time, they use these photos to make money for their own work. There is nothing left for the interviewee to say but "maybe, that's it...". It is worth noting that the camera places Ortega in a position of power and allows him to argue back. His approach creates an unusual situation in which the Indian is finally able to voice his viewpoint. Moments like that stand as good examples of moments "in which indigenous people have been using the inscription of their screen memories in media to 'talk back' to structures of power and state that have denied their rights, subjectivity, and citizenship for over two hundred years" (2002b, p51), as Ginsburg points out.



Figure 117 – Ariel and his camera in action

It is precisely the line separating whites and Indians, or sellers and buyers, that I want to highlight here. If the controversies over space are at the core of the documentary (seen through the opposition between the city and the village, or more precisely, between the Tava and what surrounds it), the sequences where white buyers approach Indian sellers equally points to that contrast. One moment

in particular visually translates that kind of relationship embedded in discomfort. The glass wall of the Museu das Missões separates the white visitors inside from the Indian sellers outside – and the documentary uses that architectural element to expose the division. As the wall is made of glass, white visitors can also see what is going on outside, so they look at the Indian sellers with a certain curiosity about their products but also about the Indians themselves. In a way, it suggests a demarcation line between social groups that is almost invisible (in this sense, the glass reaffirms the idea of invisibility) but, as we know, is actually quite concrete.



Figure 118 – The glass demarcation: sellers and buyers, indigenous and non-indigenous

When the camera shows the tour guide and school teacher providing their audience with the official narrative, there is a reverse strategy underway at the same time. The camera follows the Indians walking amid the ruins, while they answer questions and explain their version of the facts. The montage works so that this parallel sequence contains a revolutionary tone, as if the Indians are challenging history *in loco*. What *Two Villages* does (similarly to *Tava* and *Guarani Exile*) is revolutionary indeed. “All this is an accurate look from the Indian at the white colonising gaze addressing the Indian: it is the Indians who frame the ‘white gaze’ and reveal not only its historical dimension, but its real presence in today’s world” (2008, p116), as Caixeta de Queiroz claims. “This is what I would call a Native or reverse anthropology by *audiovisual* practice” (ibid, emphasis added). In order to circumvent the spatial restrictions imposed by the whites – materialised in road signs and demarcation fences, as Alvarenga (2017) points out – these documentaries necessarily understand that scrutinising how

space is defined is the only possible way to proceed. Considering *Tava*, *Guarani Exile* and *Two Villages*' on-screen elaborations, one can see the level of urgency required to reclaim territories, as ironically, there is nothing but a ruined space contested here. Moreover, what those documentaries seem to suggest is that if there is anything more threatening than being in the midst of ruins, it is being on the margins of these ruins – which is certainly the case of the Guarani people in the surroundings of the remains of Tava São Miguel.





Figures 119, 120, 121 and 122 – Two different versions of history in dispute through documentary montage

In discussing indigenous ruins and archaeological sites, Gustavo Verdesio points out that “the nature of space is not a neutral variable but something that is qualitatively experienced”, that is, “our bodies do not always relate to their surroundings in the same way throughout history, across cultural boundaries, and, of course, through space” (2009, p340). In this sense, the ruins of São Miguel are inescapably experienced according to distinct parameters, as Indians and whites inhabit distinct worlds, to refer back to Viveiros de Castro (2004). If, for the whites, the ruins of São Miguel are a commodity, it is because colonialism “allowed foreign, imperial eyes, to see and produce knowledge about those decaying material remains of societies from the past” (Verdesio, 2009, p350). Hence, the challenge to the Indians (and postcolonial discourses, in general) is to expand “the limitations of our regimes of visibility” (ibid, p351). Considering the

artistic and political leap from Cinema Novo to Vídeo nas Aldeias, this has been an ongoing development that is intimately related to Natives acquiring more control over narratives. Drawing from Ginsburg, I argue that VNA “turned the footage instead into an index of their cultural persistence and a basis for indigenous claims to their land and cultural rights in the present” (2002b, p51). When addressing indigenous territory as damaged territory, VNA subverts any possible lasting romantic connotations associated with the topic and abandons the colonised mindset that prevents one from overcoming underdevelopment and its ruins.

If the act of gathering the broken pieces implies acknowledging the ruination of a territory, it also offers the opportunity to fight back to rebuild that same territory in new terms. Carelli is aware of this. He argues that these documentaries may give the impression that “everything is a tragedy but it is not, in the sense that they give an answer to all attacks”, that is, the Indians, the Guarani-Kaiwová, the Kanoê, the Akuntsu, and many other indigenous groups linked to Vídeo nas Aldeias, “they have a survival strategy, they are not passive” (2018), Carelli points out in his interview. In making this claim, the VNA founder refuses to accept a simplistic view, which limits the Indian role to that of the victim. After all, “for every aggression, there is an affirmation, there is a process of resistance and appropriation” (ibid). What Carelli articulates here is the understanding that, where there is *expropriation* of territories on the one hand, there is *appropriation* of technologies on the other, a move that ultimately allows the remains to be restructured for the purpose of a new history.

In 1977, Caetano Veloso released an album entitled *Bicho* (in English, ‘Beast’). A decade after the advent of Tropicália, the album encapsulated for many the last breaths of the movement, not that it would ever come completely to an end – Tropicália outlives time. In one of the songs, Caetano sings: “An Indian will descend from a bright, colourful star/From a star that will come at dizzying speed/And will land in the heart of the Southern Hemisphere/In America, in a clear instant/After the last indigenous nation has been exterminated/And the spirit

of the birds of the clear water fountains/More advanced than the most advanced of the most advanced technologies”.¹²⁰ Beautifully written, *Um Índio* (An Indian) is not a manifesto but a prophecy. Those lyrics are both resigned and hopeful. They acknowledge the exterminations of indigenous people of past and present times but re-imagine a future in which the Indian is the answer. “The Indians are not the past, they are the future; they are the great reference for rethinking our civilisation, if we want to survive. So many civilisations have come to an end throughout history. It is very arrogant to think that ours will not end either” (2017, p250), says Carelli to Brasil et al. More than a reckoning with history, *Um Índio*, serenely but with great confidence, warns: “And what at that moment will be revealed to the peoples/It will surprise everyone not because it is exotic/But because it could always have been hidden/When will it was obvious”.¹²¹

¹²⁰ “*Um índio descerá de uma estrela colorida, brilhante/De uma estrela que virá numa velocidade estonteante/E pousará no coração do hemisfério sul/Na América, num claro instante/Depois de exterminada a última nação indígena/E o espírito dos pássaros das fontes de água límpida/Mais avançado que a mais avançada das mais avançadas das tecnologias*” (Velloso, 1977).

¹²¹ “*E aquilo que nesse momento se revelará aos povos/Surpreenderá a todos não por ser exótico/Mas pelo fato de poder ter sempre estado oculto/Quando terá sido o óbvio*” (Velloso, 1977).

6. Epilogue: a walk amid the documentary ruins

“Brazil’s gaze is directed toward the future” (2000, p124), Stefan Zweig once wrote. Born in Vienna, the Austrian writer lived his last days in Petrópolis, a municipality located in the forested hills just outside the city of Rio de Janeiro, after escaping Nazi Europe in 1940. Fascinated by the country, Zweig published *Brazil, A Land of the Future*, in which he praises the nation he believed was destined to lead the world in the wake of the imminent crumbling of Europe. Even though his somewhat naïve enthusiasm pervades the manuscript, Zweig does not hold back, pointing out that Brazil “is a country of constant changes and abrupt transformations” (ibid, p75) seemingly “further and further behind in modern development” (ibid, p101). However optimistic he is about Brazil, he still refers to the cycles of economic booms followed by the downfalls that have been the history of the country since the Portuguese colonisation. After the sugar cane, the gold mines, and the rubber phenomena, “Brazil remains at a hopeless standstill” (ibid). He never saw the end of the hopeless standstill that was supposedly preventing Brazil from thriving. Devastated by the horrors of the Second World War, Zweig committed suicide alongside his wife in 1942, two years after his arrival and one year after the publication of the book. Their deaths were a political act, scholar Maria Augusta Vilalba Nunes¹²² insists, one that “may lead the most sensitive of us (because sensitivity is always necessary) to open their eyes and see the ruin of the world that they saw” (2016, p115).

The above-mentioned *the ruin of the world* refers to the debris of the Old World, more specifically, to the debris of the Second World War. Indeed, dreadful ruins whose historical significance has been at the core of Western literature along with the long ruin heritage of Europe. The sense of ruination in the so-called New World, however, still struggles to be considered part of the equation. This is one of the reasons why the contribution of Lazzara and Unruh (2009) in *Telling Ruins in Latin America* remains of the utmost importance: it overtly advocates the elaboration of narratives on the ruins from which the region was put together.

¹²² She wrote an essay analysing *Zweig* (1998), a film directed by Edgardo Cozarinsky and commissioned by French TV channel France 3. For more details see Nunes’ “Zweig: a Ruína, o Arquivo e o Fantasma” (2016).

Hovering between “the collapse of utopian artistic, political, and ideological projects” (ibid, p3) to “the search for models of change” (ibid, p4), Latin America (and Latin American scholarship) seem to be finally aware “that the ruin – as a merger of past, present, and future, and as a material embodiment of change – offers a fertile locale for competing cultural stories about historical events, political projects, and the constitution of communities” (ibid, p1). It is no coincidence that historical events, political projects, and the constitution of communities lie at the heart of the contemporary Brazilian documentaries analysed in this thesis. The invention of Brasília as a paradoxical historical event; the failure of political projects in the urbanisation of Rio de Janeiro; and the reclaiming of territory by torn-apart indigenous communities make up this cartography of ruins.

In this respect, the substantial research conducted by Xavier seminally referred to the dimension of the crisis inscribed in moving images to Brazil. “The context of rapid cultural and aesthetic transformations in the 60s marked a cinema that internalised the political crisis of the time in its formal construction, mobilising allegorical strategies marked by the sense of history as catastrophe” (2012, p13), he famously states in relation to Cinema Novo, Tropicália, and Cinema Marginal outputs. Two decades later, Barros took up Xavier’s argument reaffirming that “one of the defining characteristics of the Third World is that it lives in a constant state of catastrophe”, a state whose “main by-products of catastrophes are their debris, wreckages, and fragments: or, the ruins” (Barros, 2013, p1). The step further given by Barros is his approach to ruins in the context of Latin America/Brazil. For him, “modern ruins acquire their full significance especially in the Third World. For, to the contrary of the central nations of capitalism, the Third World cannot be turned into ruins. It has already been born as such a thing” (ibid, p13). As if attempting to demarcate a visual regime of ruins within Brazilian cinema, Barros unsurprisingly centres his analysis on *Entranced Earth* (Terra em Transe, 1967) and *The Red Light Bandit* (O Bandido da Luz Vermelha, 1968) – two of the 1960s films scrutinised by Xavier earlier.

The cinematic allegories that Xavier analyses expose the underdevelopment underpinning the crisis. Underdevelopment, however, is not confined to that

historical moment. On the contrary, it has been present since the birth of the nation. As Gomes puts it, “the incredible backwardness of Brazil (...) is a backdrop without which any manifestation of national life, including its finest literature and even more so, its crude cinema, becomes incomprehensible” (1996, p8). Most importantly, Gomes postulates that underdevelopment in Brazilian cinema “is not a phase, a stage, but a state” (ibid, p85) that defines it not only technically but aesthetically – a vision that mirrors Furtado’s (2009) landmark judgement that the underdeveloped condition of the Brazilian economy within the capitalist regime has been dictated by the developed nations. Unlike any other filmmaker, Glauber Rocha (2017) took account of that situation through allegorical imagery in films such as *White God, Black Devil* (*Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, 1964), *Entranced Earth*, and *The Age of the Earth* (*A Idade da Terra*, 1980). Moreover, Glauber faced up to the ongoing crisis by writing the “Aesthetics of Hunger” manifesto, in which he reads hunger as the very essence of Brazilian society – and the *ugly, sad films* of Cinema Novo as a catalyst for change.

That change did not come, though. Nevertheless, the *ugly, sad films* of Cinema Novo propelled a cultural upheaval that still resonates. Stemming from Cinema Novo, Tropicália and Cinema Marginal responded to the failures of modern Brazil with originality and boldness. That time was by no means an ordinary period in Brazilian arts; rather, it was marked by the eruption of images dealing with the controversial notions of progress and (under)development that haunted the nation. As Xavier claims, “(...) the best Brazilian cinema films refused to accept a false notion of wholeness and took on the uncomfortable task of internalising the crisis” (2012, p32). This highly complex task was handed over to documentary-makers, as Xavier points out and this thesis has attempted to explore. According to him, Eduardo Coutinho’s *Man Marked to Die* (*Cabra Marcado Para Morrer*, 1984) symbolises the twilight of modern cinema and the beginning of contemporary cinema in Brazil. Coutinho not only poignantly addresses the military dictatorship’s great impact on 1960s and 1970s artistic output but also begins a new documentary aesthetics based on interaction and self-reflexivity that had its heyday in the productions of the 2000s. As mentioned earlier, Xavier argues that it is precisely “on the boundary between the documentary and the essay film that

today's experience connects in a special way with the discussion in question" (ibid, p27). He points out that contemporary documentarists frequently "seek alternatives that engender a reunion not exactly with a reality free of theatricality, but with theatricality itself, developed from other bases" (ibid, p10).

Albeit situated in a different historical context, Xavier believes that "a matter of substance brings together the filmmakers whose interventions were expressed in Baroque drama, ironic pop or deconstruction", that is, Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal directors, "to those who expose the theaters of the world in their experiments of *new frictions with the real*" (ibid, emphasis added), that is, contemporary documentary-makers. In terms of truly experimenting with reality, Migliorin (2010) suggests the most interesting contemporary Brazilian documentaries aim to challenge the conventions usually associated with nonfiction films. They interrogate not only the definition of documentary itself but perceptions of the world. Borrowing from Giorgio Agamben's philosophical writings, Migliorin also argues that, because contemporary documentary shies away from any categorical definition, this makes it more complicated for institutional powers to suppress or belittle its claims. This is indeed the case for many of the documentaries analysed here. Experimental documentaries like *The Age of Stone* (A Idade da Pedra, 2013) and *White Out, Black In* (Branco Sai, Preto Fica, 2014) fit into what Lima and Ikeda (2011) define as *garage cinema*, not necessarily low-budget productions, but those fostering new aesthetics, ethics and politics through moving images. Released in the context of a *post-industrial cinema* (Migliorin, 2011) in Brazil, those are not market-oriented films, but films relying on an alternative mode of production and exhibition circuit, as discussed.

The documentary power of such productions seems to engage with the concept of the *unviable nation* developed by Ramos (2003). If Brazil is a country doomed to never come to terms with itself, an eternal *land of the future* as Zweig (2000) prophesied, there is a branch of contemporary Brazilian documentaries delving into Ramos' concept in order to then subvert it. On the one hand, these narratives are built upon the failures of Brazil, indeed rendering visible its incapability to have remarkable achievements as a nation. On the other hand, these documentaries are specifically interested in gathering and reassembling the debris

brought about by *historical events, political projects, and the constitution of communities* in dispute. In other words, they are documentaries that acknowledge failures in order to retell history from another perspective and perhaps point out a different route ahead. In the context of Cinema da Retomada, Ramos' argument relates to Nagib's claim that "1990 was cinema's real year zero" (2007: xvii) and it made room for "the resurgence of the utopian gesture in Brazilian cinema from the mid-1990s onwards, as well as its variations and negations" (ibid: xix). In present-day documentary production, I argue that the negation of the utopian gesture has become a sign of the accuracy of Ramos' view, but not only that. Considering the unconventional three groups of documentaries analysed, they enable images of ruins to come to the fore as a means of not only attesting the progress and development that never quite arrived, but they also question the controversial notions of the meanings of progress and (under)development when applied to Brazil.

In this sense, the films of Ana Vaz, Adirley Queirós, Daniel Santos, Clarissa Campolina, Julia de Simone, Luiz Pretti, Ricardo Pretti, Luisa Marques, Pedro Urano, Joana Traub Csekö, Vincent Carelli, Ariel Ortega, Patrícia Ferreira, Ernesto de Carvalho, Jorge Morinico and Germano Beñites in their diverse ways, all articulate a critique of progress and (under)development in contemporary Brazil. By contrast with Cinema Novo, Tropicália, and Cinema Marginal members, the names mentioned above do not belong to a cinematic movement per se. With their focus on particular backgrounds (Brasília, Rio, indigenous territories), they rather seem to share the will to make this criticism feasible while simultaneously reaffirming the power of documentary as an appropriate tool for that criticism. In parallel with an enriching dialogue with the artistic contribution from the 1960s and 1970s, as I have attempted to demonstrate, most of the documentaries seem to draw their power from the multiple possibilities open to documentary today – or the non-definition of documentary today, as Migliorin (2010) has pointed out.

The sci-fi elements in *The Age of Stone* or the intermedial approach in *Tropical Curse* (A Maldição Tropical, 2016), for instance, reassure that being undefined might be the strength of that crop of films. To some measure, Vaz's and Marques'

outputs even experiment with the essay film domain, defined by Timothy Corrigan as “the discourse of thinking out loud” (2011, p15) while interplaying with fiction and nonfiction, documentary and experimental film. While these are not exactly first-person documentaries, “they are (...) practices that undo and redo film form, visual perspectives, public geographies, temporal organizations, and notions of truth and judgment within the complexity of experience” (ibid, p4). On the other hand, it is actually the reverse of what happens with *Vídeo nas Aldeias* productions. Interestingly, the directors’ strategy is to make use of their voices and firmly indicate where they are coming from. In this case, the documentaries voice their claims from a well-defined location so that they can grow stronger in the face of institutional powers. Alternatively, it could be argued that, by supporting the indigenous media, VNA is also undermining the traditional documentary that took no proper account of the voices of indigenous peoples.

Most importantly, what these documentaries have in common is the elaboration of narratives upon the ruins from which Brazil was composed, as if cinematically answering Lazzara and Unruh’s (2009) calling. Their critique is engendered via the ruin (a city, a monument, a viaduct, a museum, a hospital, a *tapera*) because the ruin has “radical potential” (Dillon, 2011, p18). Filmmakers resort to images of ruination, destruction, abandonment and decay to elaborate on what has failed – and ask what could one do with them. In this sense, ruins have the ability to reevaluate controversial notions of progress and (under)development, as ruins themselves are the real outcome of those notions put into practice. Furthermore, they encourage reflection on the historical world, reflection that might prompt new imagery and critical storytelling to arise and challenge the official narrative. In questioning the reading of reality, documentary-makers consequently expand one’s understanding of the traditional documentary by radically blurring boundaries and/or inviting new voices to be heard.

According to Huyssen (2006), there is no place for authentic ruins in late capitalism, as the era of restoration and commodification of ruins is upon us. Nevertheless, he claims that the imaginary of ruins may be a “powerful trigger for nostalgia” (ibid, p7) as they still preserve “the promise of an alternative future” (ibid, p8). In this regard, I would argue that the documentaries analysed here do

extend to thinking about the construction of possible futures, but not necessarily by resorting to nostalgia strategies, at least, not a *restorative nostalgia*, one that thinks of itself as being both “truth and tradition” (Boym, 2001, pxviii). Instead, this group of documentarists might be interested in *reflective nostalgia*, one that “does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones (...)” (ibid, pxviii). Not surprisingly, this is what fascinates Lazzara and Unruh when they approach ruins in Latin America, as they believe “ruins (...) do not invite backward-looking nostalgia, but a politically and ethically motivated ‘reflective excavation’ (...) that can lead to historical revision and the creation of alternative futures” (2009, p3). To excavate. To unearth the ruins of underdevelopment in Brazil. This might be the absolute common thread between these films and the outcome of the efforts made by these documentarist-diggers.

The understanding of ruins in the context of Latin America/Brazil developed by Lazzara and Unruh opens up a dialogue with several other definitions of ruins throughout this thesis. The most interconnected come from Barros’ (2013) examination of Cuban and Brazilian artworks produced by the likes of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Glauber Rocha, Rogério Sganzerla, Néstor Almendros, Antonio José Ponte, and Francisco Brennand, among others. As mentioned above, Barros’ *Third World ruins* result from the never-ending catastrophes that have defined the twentieth-century modern experience in countries like Cuba and Brazil, and which those artists have attempted to depict. In a sense, his argument links to Hell and Schönle’s (2010) wider discussion of the ruins of modernity, ruins that materialise in the breakdown of modern utopia. As both authors suggest, modern ruins stand as what Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* sees *growing skyward* in Benjamin’s (1968) unique interpretation of history as catastrophe. “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism” (ibid, p256). The storm that Benjamin calls progress is ruthless. Wreckage upon wreckage, as Hell and Schönle unfold its debris, the legacy of the failure of the modern project for the world.

The contemporary documentaries discussed here also engage with more precise definitions. Reflecting on the way *cinemanovistas*, *tropicalistas*, and *marginais*

framed the nationalist modernisation of 1960s' Brazil, documentary-makers are rather more rooted in the globalised, neoliberal present. Consequently, their reflections result in an imaginary filled by images of ruins, as if the outcome of the rotten modernisation and the savage neoliberalisation was the very dereliction of contemporary life. In this regard, Avelar argues that the *neoliberal ruin* actually represents “the destructive utopia of privatization” (2009, p192), producing the economic and political collapse of society. What neoliberalism has done to public spaces and urban planning might find a parallel in Smithson's idea of *ruins in reverse*, a term that reads “all the new construction” as “the opposite of the ‘romantic ruin’ because the buildings don't fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise as ruins before they are built” (1996, p72). If the new is the anticipation of decay, it means that present-day constructions are already in the process of ruination. Jaguaribe strikes a similar note when looking at “the decrepitude of the new” (1998, p101) that many Brazilian modernist buildings embody, suggesting not only that they might not age well, but also that sometimes, they are not even completed. Olalquiaga and Blackmore call those “incomplete and decaying” buildings *living ruins*, ruins that are right there before our eyes offering “opportunities to reassess a modern culture shaped simultaneously by material excess and quick obsolescence” (2017).

More relevant than the importance of each of these definitions is the acknowledgement that they are closely interlinked. The categories (Latin American ruins, Third World ruins, modern ruins, ruins in reverse, modernist ruins, living ruins) do not exclude, but are complementary. Above all, they cooperate in establishing a network for critical thinking about the role played by ruins in contemporary culture. In the Brazilian context, they make room for discussion about the overlap between ruins and controversial notions of progress and (under)development – a discussion that Cinema Novo, Tropicália, and Cinema Marginal were very much interested in, and that found perhaps its best translation in Caetano Veloso's reading of the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. “Here everything seems/It was still under construction/And is already a ruin” (Veloso, 1991) are Caetano's lyrics reiterating the impressions of the French anthropologist of the New World. For Lévi-Strauss, “certain European cities sink gently into a moribund torpor; those of the New World live feverishly in the grip of a chronic

disease; they are perpetually young, yet never healthy” (1973, p119). The sloppiness and abandonment reserved for Brazil make it clear that the ruins which have sprouted there are not merely the consequence of progress and development that never arrived; rather, they are in response to “not a phase, a stage, but a state” (Gomes, 1996, p85) of perpetual underdevelopment.

The aesthetics of ruins of underdevelopment quite openly refers to the *allegories of underdevelopment* brilliantly investigated by Xavier (2012) in his analysis of Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal films. It does this not only because of the common term but because present-day ruins seem to contain in themselves the echoes of the recent past. To a certain extent, the images of ruins depicted by contemporary documentary-makers are the product of a dialogue with that tradition, as I attempted to demonstrate in chapters 3, 4 and 5. In this sense, the ruins of underdevelopment suggest that those allegories were meaningful and accurate in their critique of rotten modernisation – the debris seen today being their outcome. On the other hand, the ruins of underdevelopment are also in tune with the neoliberal agenda that has deepened the social-economic abyss and transformed public spaces into commodities in Brazil. It is precisely the conjunction of both historical moments that seems to have ignited these images. Paradoxically, when documentarist-diggers unearth such ruins for the camera, one realises that these are failures that have always been present on the surface. Documentaries, thus, illuminate them for all to see at last.

6.1. Of ruin-gazers and ruinscapes

On the top of that discussion, Hell and Schönle claim that “the ruin is predicated on a particular gaze cast upon it” and that “the ruin could not exist without such creative appropriation” (2010, p6). In other words, it is the ruin-gazer who invents the ruinscape. Considering the ruins of underdevelopment, this makes even more sense, since it is a notion that escapes any fixed location. Ranging from the centre (Brasília) to the periphery (Ceilândia), as well as from the urban (Rio de Janeiro) to the rural (indigenous territories) areas, these are geographical localities that rely on the gaze of the documentary-maker to turn them into ruinscapes on the screen.

According to Moltke, “slow, ostentatious camera movements, long takes, contemplative viewing” (2010, p414) are the three most prominent characteristics of a cinematic gaze cast upon ruins, but this group of documentaries goes far beyond those rules to forge new spaces, as discussed throughout the thesis. These new spaces, however, are always subject to the historical world, as the “ruin is always inseparable from an experience of history and territory, more or less contemporary, but also from a complex referential and iconographic heritage” (2008, p265), as Habib points out.

6.1.1. Brasília

In the case of Brasília, the emergence of the federal capital as a ruinscape comes from the gaze of Ana Vaz and Adirley Queirós in *The Age of Stone* and *White Out, Black In*, respectively. Vaz undertakes a visual elaboration inspired by the rhizomatic thinking of Deleuze and Guattari (2005), breaking the chains of a dogmatic, dualist understanding of the world while embracing the freedom to articulate potential connections within reality. Rather than searching for certainties, the porosity of Vaz’s approach to Brasília defends a model “perpetually in construction or collapsing” (ibid, p20). If not porosity, it is the idea of contradiction that fuels Queirós’ moves as a ruin-gazer. “The only thing that makes us move is contradiction. It can advance with us or implode on us”, says Queirós (2014) in a Canal E interview available on YouTube. As for his cinema, contradiction allows the problematisation of the power relations and social apartheid that have shaped Brasília and its satellite cities since 1960. Through both strategies, the city then becomes available for critical reassessment, deliberately moving away from the official narrative about the capital. Trapped between porosity and contradiction, Brasília as a ruinscape emerges as “the failure of the most spectacular success” (Lispector, 1999b, p46).

In *The Age of Stone*, the ruin is a monument that represents the city. Like the Brasília invented by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, the CGI monument invented by artist Anne-Charlotte Yver comes from the future of the past. It could have been unearthed by archaeologists or recently erected by engineers; it is about

to collapse or nearly completed. Vaz's take on the (re)construction of the city never decides whether it is registering the foundation or the dereliction of the capital. Intermingling documentary techniques and speculative cinema, the Brasília of Vaz is science-*friction with reality*. More than a failure or an error, it is a query posed from the quarry. Interested in the multiple answers that such an incognita might entail, Vaz constructs her Brasília as a ruin that embodies a *radical potential* (Dillon, 2011), that bears the *fecund* within itself (Edensor, 2005).

In this sense, it should come as no surprise that Glauber Rocha's *The Age of the Earth* best resonates with Vaz's output. Echoing the "Aesthetics of Dreaming" manifesto, one could say that his last film puts an end to the trajectory of Cinema Novo – and it is the final gesture of the movement that strikes Vaz the most. She is fascinated by *The Age of the Earth* precisely because, in contrast to previous films, its "latent Marxism becomes something else, something much more carnivalesque, pagan, unruly and indefinable as it consistently tries to escape classification" (Vaz, 2017b, p217). In direct dialogue with Glauber, Vaz and her camera-body provide an animist response to his classic film, wandering amid fauna and flora, interested in detailing an alternative world prior to history itself. "I return to the *planalto central* in search for ways to shift and re-imagine what the monumental city could become beyond the preserving fetishes of its architectural legacy. To my eyes, the city had to change, to evolve, to finally become organic (...)" (ibid, p219). Holding hands with Clarice Lispector's speculation on Brasília and Maya Deren's avant-garde cinema, Vaz questions the traditional representation of the city by wondering if things could be redefined from the very start.

In pursuing that redefinition, Vaz invents Brasília outside Brasília. Filmed in Chapada dos Veadeiros and Pirenópolis, *The Age of Stone* pushes towards a psychogeography that challenges the imagery usually associated with the federal capital. Queirós resorts to a similar strategy in *White Out, Black In*. Although his sci-fi documentary articulates a critique of Brasília, it does so at a certain distance. Set in the satellite city of Ceilândia, it is from that unique viewpoint that Brasília gains the controversial contours delineated by Queirós. Ceilândia stands out in

counterpoint to Brasília. If the white, wealthy Pilot Plan rejects the debris of history, the satellite city is specifically constructed upon them. *White Out, Black In* makes this visible through its articulation at three different levels: the strict boundaries between both cities (one even needs a passport to cross them); the intimate spaces inhabited by Marquim and Sartana (from the imprisoned *laje* to the no-wall house); and the characters' own fractured bodies (Marquim is in a wheelchair, Sartana uses a prosthetic). Regardless of Queirós' skilful construction of an atmosphere of ruination, the real ruin of the film is yet to come.

Like Vaz, Queirós opts for blurring the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction by adding sci-fi elements to his documentary narrative – or documentary elements to his sci-fi narrative? In *White Out, Black In*, the police violence suffered by Marquim and Sartana in 1986 is brought to the screen as a fable. They are “cyborgs of the past” (Hora, 2016, p14) planning to drop a sonic-atomic bomb on white, wealthy Brasília, the political hub created by modernism. The bomb, of course, is heading toward the future, as Brasília itself had been considered the city of the future at the time of its inception in the Central Plateau. “Brasília is a future that happened in the past” (Lispector, 1999b, p50). To a certain degree, Queirós shares with Rogério Sganzerla's *The Red Light Bandit* the desire to *explode the Third World*. There is a sense of *avacalhar* (to mess things up) in the way both directors approach reality, because, as the bandit claims, “when we can do nothing, we can only ‘avacalhar’”. The explosion of the Third World is the explosion of Brasília in *White Out, Black In*. Then you have the real ruin on screen.

The bomb sequence is depicted through Sartana's drawings. Just as Brasília was born to Niemeyer's pencil, it collapses in a similar way. That is, in the film the drawings are a sci-fi invention that emulates the modernist invention in the real world. The sense of fable, however, is always underpinned by the indexicality of the documentary pervading the cities, houses and bodies in the frame. It is the encounter between the fable and documentary impulse that challenges not only the way Brasília was built, but also its cinematic representation. Also, it could be argued that the fabulation works with the documentary impulse here, helping the characters to elaborate on their traumatic past in a ludic way. In this sense,

Queirós' *White Out, Black In* is a science-fiction film, an example of *borderlands science-fiction* (Suppia, 2015) that mixes sci-fi and documentary strategies to tell a (hi)story. Similarly, Queirós' and Vaz's outputs are perceived as sci-fi documentaries, two attempts at cinematically (re)constructing the federal capital. Moreover, both films use the ruin as the catalyst for that to happen.

The ruinscape here refers to the invention of Brasília and the way it has impacted on the lives of many. It is the outcome of a paradoxical premise that rarely gets revised or revisited. In *The Age of Stone*, Vaz wonders if progress itself ever arrived. Hence, her ruin is a monument that encapsulates the question in its material form: is it thriving or collapsing? In the final sequence, the CGI structure simply disappears – the camera looks for it but there is nothing there. Vaz refuses to answer. Queirós, however, takes up the task. For him, progress has never arrived. Rather, its absence has yielded the legacy of the underside of progress. (Re)constructing Brasília means altering the common perception of the capital, and that could only happen with Queirós taking the lead to bring its underside to the surface. His ruin, therefore, aims to end the *status quo*. Narratively, Brasília in ruins is a new beginning for Marquim, Sartana, and Queirós himself.

6.1.2. Rio de Janeiro

If Brasília epitomises the birth of modern Brazil, Rio de Janeiro seems to capture the ups and downs of the modern fever, unlike any other Brazilian city. Framed as a (de)construction site, the Rio that appears on screen suggests a laboratory of failed projects. Prompted by the chaotic context of the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games, documentarists (as well as other arts practitioners) were compelled to encounter the city in the middle of construction (and deconstruction) work – once again. Even though not necessarily interested in the damaging consequences brought about by these sporting events, these documentarists recall previous historical occasions where construction works revealed Rio's obsession with erecting buildings and then not necessarily taking care of them. I argue that this continuous process could be seen as an obsession with *constructing ruins*. In chasing imported models of progress and development (from Paris, then New

York), Rio ended up basing its urban planning on international references rather than the needs of the local communities. Together, these images seem to work towards creating a network of images that relate to each other, evoke past events and thread an imaginary of ruins for the city.

In this sense, Lévi-Strauss' *pensée* is sharp. For him, the towns of the New World “pass from freshness to decay without ever being simply old” because “the passing of years brings degeneration” to those towns. For instance, when new districts are created, “they are more like stands in a fairground or the pavilions of some international exhibition, built to last only a few months”. After a short period, “the original layout disappears through the demolitions caused by some new building fever” (1973, pp118-119). As stated in the opening of this final chapter, Zweig stands as another European intellectual whose impressions are similar to those of Lévi-Strauss. When in Rio, Zweig also noticed that “(...) the city has actually been turned inside out, and everything or almost everything historical has fallen victim to this impatient transformation” (2000, p159).

According to Zweig, Rio, then the capital, managed to conjure up a rare duality of both timelessness and transitory things. “Here everything develops and, to be sure, grows antiquated more rapidly” (ibid, p163). Again, as Caetano famously sings: “Here everything seems/It was still under construction/And is already a ruin” (Veloso, 1991).

In e-mail interviews, documentary-makers echo that perception in both their speech and works. Santos (2017) highlights the war-like scenario that Rio foregrounds. Pretti (2019) believes there is a sense of exhaustion in the way city and society are being shaped. Marques (2018) notes the city's modern syndrome of praising the new and abandoning its heritage. Urano (2017) is convinced that the ruin in Brazil is not a work of chance, but a project. Csekö (2017) claims that underdevelopment and its power games are still issues to be dealt with. A reflex of a hybrid (Canclini, 2005), peripheral (Prysthon, 2002) modernity, their work articulates criticism whilst elaborating on an architecture of failure using the debris of a viaduct, the decadence of a museum, and the implosion of a hospital. The effort to render visible that “chronic disease” (Lévi-Strauss, 1973, p119)

merges the rotten modernisation and savage neoliberalism that have affected the way the city is projected, experienced and visually represented.

Most importantly, I argue those documentaries draw on the critical potential of the 1960s artistic upheaval of Tropicália to nurture their own output, though to very different degrees. Caetano's creative shock after seeing Glauber's *Entranced Earth* for the first time (Veloso, 2017) produced Tropicália, which encapsulated the complexities of the modern experience in Brazil in a variety of artistic expressions, from music to theatre and visual arts, as extensively discussed in chapter 4. Apart from following on from the heated debate about the country's controversial (under)development suggested by *tropicalistas*, it is precisely the blending of media and art practices that seemed to stimulate a new generation of image-makers – multimedia artist Hélio Oiticica being a major reference. This is a trend that recently gained a more in-depth analysis from Solomon (2017) by shedding light on the role of Tropicália in provoking intermedial dialogues across Brazilian film history. Revisiting Tropicália through a contemporary version of intermediality and the execution of intermedial aesthetics in the documentary mode worked towards rendering visible the above-mentioned architecture of failure. That is, the ruins of underdevelopment inhabiting Rio. In so doing, artists sought to reclaim the radical potential of art from its co-opted, neoliberal role in a regime that worked to empty tropicalist signs, colours and textures (Rolnik, 2006, 2011).

First conceived as live performance combined with an acoustic-electronic sound art created by the De Repente Acidente collective in art galleries, *ExPerimetral* (2016) is indeed an intermedial product. As an experimental short documentary, it exposes the wreckage of the neoliberal agenda put forward by investors and politicians for the World Cup and the Olympic Games. Santos' camera is lost amid the rubble of the Perimetral, an elevated highway that imploded due to infrastructure requirements. Ironically, the Perimetral constructed between the 1950s and 1970s as evidence of modernity was no longer considered useful. Regardless of its utility, Santos questions the Porto Maravilha Urban Operation, a highly-criticised gentrified project planned for the area that excluded the voices of local communities, which should have been heard. Instead, architect Santiago

Calatrava's Museu do Amanhã (Museum of Tomorrow) was constructed near Praça Mauá supposedly to attract investment and foreign capital. In this regard, constructing ruins in Rio means constructing neoliberal ruins (Avelar, 2009), a concept that, above all, takes into account the rubble left for marginalised communities after neoliberal plans have thrived.

On that note, *The Harbour* (O Porto, 2013) follows with an investigation of Rio's harbour region. The collective experiment directed by Clarissa Campolina, Julia de Simone, Luiz Pretti, and Ricardo Pretti chose to depict the urban transformation by making use of the Porto Maravilha Urban Operation digital mock-up. Instead of ruins per se, the directors expose the high-tech oppression of the neoliberal project, one that ruthlessly replaces historical architecture and local communities with aseptic trees and videogame avatar inhabitants. The videogame-like aesthetics that invades the climax of the short experimental documentary points to the open dialogue that *The Harbour* aims to establish with other media forms of expression. As mentioned earlier, co-director Clarissa Campolina had already been involved with the art gallery circuit – prior to *The Harbour*, she exhibited the video installation *Rastros. A Paisagem Invade*. Similar to *ExPerimetral*, the use of sound plays a pivotal role in constructing the ruinous atmosphere. Here, the soundscape consists of a carioca funk beat that gives way to the nightmarish saxophone of Swedish musician, Mats Gustafsson.

Similarly, Marques uses her art gallery background to frame the Carmen Miranda Museum as a ruinscape. In *Tropical Curse*, the director takes on the persona of Darks Miranda, a sort of ghostly presence of the singer. The first time Marques performed Darks Miranda was for the video art installation *Equilíbrio de Frutas Sobre a Cabeça, Sob os Olhares de Carmen Miranda* (Fruit Balance On the Head, Under the Eyes of Carmen Miranda, 2012-2013). Covered in white fabric with a pineapple on her head, the ghostly presence wanders around the museum, a spaceship-like building as ghostly as the performer. In the experimental short documentary, Marques meditates on both the museum and the singer as a means of questioning Brazilian modernity via two of its controversial symbols. The Carmen Miranda syndrome elaborated in *Tropical Curse* mirrors the modern syndrome which praises the new and abandons its heritage, as Marques (2018)

claimed via e-mail interview. It is a syndrome of sloppiness and abandonment. The visual elaboration is playful in a very tropicalist tone, as Miranda's figure was already one of Caetano's most emblematic appropriations in his *Tropicália* unofficial anthem. Music also plays an important role in the film. In the climax, Darks Miranda performs to the famous song *South American Way*. Plus, Marques claims that the phantasmagorical figure from the lyrics of *Carmen Miranda's Ghost*, played by Leslie Fish, was crucial for her to reach the mood she intended for the film.

Noteworthy at this point of the epilogue, the intermedial aesthetics present in those films can certainly be found in many other contemporary experimental documentaries. In *The Age of Stone*, for instance, sculpture and literature define the form of the film as much as the work of the camera itself. At the core of the sci-fi documentary, the monument is the creation of French sculptress, Anne-Charlotte Yver in collaboration with Ana Vaz. Furthermore, the girl, Ivonete dos Santos Moraes says little but when she does, she recites excerpts from the writers Clarice Lispector, Hild Hilst, and Machado de Assis. Needless to say, Clarice's writings about Brasília are rooted in the very origins of the project. In *White Out, Black In*, music and drawings are intermingled with the audiovisual narrative. For a start, the bomb that Marquim and Sartana are crafting is made of songs and sounds collected in the streets of Ceilândia. Marquim spends his days playing old vinyls in his underground radio station, as if paying homage to the black music ball where the violence he suffered took place. Sartana, on the other hand, is responsible for drawing the bomb-attack sequence, the one that will show Brasília in ruins.

Initially a photographic series, Urano and Csekö's documentary *HU Enigma* (HU, 2011) pays tribute to the diptychs developed by her in the gallery. By splitting the screen in two, the directors are able to combine different aspects of the ruination process taking place in the hospital building. Like the museum, the hospital stands as a modernist project that has both the grandeur and the failure of the modernist experience – Brasília is the epitome, as discussed. For Jaguaribe, decaying buildings are “allegorical ruins of the modernist collapse” (1998, p112). Moreover, those buildings make real the fractured ethos of the nation, as the

conceptual analogy *building/Nation* coined by Lissovsky and Sá (1996) suggests. At the same time as the documentary exposes the collapsing lame-leg, the incomplete, abandoned half of the hospital, it underlines that the other half is functioning in a precarious situation. Matta-Clark's site-specific 'building cuts' inspired Urano and Csekö's framing of their actual site, allowing them to explore the division between both halves which mirror one another.

Despite being a leading university hospital, *HU Enigma* creates a visual analogy between the decaying architecture and the equally decaying public health system. On screen, the body of HU seems as ill as the body of the nation – Urano and Csekö imply this in shots of peeling, muddy walls as the skin of the building. Before its implosion, the living body of HU spent many years as an actual *living ruin* (Olalquiaga and Blackmore, 2017, 2018), not just because it stood incomplete and decaying, but because its presence invited a reassessment of a certain modern discourse and practice. Built as if anticipating the ruination ahead, the hospital was a *ruin in reverse* (Smithson, 1996), too inadequate, too unlikely to stand erect. Like the museum, and, to a certain degree, the elevated highway, these construction works were lured by the modern, developmentalist mindset whose failings actually contradict it, as the filmmakers suggest.

6.1.3. Indigenous territories

Centuries prior to the invention of Brazilian cities, however, the indigenous territories had already been a target of a similar mindset. Cinema Novo insightfully pointed that out in daring films produced throughout the military dictatorship, as discussed in chapter 5. In their ferocious, leftist critique of progress and (under)development, *cinemanovistas* like Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Walter Lima Jr., Jorge Bondanzky and Orlando Senna, among others, helped to foreground a discussion interested in revealing the indigenous territory as damaged territory through allegorical Indian figures. In *Macunaíma* (1969), Andrade makes use of the anthropophagic discourse to question the national predatory class structure, reading cannibalism as a form of consumption in the underdeveloped Third World. The film swallows and recycles indigenous

elements in order to critique so-called progress. The final sequences, in which the indigenous *maloca* turns into a ruined *tapera*, encapsulate the decadent modernisation of military Brazil at that time. Lima Jr., on the other hand, goes straightforwardly to a ruinous scenario per se. In *Brazil Year 2000* (Brasil Ano 2000, 1969), the characters are in the aftermath of the Third World War. The developed countries were defeated, but Brazil is still caught between its utopian desire to thrive as a nation and its seemingly eternally peripheral condition. The absence of Indians (with a white migrant family having to impersonate them) is the most powerful discourse about the obliteration of the indigenous territory.

Blurring fiction and nonfiction strategies, Bodanzky and Senna's *Iracema* (*Iracema – Uma Transa Amazônica*, 1974-1981) dives into the Amazon region to expose the ecological disaster and social exploitation resulting from the construction of the Trans-Amazonian Highway. Drawing on Cinéma Vérité style, the film depicts the interaction between Paulo César Pereio, a professional actor, and Edna de Cássia, a non-professional actress, as Tião Brasil Grande and Iracema, respectively. Tião's character embodies a conservative, developmental attitude, whereas Iracema's body is the target of misogyny and abuse. Iracema, an Indian who denies being an Indian, is perhaps one of Brazilian cinema's most meaningful characters. She represents the consequences of *peripheral modernity* (Prysthon, 2002): although she is energetic and impetuous, Iracema never overcomes her marginalised condition. Her voice does not resonate at full power. Indeed, it would take more than a decade for an indigenous media to emerge in Brazil – and give voice to people like Iracema/Edna. In the wake of the emergence of international indigenous media groups, the NGO Vídeo nas Aldeias was founded in 1986 in São Paulo. Quintessentially collaborative, VNA has aimed at making films as well as training Indians to produce their own images.

To some measure, much of the discursive power that was at the core of Third Cinema in the 1960s seems to have been passed on to initiatives like VNA and indigenous film collectives per se. Recalling Julio García Espinosa's "For an Imperfect Cinema" manifesto, Salazar and Córdoba categorise the willingness of indigenous media as that of an imperfect media, in the sense that it is in "constant search for new languages, languages unconcerned with technical perfection or

conventional rules and modes of representation and narrativization” (2008, p50). In their view, while contemporary mainstream Latin American cinema has obliterated many of the concerns of Third Cinema filmmakers, indigenous output updates and recontextualises Espinosa’s notion by challenging not only the social structures, but the indigenist rhetoric of development perpetuated by those structures. In this sense, it is the visual representation of indigenous territories that VNA documentaries use to articulate their critique. Framed as in constant dispute, these territories make the overlap between space and power visible, as Lane (2009) points out. That is, by reclaiming their land, the Indians are also strengthening their place within contemporary society.

The target of ruthless capitalist strategies, the damaged territory becomes a ruinscape through the gaze of VNA documentarists. *Corumbiara* (2009) is built upon an all-pervading sense of loss, as the documentary tells a story of defeat. Over two decades, Vincent Carelli documented his search for evidence of the massacre of the Kanoê and Akuntsu groups in the Corumbiara territory. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes a journey through the debris of those tribes. The reason for making a documentary about a world that has disappeared, Di Tella (2009) argues, is *to deal with its ruins*. The remains found by the VNA crew are echoed in the film’s montage. Gathering images from different years and with different textures, Mari Corrêa, the film editor, composes a visual tapestry out of fragments, as Guimarães (2016) highlights. Interestingly, the idea of fragmentation is very much present in Lévi-Strauss’ (1972) study of the *savage mind*, one that is put together from residue, parts left behind that form a structure capable of constantly undoing and redoing itself. Interested in the relationship between the montage and the indigenous mindset, Caixeta de Queiroz (2008) brings them together by reading documentary-making as picking up pieces (images) of a whole (material, corporeal) and an everything (imaginary), as pointed out.

In analysing the Corumbiara ruinscape, four sequences can be mobilised to provide a detailed reading of that environment, as discussed in detail in chapter 5: Carelli together with Marcelo Santos, his friend and collaborator, arriving in the bleak scenario for the first time in 1986; their first contact with two Kanoê Indians

after finding a ripped apart indigenous village in 1995; the sharp contrast between the Kanoê village and the safe white-man's settlement; and the final encounter with the Indian of the hole in 1998, and the impossibility of establishing any kind of trust in the face of such devastation. One after the other, those sequences visually represent the indigenous territory from within and with great resonance, as *Corumbiara* is VNA's first documentary feature to reach a wider audience. In exposing the ruinous state of indigenous areas, VNA reaffirms one of its main purposes: reclaiming land demarcation through documentary images in order to stop the damage continuing.

Even more symbolic in terms of documentary images, are the collaborative indigenous documentaries *Tava, The House of Stone* (Tava, A Casa de Pedra, 2012), *Two Villages, One Path* (Duas Aldeias, Uma Caminhada, 2008), and *Guarani Exile* (Desterro Guarani, 2011), bringing the seventeenth-century, Jesuitic ruins of São Miguel Arcanjo to the attention. The history of the controversial construction of the grand stone-built *tava* triggers a reassessment of the meaning of those ruins and to whom they belong. The documentaries avoid depicting the ruin complex as a tourist attraction, therefore resisting the forces that have made Machu Picchu a ruin commodity. Similar to Harrison's (2009) attempts to address Machu Picchu – perhaps Latin America's most famous ruins – as a contested space, VNA directors aim to give their own version of (hi)story. Marked by the violent European-led colonisation process, the geography of the area is entangled within historical, economic, and social issues that impact on the ways indigenous men and women relate to the territory. *Guarani Exile*, in this sense, problematises that relationship in its very title, as the indigenous population seems to be exiles in their own land.

Tava São Miguel is a ruin that merges into the history of the Guarani people. Furthermore, at the same time that it is a ruinscape in itself, it also stands as a sign of the longstanding ruination that has devastated the indigenous lands, from colonial to modern and neoliberal times. The most interesting (and symptomatic) aspect that emerges on scrutinising the reason for these ruins is the fact that they are, indeed, real ruins. In essence, both the discursive and the territorial dispute deal with reclaiming what is no longer there – it is a dispute over a ruin, which

says a lot about the place of the Indian within present-day society. Forbidden to enter the UNESCO World Heritage complex, they are not even part of the ruin; they are at the margins, at the *out-of-the-ruin*. There is no time for shallow nostalgia, though. As Carelli (2018) claimed in a Skype interview, for every expropriation, there is appropriation. That is, their narratives transform loss and grief into resistance and action. Here, the *radical potential* (Dillon, 2011) of the ruin has come full circle: it is an opportunity to redefine the world as radically as possible.

6.2. Expanding the map: further research and final remarks

The cartography of ruins engendered by this group of filmmakers is an attempt to challenge the world system and its representation. In questioning the official narrative, filmmakers have questioned the ways through which that version was put together. Documentary, this so-called capturer of the real in modern society, seems to be an appropriate means to turn one's common-sense perception of reality inside out. Caught between rotten modernisation and savage neoliberalism in countries like Brazil, the cultural logic of late capitalism implies the need to re-situate, to restore the ability to counter-act. The need for what Jameson (1991) has called *cognitive mapping* is the need to resist the market rhetoric that weakens any sort of counter-action. According to him, overthrowing the alienation intrinsic to the traditional city "involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories" (ibid, p51). For Jameson, cognitive mapping will of necessity have to deal with "this now enormously complex representational dialectic and invent radically new forms in order to do it justice" (ibid, p54).

Through thought-provoking moving images, the ruinscapes of Brasília, Rio de Janeiro and the indigenous territories bear that complex representational dialectic and invent new ways of shedding light on the real, all in very particular ways. Rather than being a group within the same aesthetic movement, these films seem

to share a similar sensibility when they gaze upon the ruins of underdevelopment. They ended up creating images that function as the catalyst for viewers to redefine the way they relate to the world. “Film, like an emotional map, here becomes a geographic vessel, a receptacle of imaging that moves, a vehicle for emotions” (2002, p207), as Giuliana Bruno poetically put it when designing her *Atlas of Emotion*. For the scholar, a film, just like a map, “collapses time and space, mapping out diachronies and spatialities, known and unknown, for the viewer to traverse virtually” (ibid, p275). In the case of the Third World, Jameson, although somewhat skeptical of the term *Third World* itself, reads it as “the last surviving social space from which alternatives to corporate capitalist daily life and social relations are to be sought” (1992, p188). In this regard, “it is obviously encouraging to find the concept of mapping validated by conscious artistic production”, one that “seems to have conceived of the vocation of art itself as that of inventing new geotopical cartographies” (ibid, p189).

The map suggested here, however, is not self-sufficient and complete in itself. Its connections are multiple and endless, as if under the influence of a rhizomatic thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005). In terms of space, it ranges from the Central Plateau to the coastline, from the Pirenópolis quarry to the Quarentão Ball, from the crumbling hospital to the ruinous *tapera*, from the Chapada dos Veadeiros mountains to the *toothless mouth* of Guanabara Bay. It time travels from the *Entranced Earth* in 1967 to *The Age of the Earth* in 1980. On board a flying saucer, one departs from *The Red Light Bandit* in 1968 to land in the *Tropical Curse* in 2016. Trapped in 1986, cartographers wander around the promising backstage of *Brasiliários*, witness the foundation stone of Vídeo nas Aldeias, contemplate Caetano’s directorial debut in *O Cinema Falado*, and become suddenly paralysed on hearing of the racist police shooting in the satellite city of Ceilândia. Shortcuts and detours, of course, could have taken one somewhere else: to the dismantlement of a historic hill in *O Desmonte do Monte* (Sinai Sganzerla, 2018); the absent Monroe Palace in *Chronicle of the Demolition* (Crônica da Demolição, Eduardo Ades, 2017); the literally collapsing prison system in *The Prisoner of the Iron Bars* (O Prisioneiro da Grade de Ferro, Paulo Sacramento, 2003); the ecological disaster in *River of Mud* (Rio de Lama, Tadeu Jungle, 2016); the phantom village of Fordlândia in *Ghost Towns* (Cidades

Fantasma, Tyrell Spencer, 2017); or even the sentiments of poet Manoel de Barros recited by singer Maria Bethânia in *Ruin* (Ruína, Gabriel Sanna, 2016).

The modern invention par excellence, cinema is certainly not the only realm for the ruins of underdevelopment. The failures of modernity can be a trigger to other artistic practices aimed at reflecting upon such debris. Throughout the research process, a number of examples ranging from photography and literature, to theatre and television were encountered. Far from making a final list, I mention them here as evidence of the increasing presence of ruins in Brazil's contemporary culture – also, as suggestions for further research into the particularities of each media, and what each of them could add to the debate. Here, it is worth mentioning artist Giselle Beiguelman's two installations *Monumento Nenhum* and *Chacina da Luz*, both displayed in São Paulo public spaces in 2019. The first is a collection of fragments, most certainly pieces from dilapidated past monuments. She named these pieces 'ready-made forgetfulness', questioning the link between city dwellers and the collective memory. The second urban intervention goes in the same direction: the work is made of the debris from eight neoclassical statues once located in a famous park. Three years ago, the statues were pushed over by vandals in what the artist considered an 'act of violence'. Needless to say, Beiguelman's artistry is intrigued by the role played by historical and cultural heritage in contemporary society. Focusing on abandonment, photographer, Romy Pocztauk has been taking pictures of abandoned areas since the beginning of this decade. Apart from international projects, in *A Última Aventura* (The Last Adventure, 2011) she produced a series of photographs interested in the material and symbolic evidence of the pharaonic Trans-Amazonian Highway that was never finished. Depopulated empty spaces are foregrounded as the outcome of the project's failure and the military repression of the time.

Intermingling photography and literature, visual artist, Jonathas de Andrade, transformed the city of Recife of the 1970s into a modernist, post-utopian ruin in *Ressaca Tropical* (Tropical Hangover, 2016). Narrated as an intimate journal, texts and images overlap in Andrade's commentary on the passage of time and how it can affect both the urban and the personal experience. In past photographic series like *Projeto de Abertura de Uma Casa, Como Convém* (Project to Open a

House, As It Should Be, 2009), Andrade had already addressed the connection between modern architecture and ruination. Photographs are also an important element in the literature of Marília Garcia. In *Parque das Ruínas* (Park of Ruins, 2018), the poet contemplates two of Rio de Janeiro's museums timely named Parque das Ruínas and Chácara do Céu (Farmhouse of the Sky) and meditates on the never-ending crisis and the way images relate to it. Appropriately, the book ends with two of those images: Jean-Baptiste Debret's drawing of the National Museum (1831) and a photograph of its current ruined state due to the large fire that took place in 2018, as discussed in chapter 1.

In theatre, director Bia Lessa's *Pi – Panorâmica Insana* captured the transience of ruins unlike any other theatrical performance, in 2018. A play about the human condition in contemporary times (in close dialogue with dance and the visual arts, and citing Franz Kafka and Paul Auster), *Pi* had its debut in a very particular venue in São Paulo, the Teatro Novo (New Theatre), chosen by Lessa precisely because it was still under construction. When attending the performance, the audience was able to encounter the remains of the old building and the first step towards the new theatre – an in-between situation, just like present-day society. On mainstream TV, the plot of mini-series *Treze Dias Longe do Sol* (Thirteen Days Out of the Sun, 2018) concerned a medical centre that collapses in the final stages of its construction. Co-produced by O2 Filmes and TV Globo, the fictional story follows a group of survivors struggling to escape while discussing the irregularities that had led to similar tragedies. On cable TV, actor and presenter, Michel Melamed, filmed the third season of his talk show *Bipolar Show* (2016-2017) in the ruins of Cassino da Urca, in Rio de Janeiro, where he and his guests talked about the dark times through which the country was passing with a highly appropriate backdrop.

Ruin-gazer documentary-makers have resorted to images of ruins as a means of shedding light on the underside of so-called progress and development. The ruin makes anti-development visible, a paradoxical representation of a discourse that intended to thrive, yet failed. In fact, its images refer to the broader condition of a country in a state of continuous collapse. In some measure, this thesis has attempted to combine these documentaries as fragments that, once assembled, can

provide different angles of national history. In constant, yet sometimes conflicting, dialogue with the revolutionary generation of Cinema Novo, Tropicália and Cinema Marginal, they update and recontextualise that legacy through new imagery and critical storytelling, as observed in their interviews. For Csekö, after all, much of what Glauber Rocha discussed in his films “has not been resolved” (2017). In attempting to touch on the issues initiated by Cinema Novo, Urano, her collaborator, replaces one of the movement’s main concerns: “Cinema Novo brought a little of this modern perspective, a certain passion for the idea of the ‘new’ etc., but this is perhaps its most problematic aspect. This love of the ‘new’ in me has given way to the love of difference (...). I am a xenophile, like my best contemporaries” (2017).

Striking a similar note, Santos argues that he and some of his contemporaries are perhaps “making a new Cinema Novo” (2017). Calling to attention the fact that there were no black *cinemanovistas*, Santos says: “In a way, we are making a new Cinema Novo, because we are black youngsters, and share not only an aesthetics but also life experience (...)” (ibid). In this sense, Vaz has also made clear that it is about time filmmakers empathise with “female bodies and other sexualities” and take into account “the rituals, spirituality and mythical thoughts” (2017) of other ethnic cultures that were once dismissed. Indeed, the indigenous voice has also become part of the narrative in present-day documentary production. As Ortega claims, “if we don’t do this, it will always be the non-indigenous who will go to the villages to register” (2018). Carelli, however, fears the end of an era with the new political environment in Brazil: “It was a dream back then, now... it has turned into a nightmare” (2018) referring to an indigenous museum project that is currently at a halt. At the time of his interview, the country was already immersed in neoliberal austerity under the then President, Michel Temer (2016-2018), a situation that has been aggravated since the election of far-right President, Jair Bolsonaro (2019-), as he has openly stated his opposition to NGOs like Vídeo nas Aldeias.¹²³

¹²³ For more details see Gabriel Stargardter’s article “Bolsonaro Presidential Decree Grants Sweeping Powers Over NGOs in Brazil” (2019) available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-politics-ngos/bolsonaro-presidential-decree-grants-sweeping-powers-over-ngos-in-brazil-idUSKCN1OW1P8>

For Pretti, dystopia seems to be located more in the present than in the future: “dystopia does not only occur in the human frame, but also in the remains humans have erected, and, in all nature, whether the sea, birds or trees” (2019). Inviting the Austrian writer into the debate, Marques finally wonders: “Was it Stefan Zweig who threw this curse at Brazil? Or did he just recognise the smell of promises without ever realising that these promises would never be kept?” (2018). The answer might still be under construction, but Queirós seems to be building one in moving away from models and paradigms when constructing a film narrative. “From the moment you fabulate, you also create political layers, layers of interventions, layers of possibilities, layers of territory” (2018), he suggests. The layers of territory intended by *cinemanovistas*, *marginais*, *tropicalistas* and ruin-gazer documentary-makers forge a map in which the ruin is placed in the main square, near the busiest road and opposite the most visited attraction, so that anyone can see the spectacular dimensions of its failure.

Within this context, an aesthetics of ruins in contemporary Brazilian documentary seems to be intrinsic to the destructive effects brought about by the rotten modernisation and the savage neoliberalism of present-day society. In order to respond to that, contemporary production plays with the very definition of documentary by blurring the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, or traditional and experimental filmmaking. The scope of films analysed in this thesis do this by exploring the idea of liminality: either by opening a fruitful dialogue with other art practices (visual arts, performance, literature, music) or by taking account of different cosmologies (the indigenous mindset being finally incorporated). Furthermore, these productions also resonate with the criticism and creativity that took the Brazilian artistic scene of the 1960s and 1970s by storm, as if updating and/or recontextualising that legacy. In exploring these multiple possibilities, these films not only question the conventions of documentary-making, but also challenge the official narrative as conventionally told. In this sense, the ruins of underdevelopment offer a powerful possibility for reflection. As a branch of the ruins of modernity, they narrow down the discussion and bring particular concerns into consideration. In examining the highly complex culture of a country like Brazil, this thesis sought to develop an original contribution to knowledge in order to elicit from the reader an original understanding of it.

Appendix

Ana Vaz

Interview by Skype on August 22, 2017

In the book *Allegories of Underdevelopment*, Ismail Xavier provides an overview of Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal films that were contaminated by the crisis of representation after the Military Coup of 1964 and, more so, after the advent of AI-5. In *The Age of Stone* (which has an undeniable connection to Glauber Rocha's last film, *The Age of the Earth*), I have the impression that you radicalise this crisis even more, to the point that the camera disturbs the viewer's understanding of what he sees. In what points do you think you come close to this legacy and in what points do you distance yourself from it?

It is a delicate matter. You, Brazilian like me, understand what Cinema Novo's heritage is in Brazil, and what the legacies of the great radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Brazil are in fact. In the text I wrote for the Tate Modern catalogue [*about the Tropicália and Beyond exhibition, organized by Stefan Solomon*], I try to say a few things without being very categorical, because I think there has to be some caution when talking particularly about Glauber Rocha. I think the work of historical revisionism that is being proposed is important because it allows a kind of opening of what could be a story or the stories of Brazilian cinema, beyond the canons, but with the canons. I cannot openly say that Cinema Novo inspired me in a direct way. When I started making films, I think the most touching and strongest thing for me was my encounter with the American feminist vanguards of the 1970s, in which there was a deep interest in the collapse of the narrative, not only as an exercise in style, but as a need to re-situate the narrative within and through a world experience that was often carried out through the body, as in the films by Abigail Child and Sue Friedrich.

I say all this because the cinema begins, in my opinion, there, in this fragmentation not as a political ideology, not as militancy from a guidebook. I think that Latin America suffers from a hangover from a Marxism that is not communitarianism; it is a communism from a guidebook. True communitarianism is done in another way. And I think that at the moment we see a little the difficulty of re-enacting these political guidebooks that never failed to exclude two great problems: a profound sexism, an enormous difficulty to sympathise not only with the bodies of women but with other types of sexuality, and the rupture with ethnic cultures, a rupture with the earth, with rituals, spirituality, mythical thoughts. So in this sense, Deren's cinema influences me more than Glauber's, although I think that other filmmakers within Cinema Novo have not followed the same guidebook.

What helped me understand Glauber, what touched me in Glauber's cinema and made me understand what Cinema Novo had that touched me was *The Age of the Earth*. It is his most complete and complex film. It was his least understood and most fragmentary film. It is the film in which the disillusionment with a horizon of total success of an ideology explodes. I see it as a rupture. Something that already begins with the "Aesthetics of Dreaming" manifesto, which distances

itself from the “Aesthetics of Hunger”, which is beautiful and strong, but which also has a monolithic potential of unification of ideals and ideas that I find extremely dangerous as a way of thinking. It is what I think as a feminist who sees the cinema as a possibility of catharsis.

When I make *The Age of Stone*, this film marks my return to the Planalto Central, to the countryside cultures, to the reunion with the family, with the figure of my father [Guilherme Vaz] who has always been very present in the films [from *Cinema Novo* and by Ana Vaz herself] as a great composer and thinker of the Brazilian culture. At that moment, I wanted to close what I call the Trilogy of Utopias, which I had started with *Sacris Pulso* [on the utopia or dystopia which is Brasília] and continued with *Entre Temps*, the film that marks my arrival in Europe and talks about demolitions and the end of certain utopias. I wanted to get out of this idea of the beginning of the twentieth century, of the ruins, of the end of modernity as a collapse, and move on to something more entropic, with less resolution potential, but which would see in the very experience of those thoughts, lands and territories possibilities of a reinvention of new utopias, less distant from the earth, more topical and less utopian.

Brasília already appears in your filmography in your first short film *Sacris Pulso*. Has your perception of the city changed much during the gap between *Sacris Pulso*, produced while you lived in Australia, and *The Age of Stone*, filmed in Brazil? How was your return to Brazil?

This is an important issue that is still being answered. Brasília is a recurring theme within my intimate and, at the same time, philosophical reflection. The question of modernity and Brasília as a milestone of that is something that permeates the cinema that I make from the beginning. One might say that *Sacris Pulso* is a kind of encounter with a ghost town, which never existed for me, which only existed through the cinema. Brasília, as it is narrated in that film, is fruit of the thought of Clarice Lispector mixed with my father’s and my mother’s figures, I mean, it is an extremely personal film. I would say that it is an imagined biography that will go a lot through reality, but that will turn it into a kind of flight to imagine other relationships among time, image and place. Because it is a film that I make at a distance about a place that I no longer have access to, it is also a moment when I begin to think that my return to Brazil will never happen, or when it will, or what it will be like.

When I moved from Australia to France, I kept trying to understand *Sacris Pulso* because I always felt it was a film that would show and hide. It was the moment when I made *Entre Temps* through archive footage, an extremely melancholic film dealing with French housing estates that were imploded in the 1980s. During this film, I already began to write what would become *The Age of Stone*. It was when I began to imagine that, in the middle of that field of destruction, there would be a parallel universe, there should be a parallel universe in which things could remodel otherwise. I remember that when I started writing *The Age of Stone*, I thought that was not the time to make an iconoclastic gesture. The iconoclast, when it destroys the icon, accentuates it. And that always bothered me a lot. So I began to think of a way to re-enact this, outside this complicated guidebook of what Brasília represents in Brazil. That was when I returned to the text of origin

[*actually the two chronicles Brasília and Brasília: Esplendor*], to Clarice's text [*already present in Brasiliários, film in which Ana Vaz's parents met in 1986, and also in Sacris Pulso*], which are the first literature words that I understand and that have guided me a great deal within the understanding not only of that city, but of a number of other more obscure, mystical and mysterious issues, as is Clarice's writing itself. And then there is that brilliant thing of her re-imagining the city as already a ruin in a very distant future or from a very ancient past, we are lost within the temporal question, something *Sacris Pulso* already signalled. That was when I decided to make a kind of uchronia of Brasília: what if? What if that could have happened otherwise?

And then there was this long collaboration with Anne-Charlotte Yver, a sculpture that can bring to modernist shapes a sensual, strange, monstrous and undefined carnality. I met her at an exhibition; we talked a lot and discussed some proposals. When she showed me the drawings, she was still finishing that shape that leans [the CGI monument in *The Age of Stone*], and I told her to leave it that way. It is an in-construction to be which we do not know whether it is an archaeological excavation or whether it is being constructed and will never be finished. That became the starting point to the fiction of the film. A lot of people watch the film and do not know if it is fiction, an ethnographic film, a structuralist film, and I did not want it to be any of those things, and at the same time I wanted it to be all those things. The coldness of structuralism does not conform to the kind of cinema that interests me, so the film needed to be populated by other peoples, other ways of being and not in a classical ethnographic form. That is why I decided to have a *casting*. It was the first time I wanted to make some sort of fiction, a science fiction around the construction of that monument. I went to Goiás two or three times for location search and to meet the people in the region. That was when I met Ivonete [*dos Santos Moraes, actress in The Age of Stone*], a girl of huge strength who learned Clarice Lispector and was able to give Clarice a creole corporality and dimension.

The Age of Stone is the film that tries to intersect these fields and give an animistic response to what could be a Marxist criticism of the city of Brasília. I think Brasília is a mystery and I am not the first person to say that it is bathed in a series of legacies that do not match its present, coming from much earlier. And all this permeates a bit of the imaginary of the city too. My family moved there at the beginning of the city, when it was all starting and it was already very weird. But whether you like it or not, with all criticism of Brasília, Brasília was an exercise in social democracy for a few years in Brazil. And the few people who could live that at the beginning of the city have this experience, that memory. What annoys me sometimes in a criticism not only of Brasília, but of modernity itself is as if we could, today, from our postmodern throne, say: "Oh, poor people, they made a lot of mistakes...". And no, there was a really experimentalist boldness in that moment.

Thinking a little about *The Age of Stone* in relation to *White Out, Black In*, by Adirley Queirós. The two films have in common an elaboration around what Brasília is by means of what would be a science fiction in the documentary. On the other hand, both have their very own aesthetic and discursive strategies to reach the viewer. How do you see Adirley's cinema in this

context?

I cannot not respect a lot what Adirley was able to do, not only in relation to Brasília, but as a gesture of cinema in Brazil. He brings strength and vitality. He is bold. And this I find very beautiful and very strong. And I think he is not militantly bold. He has affection; he has real affection for what he films. On the other hand, *White Out, Black In* is a film that has an iconoclasm that sometimes accentuates a binarity, which I think is a bit simplistic. It seems predetermined, as if that is what people tell you the world is, but the world is something else and it is more complicated. We can get into conflict in relation to that, no doubt. Two filmmakers who come from different worlds in the same city; but, like him, I firmly believe in the need to create stories out of History, truly alternative stories to how History is told. In that sense, this brings us together in what science fiction is, not as this already extremely imagined and predetermined genre, but as something that exactly enables us to project something else. And because he has that inner strength and vitality, he shows the binarity, but at the same time he says “*fuck you all, we’re doing our thing!*”. And that is very strong. He manages to show all the criminal violence of what that means in that city as a fable. And I find that very beautiful. Adirley is undoubtedly one of the most interesting figures in the language of contemporary Brazilian cinema. Now that language is multiple, it is bigger than that. We love to create canons very quickly, so I think it is important that this exists along with other voices.

In *The Age of Stone*, there are quite a few characters. In addition to Ivonete, the protagonist, I highlight the men who work in mining. To the viewer, they can be explorers or slaves; that is never very clear. How was the conception of those characters and how was the contact with the people chosen to play them in the film?

I would say that *The Age of Stone* has as its main characters two beings: the monument and the meeting of the monument with Ivonete, who is a kind of ghost, as if we would see through her. They are all spectral, they haunt that landscape. They are not completely agents of that story, but they appear as mirages, as announcers of those who had been there. They also operate in an uchronic way, that is, if History had been otherwise. The *boiadeiro* is black, which is already an inversion. The girl, who is young and could look a fragile character, is a strong character who incarnates the monologue written by Machado de Assis, also an inversion. Seu Chico Preto is a lord of that region, he had been a *boiadeiro* all his life, he is not doing anything that is different from his practice. Like her, a kalunga girl, daughter of the process of crossbreeding that defines not only that region, but others in the country. As for the stone quarry workers, that may be the most documental moment of the film. We leave fiction and enter the documentary, but a documentary that is completely linked to the fiction of the film. I never imagined filming that quarry as a place of imprisonment. There is a somewhat stranger reflection on the relationship between man and nature in there. If we see the History of humanity, it is totally marked by this relationship and not by a vision of social class. This is what Clarice says very well about Brasília: creation is always a new mystery. You never know exactly what that means. There is something mysterious in trying to understand what that insistence on building, deforming, sculpting that space, increasingly worn out by activity, is.

Where are we? Where will the film take us? It is a rather daunting film, because there is this thing of continuous creation and destruction. Thus, in the final moment, in that panoramic movement that goes up to the sky, the monument has already disappeared, it is no longer there, but there is still the memory of this thing that is gone.

You commented a little on camera movement and that was something that quite caught my attention. How varied the camera movement is in order to be able to capture and translate that space. There is close-up, there is zoom-in, there is zoom-out, there is panorama. Did you already know that it would be so?

I could not say it was random. In the case of zoom, it is the movement that our eye cannot reproduce. The zoom emulates a kind of cyborg-like technical movement, in which there is a union between machine and man, one turning into the other. This component is the scenic body of what became *The Age of Stone*. So I knew that there would be an insistence on these zooms, as if the camera movement itself could insinuate a construction and destruction of the landscape, as if the camera would be inserting the movements of those carving that landscape, as if the camera could carve that landscape as well. It is the beginning of an exploration of what could be a camera-body. In the end, the director of cinematography Jacques Cheuiche [*cinematographer of Brasília*rios] and I decided to forget the tripod and go for the camera in hand as a way to break that most ceremonial oracle-film thing, which was also very important.

Is the sound all captured in loco? At times, it sounds like a composition made especially for the film.

I captured all the sound there. In most of my films, rather than a lot of dialogue and a lot of voice, what indicates the narration is the sound. Undoubtedly, this tells of my closeness to my father [*Guilherme Vaz*], who is a thinker of noise as music, one of the first people to make the soundtracks of Nelson Pereira dos Santos' films and who began to think of music soundtrack in Brazil as an extension of the possible noises of a place. Every time I work with the sound designer, he says that the sound design is done, because he can only use the images in deep relation with the sound. For me, that is where the narrative takes place. *The Age of Stone* shows me this very clearly. If I recorded one hour of images, then I would go out with Chico Bororo, a great figure who also worked a lot with my father in the interior of Goiás, to record one hour of sound. All the sound of the film comes from the locations. Then it is a matter of modulating it according to the narrative which will bring up other elements. They say that this is experimental, but it is already present in the fragmentary aspect of the *early cinema*, as a way of reinventing the narrative.

Adirley Queirós

Interview by WhatsApp on September 29, 2018

In interviews, you almost always mention Hollywood films like *Mad Max* and *Blade Runner* as references to *White Out*, *Black In*. I would like to know how you relate to the legacy of Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal and whether

this legacy influences your work as a director.

I think mostly Cinema Marginal does, but it is also something I got to know quite late, it is not something that was part of my cinephilia. It has been no more than fifteen years since I got to know this Cinema, but the moment I saw it, it influenced me a lot. In general, Cinema Marginal influenced me a lot in its rather scruffy way to do things, but mostly due to the fact that it emerged at the moment when Cinema Novo was turning into an institution. *Bang Bang*, by Andrea Tonacci, was the one which influenced me most. I love *The Red Light Bandit* [by Rogério Sganzerla], *Hitler Third World* [by José Agrippino de Paula], the films by Ozualdo Candeias... These four directors influenced me a lot, but I really like Cinema Novo as well, I really like Joaquim Pedro dos Santos, Glauber Rocha – of course, but I like Cinema Marginal better, especially *Once There Was Brasília* [a subsequent film to *White Out, Black In*].

You say so because Cinema Marginal came to break with this institutional discourse that Cinema Novo ended up assuming at some point?

I think it was a reaction, because Cinema Novo was becoming somehow a Brazil-export thing. Despite being a great cinema, potent and all that, it was going through that moment, and that moment ends up generating a conflict with other generations, other possibilities of making films. Cinema Novo turned out to be a class cinema, made by people who had an idea of good taste, who knew the system. By trying to do a dramaturgy that had a more popular reach, it ended up presenting an average Brazil, a Brazil of concessions, a Brazil of negotiations, and Cinema Marginal might have been that too, but because it was so short-term, its strength thrills me.

In other interviews, you have already said that you intended to make *White Out, Black In* as a traditional documentary, but from the moment you started the project you realised that fable-making would be the most appropriate way to make the characters elaborate what occurred in front of the camera. In relation to this supposed dichotomy between the real and the fictional, what do you think only fiction can do and what only the documentary can do?

When I made the *White Out, Black In*, I wanted to turn the real into a fable thing. With very strong elements from the real, turn memory into an adventure story. It had all the power of fable, which was the power of what we could be, of the war that we could declare, starting from a defeat to be the victorious heroes. I think the documentary does not really tell a class story. When I say a class story, it is the story of a Brazilian periphery, in the sense that it cannot outperform its own documentary form. And I am not saying I can do this; this is a reflection on that. My reflection is to think that we cannot outperform this form, because we have to make a “round” film, a film that connects, a film with all elements of dramaturgy, so to speak, of a more powerful class, of people who historically tell the History. The documentary cannot outperform this because the documentary has to be the memory of the real. I think it has a huge difficulty going through the form to tell some stories, while others it can tell quite well. I love documentaries, but in my perception, when the documentary comes to the perspective of characters like the

ones in *White Out, Black In*, it is as if the documentary has betrayed those characters. Why? Because at the moment of their revenge, revenge does not happen. The documentary places these characters as victims and turns that everyday or extraordinary event into an extremely exotic thing. It transforms that character into an average character in so far as the whole audience will relate to, will connect with immediately, as if the documentary were for the sake of appearances, since the audience it will reach is very well known. Therefore, the memory remains the memory of the oppressor's eye over the oppressed. This is what the classic documentary does: it gives the memory of the suffered oppression. It is almost an idea of the journalistic fact, of the legitimacy of the real. But this also happens with classical fiction when it naturalises some spaces which are in fact spaces being built, as it happens in *City of God* or *Elite Squad*. A cinema that proposes to make a fiction film, it runs into this classic idea of script, and every script is hampering.

I think the middle ground, this model that I propose and that several people of my generation propose is not something new, either. Cinema Marginal itself would already do that, putting the absurdity of the real represented there. And this pursuit of risk may be the most important; Cinema Marginal did take a risk. Cinema Novo took a risk at some point, though very small, because it quickly discovered the formula of the great festivals, for an average audience, an arts audience. Risk is not associated with such audience. That middle ground that we struggle to try to find is, in general, very difficult to get because it is too risky. So, everything is a connection between the possibility of being made, the economic condition of what is to make films at the moment, this distorted idea of what would be a cinema industry that does not exist, as Paulo Emilio [*Sales Gomes, critic and Brazilian cinema researcher*] would say... So, I reckon all this contributes to think about your question on what fiction is, what fiction cannot do, what a documentary is, what a documentary cannot do, and what would be circulating between those two poles. What we do, in fact, are the nuances of those two poles, and I think we could extrapolate, get out of those nuances, get out of those two poles, of that magnetic field. But you only do that by taking risks, and we risk very little.

In my view, there is an imaginary of ruins impregnating the film in three layers: in the cities (in the tension between Brasília and Ceilândia), in the houses (the bars, the absent walls, the radio in the underground) and in the bodies (the prosthesis and the wheelchair). How was this imbrication built by the film?

We have assumed that Ceilândia is an amputated city. It is the first territorial abortion of the Federal District. It is not the first, it is not the only one and it will not be the last one in Brazil. Its great characteristic is to be next to the modernist and avant-garde capital. And this ended up potentialising the space of Ceilândia a lot in imagetic terms, when one thinks about what circulates around Brasília. As from this idea, we have, then, the characters that are in that city. The characters are amputated, just as the city is amputated. And where there are amputated bodies in an amputated territory, a war is assumed, a state of permanent warfare. And the state of permanent warfare is total vigilance and total reaction. That is, at the same time that this total vigilance brings tension, this tension also implies

reactions of mysteries, of other possibilities, of denial of the *status quo*. Then these bodies would circulate around this territory to transform it. I think the body is the reaction to the territory. The way you talk, walk, do things is a reaction to the territory that surrounds you.

And that was even stronger in the 1980s [*decade in which police violence against the characters happens*]. Although today we have a virtual world, the street is the place of confrontation, the place of melee. Outside the network, you are a body that inhabits and fights for spaces, which will entail millions of things. In the 1980s and 1990s, this was even stronger. We lived in Ceilândia; we did not go to Brasília. There are people who never left Ceilândia, who only circulated around the territory of Ceilândia. They did not travel, did not go downtown, did not go to the beach, this did not exist. Thus, this implied an immense knowledge of the territory and the naturalisation that this territory is the world. The other world, I do not know. The other world was a journey, an adventure, anthropology, geography, another world.

As regards the characters, the music elements in the case of Marquim do Tropa, and the drawing and the photography in the case of Shokito/Sartana, were they contributions of the actors themselves to the script?

Shokito, in fact, has been a close friend of mine since I was five or six years old. He has always been a guy who liked drawing, who liked reading. He worked with silkscreen, he was very skillful. I really wanted him to do the film. When he accepted it, we told him that the character would be a solitary cyborg of more than 800 years old, with 800 years of accumulated memory. And this loneliness was the biggest nightmare in the world. That was what he should bring to the character. Since we did not have budget for the sequence of the Brasília explosion either, we used the drawings that he himself made to illustrate. He had already been drawing throughout the shooting and, closer to finishing, I asked him to complement it with drawings of the traveller's attack on Brasília. The drawings enter at the end as a catharsis, a fable that seeks revenge. In the film, the other drawings that appear also suggest that he foresaw or anticipated the coming of that traveller, so that in the film the two never come across.

How was choice of the music for the final sequence of the explosion?

The choice of music was very crazy. One day, some friends showed me the recording of *Bomba Explode Na Cabeça* [by MC Dodô] and I found it incredible. It seemed to have been made for the film. All the elements in the song were in the film. It talks about funk, talks about a guy who dies at the dance, some crazy stuff that was very associated with the stuff in the film.

The phrase that ends *White Out, Black In* (“Our memory, we ourselves fabulate”), is it of your authorship? What message does it want to convey?

The phrase is mine. Memory is a construction. It is a fable. Memory depends on the times, on the feelings, on the political moment. So, if it is to speak of our memory, let us speak. We do not want to talk about the reality of memory; we want to talk about memory manipulation, which is much more interesting. And

this fable about us can become cinema. We do not have to be always stuck with models and paradigms to try to propose a film narrative. And from the moment you yourself make something up, you also create political layers, layers of interventions, layers of possibilities, layers of territory.

Daniel Santos

Interview by e-mail on December 27, 2017

When we see *ExPerimetral* for the first time, we have the impression that those ruins are ruins of a war, so much impact they cause on the viewer. Only at the end you present us the city of Rio de Janeiro surrounding that scenario of destruction. Is Rio a war scenario?

Rio is a scenario of war. Conflict is evident in many spheres, not only in the slums, which are areas of permanent conflict. At the time of the construction works (Olympic Games/World Cup), the city became a large construction site; chaos was installed on public roadways. Knowing a little about the history of Rio, we know that there is a lot of the history of Brazil buried in the middle of those sites, such as the case of the discovery of the Valongo Wharf. The city of Rio appears only at the end, since I see that these projects of reurbanisation, present mainly in the historical areas of cities, are a global phenomenon. Therefore, I did not want to put it as an event restricted to the city of Rio. And the curious thing is that the community involved with the history of these places does not benefit from the works. In fact, they end up being damaged and excluded, i.e., these projects move the gentrification from the historical spaces, overlapping the local history once again in order to serve tourism, the entertainment capital. And the conflicts appear in the surroundings of the territory, for the value of the land, for IPTU [*the municipal tax on real estate*], etc. This explains the conflicts on the hills.

I realise that there is a certain movement of filmmakers and artists of your generation questioning the official History of Rio and proposing a new look on the city. I would like you to comment a little on these initiatives and talk about your relationship with the city and the appearance of the idea for the project.

In fact, I felt responsible for documenting this story, for what is before my eyes. We, artists who study, research, and develop sensitivity about what is happening, need to take action. Since not being from Rio – I was born and raised in Campinas –, I wanted to contribute in a way to the city that has welcome me and which is part of my history. And this movement is very important, because it defies the future we want for our cities.

The instrumental soundtrack and the sound design of the film caught my attention. The film opens with what would be a military fanfare. Further on, we hear something like an African percussion. How did the sound design process take place?

I dedicated myself a lot to the sound of the film. I have a lot of interest in sound narratives and I see them as an infinite possibility in the perception of ideas, an open possibility for the free interpretation by the viewer. If the viewer wants to

close his eyes, or even if he has a visual disability, he can contemplate the work somehow. At the beginning, the *ExPerimetral* project was a live performance, or live cinema. I created a scaffolding structure, a scaffold obelisk covered by layers of voile, where the captured images were projected. I developed the sound with the sound collective *De Repente Acidente*, which I was part of at the time. We mixed ambient sounds with acoustic sounds and electronic beats. At the time, I already had the idea of making a film, but I wanted to explore the same project on other exhibition platforms. Finally, the performance took place in galleries. Then I dedicated myself to the project of the film, and in the research I discovered Iannis Xenakis, a great conductor of concrete music. His work fit like a glove and was in direct dialogue with the idea I had about the sound for the film. At the beginning of the soundtrack, there are trumpets, as in the book of Revelation, some trumpets sound announcing the end. Next, the mayor of the city comes to announce his project to the city. Following that, the drums that “sync” appear with the fall of the rubble in a non-harmonious way, which, for me, symbolises the collapse of the history of black people in that territory. Before that, there is the tangle of irons that symbolises the connections, the veins that connect, the roots that were ripped out and exposed to the sunlight. The sharp noise represents this agony.

Mayor Eduardo Paes’ speech has a tragicomic effect: it is too sad to hear it all (and in English, to the world), knowing the reality of the city/country, but at the same time we feel an embarrassment, we feel like laughing at that situation. Was the rhythm of the film built from his speech and then came the images, or the other way around?

Eduardo Paes’ speech came last. I had worked more on the sonority of the noises, but I felt that I needed a speech so that it would not be only within my artistic abstraction. Thus, I found many speeches about the works, about what was happening in Rio de Janeiro at that time. At first, the speeches came from the political opposition; others from urban planning experts who disapproved of the project. So I continued digging into the research, because if I used the speech of the opposition, I would take sides, even manipulate the narrative to my point of view, which was not the idea. Then I found the full recordings of symposiums and international meetings to which the mayor had been invited to present his management project. The most fantastic thing is that everything was in English, and with his “Tupiniquim” English, the mayor would speak practically to those who invited him there and to his political group, that is, he was there to be exalted and not questioned about his project. Therefore, he was very confident because he knew what the people there wanted to hear. And when there is a lot of confidence, something bad is about to happen. I believe that he made a mistake in that sense, demonstrating his commitment to the private initiative and not to public administration, in the position granted him by the population for eight years. Thus, his own speech demoralises him, taking this responsibility from me. I believe that Mayor Eduardo Paes characterises a new historical ambition, representing a new tendency of mayors, young and with ideas aligned with the financial and real estate markets.

At a certain point, we read, among the rubble, the phrase “our senzala” [“our slave quarters”]. I found it symptomatic to see that in a film that talks about the future and the development of the city. What has changed from the times

of the *senzala* to the present day? Has the future come?

That phrase was also a surprise to me. I came to find it in the editing process, after seeing and reviewing the images many times. I found it very symbolic as well, because that whole region began the process of colonisation in Brazil, that is, it is a territory walked by many enslaved men and women. As for “*our senzala*”, I believe that it is maintained in a more contemporary and perverse way. This is clear in the mayor’s speech, and notorious in his administration. An example of that was the slum’s pacification programme, the UPPs, implemented by Mayor Eduardo Paes and financed by the private capital (entrepreneur Eike Batista was one of the biggest investors in the programme, for example). Such a programme is nothing more than a social, cultural and territorial controller, just as it was in the time of the slave quarters. With the start of the programme, mainly in the slums of the south, a noble area of the city and very much targeted by the expansion of the real estate and foreign sector, many of the residents of those slums failed to meet the conditions imposed by the State in order to remain “legal”, since the cost of living increased dramatically. Thus, the residents end up giving up their houses for immediate amounts, seeking more distant and cheaper places to live, and giving way to groups of foreigners who seek the privileged view from the hills to set up their hostels. This seems to me the purpose of this new public management aligned with the principles of financial speculation. The future in the city has been presenting itself this way, it is scary. It is plunder disguised as public policies.

The generation of Cinema Novo worked very hard on the issue of the idea of progress and underdevelopment in Brazil. What do you think your generation brings from that movement and in what way are you totally different? Do you talk about the same Rio?

The generation of Cinema Novo was of huge importance in the revelation of our identity. They managed to print on the screens a part of the history of Brazil that the Brazilians themselves did not know, creating a beautiful filmography which is always a reference. I speak of revealing, for there was already an identity. And this new generation inherited the boldness to make films amid human and technical precariousness. Today we live other times, and the difficulties are now different. There will always be difficulties, but we will continue doing it. At that time all the filmmakers of that generation were men, white and bourgeois, with an almost foreign look upon their own people, carrying with them a language from the European schools of cinema. Today, we can say that the young Brazilian filmmakers and artists are diverse and come from many realities, creating a more real language of nation, getting closer to the imaginary realism of Latin America in the search for innovation in language.

You commented on the fact that Cinema Novo was mostly a white and bourgeois movement, much influenced by the European cinema. Today, this situation would be different. How do you see the scenery today and how does it differ from that of Cinema Novo? Would you point out any film or filmmaker from that period? (And when I say Cinema Novo, I also think of Cinema Marginal and the production around it; in brief, the Brazilian cinema).

So, that is a fact. Just look at any photographic record of the directors of Cinema Novo, I say that in relation to the direction department. It is not very different today. Despite the technological advances, production is still centralised. Recently, there was a survey that said that cinema is still made mostly by white men. It is also a fact that there are new filmmakers. Even so, it is a small number. But the question remains: where do all those films that are made go to? We know that if those creations are not accepted by the film festivals, a showcase that is extremely restricted, they go to the drawers, to the “cloud”, to the corners of the internet. That is, the distribution, not only the execution, is still a process to be decentralised. In Brazil, you have to dig deep to access these viewing channels. I say this on a national scale, because I am privileged to live in the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro, having a whole cultural array available, and yet we, artists from the place, find the local scenario weak, let alone a filmmaker from the suburb of the same city. Just like me, I have close friends who are making their first films, we help each other. In a way, we are making a new Cinema Novo, since we are young black people who share not only our aesthetics, but our life experiences, which strengthen us in the pursuit of accomplishment.

Ricardo Pretti

Interview by e-mail on March 28, 2019

Like other so-called experimental films in contemporary Brazilian cinema, *The Harbour* seems to balance between documentary and fiction, without, at the same time, appearing to be concerned about those labels. In what way was the film conceived? Has this blurring of boundaries been an issue in designing the project?

In fact, we do not care about those labels. Since the conception of the project we have understood that the sound and the image would have an anachronistic dialogue relationship, which is not the same thing as asynchronous. In my view, it is in these fissures between sound and image that the boundaries are blurred and confronted. Labels such as fiction and documentary often seek to imprison the films, and consequently the viewers and filmmakers, who are the two ends of the same creative act, and the so-called experimental cinema, make it more evident that it is necessary to break with those ties.

In dialoguing with other documentaries, *The Harbour* records a specific moment in Rio’s recent history. On the other hand, it suggests that these urban transformations are actually a repetition, part of a continuous cycle of construction and deconstruction. As a filmmaker, how do you see this kind of obsession? Can the image interfere with this process?

I believe there is a sense of exhaustion of our models of city and society. It seems that there is no more space for new ideas; we have to repeat what was done before, forging a modernity that is already worn out and dead. The problem is that this repetition becomes an inferior copy of the past. We live in a sloppy copy of the past, and thereby we bury the true past. Even the ruins already have an air of copy. The image is not different either – see the success of Instagram with its simulacrum images of the past. In the case of *The Harbour*, we decided to put

tights in front of the lens to impose a veil between the image and the reality as a way to resist both the standard image and the copy reality.

The discussion about the idea of progress and (under)development in Brazilian cinema was born with the generation of Cinema Novo. In the research, I try to recover this legacy and analyse how it establishes points of contact and distance in relation to the contemporary production. How do you relate to this tradition? What would your points of contact and distance be?

Cinema Novo was my first conscious contact with the Brazilian cinema, it was my literacy. In this sense I feel a naturalised and therefore not too critical relationship. Today it is a memory; I would need to see the films of Cinema Novo again to be able to say something about it.

In parallel to the films of the Cinema Novo (or as a result of them, as Caetano Veloso says), Tropicália, with its cultural anthropophagy and intermediality, gave a new impetus to this debate. In *ExPerimetral*, *Tropical Curse* and *HU Enigma*, there is a dialogue with the visual arts that seems to update this legacy a little. How do you position yourself? In this sense, could we say that *The Harbour* refers to a certain tropicalist tradition?

There is no conscious intention to establish a relationship with Tropicalism, but this approach seems very rich. The cinematographic apparatus being devoured by other apparatuses, means and sensibilities is something that seems to me necessary to make our cinema breathe better.

In the text that Victor Guimarães wrote about *The Harbour* for *Cinéctica*, he makes an interesting analogy with “*Futuros Amantes*”, by Chico Buarque. Did you have this song as a reference? What other influences are sewn into the film?

It was not a reference to the film. But I love the idea of scuba camera, even though in our process it was more of an archaeological camera idea. And I can still glimpse a ghost camera. In short, a camera of another space-time dimension that watches that world as something totally strange. Shooting in Rio de Janeiro becomes much more interesting when its excessive familiarity is taken out in order to let what is unusual remain. Rio can be unusual.

In an interview available on YouTube, co-director Clarissa Campolina comments that the space builds people and that people may reflect on or change the space. She also says that the person and the space integrate the same frame in your films. How does this construction take place from a formal and aesthetic point of view?

I do not remember which one of us commented on that, but an interface between figure and background is very interesting to the film. Dystopia does not only occur in the human figure, but also in the remains it has erected and, in all nature, be it the sea, the birds or the trees. A hierarchy of those elements did not interest us.

Although we see debris and hear noises of (de)construction throughout the film, the climax occurs with the “destruction” of the harbour zone via images of the Porto Maravilha project. It is strong and, at the same time, unusual. How was that choice made?

It is the horror-film moment with a digital and imperialistic invasion, instead of zombies. At some point it was important to leave no doubt and using Mats Gustafsson’s sax made the feeling we had regarding the Porto Maravilha project very clear to us.

Luisa Marques

Interview by e-mail on January 23, 2018 and January 26, 2018

***Tropical Curse* seems to me to operate the intersection of two discussions, or rather, the same discussion as from two objects. Both the construction of the Aterro do Flamengo Park and the construction of Carmen Miranda’s figure point to a problematisation of our idea of progress and modernity. At one point, these two axes interconnect in the Carmen Miranda Museum – a representation, let us put it this way, of both the park project and the artist’s figure. I would like you to comment on this idea and explain why you have decided to approach this theme in that way.**

The theme – this entanglement of two objects – was getting clearer in the research process for the film. The starting point was actually the Carmen Miranda Museum. It was not the subject that took me to the Museum, but the other way around. Since 2012 I had been researching around the figure of Carmen Miranda, done some more experimental work investigating this imaginary of the fruit on top of her head, which was always linked to the question of national identity and gender. I lived in the Netherlands for a year, and this interest came up there when I felt rather uncomfortable with a certain stigma of what it is to be a “Brazilian woman” (and, in my case, not white) in Europe. So, this cliché appears in our head. Because Carmen Miranda – despite not being Brazilian, or precisely because of that – incorporates all those contradictions. Besides being a truly charismatic and talented artist, she was a tailor-made product that would help forge a very useful national identity for a foreign policy between Brazil and the United States. So she is a very rich figure to talk about this feeling of exoticism, cliché and, at the same time, an image that is overbuilt, artificial, a caricature. This imagined nation, these constructed imaginaries may promise some sense of belonging, but often lead to patriotism with dangerous political dimensions.

It was then that I arrived at the Museum. I had lived near the Museum as a child (I was born in Fortaleza, but went to Rio when I was one month old and stayed here until nine, then I went back there at 17). I remember that place a lot; I always found it bizarre. It is a very particular construction, besides the crevice in the centre and the palm trees that spring from this crevice. This small concrete spaceship, landed very near the ground, at eye level, has always impressed me. But it is not a lush construction. It is even quite precarious. Not in its unquestionable complexity of design, architecture and engineering, but in its actually brute appearance, but not a monumental brutalism. All this to say that it

was more the Carmen Miranda as an icon and her ghostly spaceship museum that caught me first. I thought I had to do something about/with/in the Museum.

Then in 2013 I heard that the Museum had closed, and I was very frustrated that I would not be able to film inside it. But the will to do something with that building continued to haunt me. In 2016, I went to a practical seminar, a kind of one-month stay in Parque Lage. It was a programme that selected some artists who worked with moving image. I had two ideas and I showed them to one of the seminar's tutors, Bernardo José de Souza, and he encouraged me to develop the Carmen Miranda Museum project. In that one-month period I started researching, collecting the footage and putting it together. During the research, I discovered a lot of things. From the beginning, I learned that the concrete building that I was so interested in had not been built to be a museum, but as part of the initial project of the Aterro, carried out by the so-called Grupo de Trabalho [*Working Group*], which involved Affonso Reidy, and which had been built to be a recreational space, a kind of "toy library", according to the archives of the Aterro. The space ended up being abandoned and only in the 1970s it began to house the Carmen Miranda's collection. The Museum itself was inaugurated in 1976, in a space that had been built in the 1950s.

When I learned that the Museum was closed (and the collection would be transferred to the Museum of Image and Sound, which we do not know if will ever exist), I thought a lot about this fate that museums and public buildings generally have in Brazil: the abandonment. The Carmen Miranda Museum was already spooky, but when it was closed, its fate came to be. The image and the reality of that Museum concentrate a lot of weight on those two objects, or projects, subjects that you mention in your question. And it was the Museum that made me research and intersect them.

Other filmmakers and artists of his generation have been working on this idea of progress in Rio de Janeiro through works that question the very idea of progress itself. Do you feel part of that or do you think there is a certain movement going against the official History and proposing another look at the city? How do you see that?

I know some of the people who have worked with this theme. I think it is not only in the cinema, but very much also in the visual arts, in proposals by artists and curators who propose to rethink the city. I think we have, in Brazil, this modern syndrome of ode to the new and abandonment of the heritage. And in Rio this happens very openly. The port region has served this in recent years. That is where the city was born; the Morro do Castelo, for example, which was pulled down. And from that there are the expulsions of the people who live/lived in those places. Rio has these layers of institutional destruction and unbridled construction on top. The beginning of the twentieth century in Rio was all like that. The Aterro itself, there in Glória, was first about the project of the Flamengo Park; then, if I am not mistaken, they dumped more. The city would have been a huge construction site. And this has returned in recent years because of the World Cup and the Olympics. I think that was why this theme hit so many people. Everything was always at work. Many, many people really have been expropriated... Not to mention the enormous increase in the cost of living and the shortfalls that we have

seen and we are seeing happening in the state and in the city of Rio.

The text of the film is your adaptation of the writings by Pablo Leon de la Barra, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Could you comment on the choice of those texts and how you think they dialogue with the discussion you wanted to propose? In the particular case of Lévi-Strauss, he seems to me to be a key author to think of the idea of progress in the big American cities, when he visits the “New World”.

The texts by Pablo Leon and Dominique Gonzalez were introduced to me by Bernardo José de Souza. They are from a catalogue of her exhibition at MAM in 2015. From Lévi-Strauss I got very little, maybe just a little excerpt from *Tristes Tropiques* (“We are undoubtedly on the other side of the Atlantic and very close to the Tropics”, “This moist heat which frees my body from the usual weight of wool...”). But all this I used by often making small changes and complementing with my text. It is not by chance that those are texts by three “gringos” who somehow had a relationship with Brazil and whose imaginaries were also populated by this country where you and I were born. This foreignism is in the text and is in the film. It is in Carmen Miranda, it is in the science fiction, in the beings from other planets and unidentified objects. It is also a film about feeling like a foreigner in another place, being Brazilian, and feeling like a foreigner here, sometimes. Regardless of having lived more than half of my life in Rio, I was not born in Rio and neither was my family, so even though I have some intimacy and some sense of belonging to the city, I also feel very foreign to Rio. I also look at the city without understanding much, adhering and repelling, in a passionate and contradictory relationship. I am also a foreigner who observes the city.

Visual effect inserts, both neon lights and tropical fruit images, make the film almost an unidentified object (at a given moment, do we see what would be flying saucers?). I would like you to comment a bit on the aesthetic decisions to tell this story. Is the form the content in this case?

There is an archive image in which, yes, they are flying saucers. It is an image I took from archive.org, in very low quality, like several others in the film. The film also has many layer overlays, and the images accumulate and entangle in one another. The layers of time and history are in that landscape on which the film raves, but it is also in the materiality of the images. The archives that came to me were already somewhat distorted, compressed; they had lost some features and gained others. I have interfered with the images, manipulated them, but they also interfere with each other, and the material conditions of each one also make up their visual qualities, they have made the images come to me as they have. There is a phrase by Walter Benjamin, if I am not mistaken in the text *The Author as Producer*, which is more or less like this: “The concept of technique is the dialectical starting point for overcoming the infertile contrast between form and content”. I wanted to talk about the Museum, but I was not interested in making a technical report about it. I wanted to talk about the burdens and contradictions that that Museum carries, and about what it evokes. The references would come and cross each other. I had Kenneth Anger in my head as reference because I really like *Scorpio* and *Lucifer Rising*. I had even thought about something mystical. In *Lucifer Rising*, there are the pyramids, and I thought that these modernist, brutalist

constructions are kind of unidentified objects really. They are sort of mysterious like the pyramids. Architecture is a fascinating thing, because we build things (or rather, the others build, the exploited labour force) that will determine the flows of our movements, will greatly influence our relationships and our bodies.

During the screening of *Tropical Curse* at the *Tropicália and Beyond* film programme at Tate Modern in November 2017, there were comments about the relation of the film with those by Rogério Sganzerla (in particular, *The Red Light Bandit* and *It's All Brazil*). How do you undertake this dialogue with Cinema Novo/Marginal? What is there in common and what is different, particularly considering your film and those by Sganzerla? And do you think your generation relates to this legacy in any way?

I think this relationship varies a lot. Generations are also diverse. I think that each person from my generation (30-year-olds and a bit older) had a specific background and context. I was very, very influenced by Sganzerla. I saw a complete retrospective by him in 2005 that changed my life, really. But at no point I had thought of Sganzerla when making the film. Then I realised that it has a lot to do with *It's All Brazil* and *It's Not All True*, especially, as well as a bit of *The Red Light Bandit*. The other day I saw *Copacabana Mon Amour* for the third time (the first one after doing *Tropical Curse*) and I found it very crazy that there is a sheet ghost chasing Helena Ignez on the coast. I did not make a direct reference. I did not even remember that the film had that. But somehow that must have stayed in my head. Now, to say what there is in common and what is different, I would have to think and elaborate a little more. I think it is more different than similar, but it must ring a bell quite a bit really. I had just not made the connection before. As I said, if there was any filmmaker who was an initial reference, that was Kenneth Anger (I just cannot say if this is in the film or if it was a delusion of mine).

Seeing the film again, the idea that our tropical curse is the future that never comes came very strongly to me. What is the tropical curse in *Tropical Curse*?

Was it Stefan Zweig who threw this curse in Brazil? Or did he just recognise the scent of promises without ever realising that the promises would not be fulfilled? He killed himself though, didn't he? I do not know what the tropical curse of the film is, but my curse is to make films without money. *Tropical Curse* had no incentive. I took out R\$ 500 from my pocket to (symbolically) pay for the soundtrack, the English translation, the ghost sheet and a pineapple.

Joana Traub Csekö

Interview by e-mail on December 18, 2017

Cinema Novo, very much represented by Glauber Rocha, feels like incarnating violence, hunger and underdevelopment in a kind of aesthetics. At the same time, there is a lot of criticism of a certain binarism, or political Manichaeism, in this first phase of the movement. In your dissertation, you advocate an investigation of the idea of Brazilianness as something hybrid, complex, multifaceted. How do you see (and here specifically thinking of *HU*,

the documentary) your exercise as an artist to explore these issues and the exercise of Glauber's generation?

I really like Cinema Novo movement and especially Glauber's films, like *Land in Anguish* and *Black God, White Devil*. He is certainly a reference. Like Hélio Oiticica, they are authors-artists who constitute a certain ground for my production, something like a place to start from. They founded this "common ground" with aesthetic thoughts through which we can see ourselves as Brazilians, as an underdeveloped country, with all ambiguities that this brings. I think Glauber is quite contemporary, despite, of course, his production being in another historical moment (although with the white coup and Temer in office [*Michel Temer was then the president of Brazil at the time of the interview*], we see that much of what he thematises and problematises in his films has not yet been solved). Thinking especially of Rio de Janeiro and the recent mega-events that took place in the city (World Cup and the Olympics), leaving a trail of corruption and obsolete constructions as main legacy, we realise that underdevelopment and its power games are still issues that we need to deal with. *HU* proposes to investigate an emblematic case in which, for various reasons (political discontinuities, slowness, irresponsibility), we witness this monumental building immersed in deep conditions of underdevelopment. It seemed necessary to put this story together again, bring it up, so that we, as Brazilians, may reflect about how not to fall into the same traps.

We must also take into account that I come from another field, that of the visual arts, and that, although I relate to/know/follow the national cinema, I am not an expert. I understand the concepts that Glauber created for his "Aesthetics of Hunger" as founders of a certain attempt of Brazilianness, to perceive ourselves better and to operate from our circumstances. This is how I instrumented these concepts so that they integrated the way we deal with *HU*. Considering that the film was made almost ten years ago, when the discussion about art and politics was not at an as evident moment as now, Glauber, as well as other artists like Rosângela Rennó, Hélio Oiticica, Cildo Meireles, Artur Barrio, helped me to think about how to create an experimental language for the film that could unite art and politics.

When we approach the HU building, there is no way not to think about its aesthetics. As a modernist construction and ruin, it is extremely photogenic, but in no way have I wanted to empty the political sense that this construction contains. On the contrary, it was necessary that the way we presented the building visually reflected on what was said about it. We even had an ethical duty to rescue its dignity, beyond the mistakes that led it to ruins. Let us remember that the building also keeps its initial vocation to be one of the largest public hospitals in Latin America. There are all the professionals and researchers who have dedicated their lives to the place, sometimes developing research and cutting-edge treatments there. HUCFF is a reference hospital in Rio, despite all its precariousness.

Finally, I believe that today the Brazilian experimental cinema goes by a lot of the documentary genre, though not only, of course. I give the example of the film *Housemaids* (2012), by Gabriel Mascaro. For me, it is a film that uses very original and overwhelming strategies to deal with a very hard aspect of Brazilian

society and, on the other hand, deeply rooted, naturalised. The film makes us deal with the reality of domestic work from very close points of view, placing us within its narrative, so that we are not indifferent to what we have just seen, it generates deep reflections. I hope that *HU* has the same transformative quality, that we do not leave exactly the same after watching it, that we can unveil some foundational aspects of our underdevelopment through its troubled history.

A second point that caught my attention in your dissertation was the emphasis on the Brasília project – a happy coincidence, since the thesis also deals with documentaries focusing on the construction of the city. The modernist school is harshly criticised by you, especially the thought of Le Corbusier, via Beatriz Jaguaribe’s text on modernist ruins. I would like you to comment a bit more on your perception of this concept. Can we say that it was assimilated for the execution of the documentary? How does the image of the film build this aesthetics of the modernist ruin?

The criticism falls, in reality, on Le Corbusier’s project for Rio, which is really scary. And on certain authoritarianism of architecture in relation to the surrounding environment, in my view, one of the problems of the most orthodox and European modern architecture. I think the film incorporates, yes, this concept by Beatriz and also the idea that this ruin, now invisible, is the modernist future (and a future of a nation) that, on the one hand, was lost and, on the other hand, was partly implemented with some accuracy, but also with many mistakes – such as the belief in the car as a solution for urban mobility. On the other hand, I believe that the film also respects some dignity of this public construction idealised to be one of the main hospitals of Latin America, the speech of architect Margareth Pereira in the film synthesises that a little. As I have said, the film seeks an aesthetics that encompasses its modernist forms worn out by the time, turned into ruin, as well as to articulate this aesthetics to the political context(s) that generated it and made it what we see today. Therefore, we have used the artifice of the screen divided in the middle in which we have, for example, the speeches of the interviewees on one side and images of the building-ruin simultaneously with those testimonies.

The testimonies are all of people who dedicate themselves to the HU, or researchers of the UFRJ itself. For me, the talks that permeate the film and narrate the history of a place that is so emblematic and symbolic of the Brazilian public thing are what give the human scale to this monumental building. By the time we released *HU*, I received some comments (mostly from people in the visual arts) on the option to include this discursive dimension in the film, as if, in a way, that would “hinder” a more formal view on the building and its ruins. As far as I am concerned, I have always found it of utmost importance that the modernist forms of the HU were informed by its dramatic history. They make more sense in this way, and that is why it is a modernist ruin. The modernist ruin is not only the appearance of the building; it incorporates much more than that. One of the main reasons that made me transform the research on the HU into a documentary was the opportunity to rescue a significant history of the Brazilian recent past.

Pedro Urano
Interview by e-mail on November 11, 2017

Regarding the language developed for *HU Enigma*, I know that prior to the feature film there was the short film *Homenagem a Matta-Clark* and also a Master's thesis on the HU, so I was wondering about at what moment the approach to the theme was defined in your head and in Joana Traub Csekö's as directors. Can the content and the form of the film be seen in isolation or are they interconnected from the beginning?

The correct sequence was: Joana's dissertation, the medium-length film (52 min) developed by means of the DOCTV programme, the feature film (long and medium have the same name, which may cause some confusion), and the short film *Homenagem a Matta-Clark*, which functioned as an epilogue to our work in the building. There is also Joana's photographic series, *HU series*, developed during the writing of the dissertation and exposed in the Galeria Novembro (RJ), and my photographic series called *Homage to Luke Howard*, which took place in the building, though it does not refer to it, but to the cloud of dust that rose from the ground at the time of the implosion. This last work maintains, for me, a close relation with the other "homage" (to Matta-Clark). In other words, I paid two tributes: to an artist and to a scientist.

This was the story: I have known Joana for a long time; we were colleagues at the School of Communication of UFRJ. On a visit to her atelier, I came across the images of the *HU series* still in process; she was investigating montage possibilities between one photograph and another. I asked about the building, she told me its history. I saw an intriguing documentary there. The edict for DOCTV was open. I proposed the idea for the film. She was immersed in the writing and presentation of her dissertation, but she entrusted me with a chapter from the text called *HU Enigma* – it was the first name of the project I wrote. I invited her to direct the film with me. She had no previous experience with cinema, but since my previous film (*Royal Road of Cachaça*) I had convinced myself of the fertility of working in partnership. Lonely creation is a fiction. The pair is the fundamental unit of creation.

We requested the floor plans of the building and walked each floor before starting the shoot (it took us two weeks in that effort). It was necessary to know the building to construct an image for it, which was not at all easy, especially due to the size of the building. Since I had decided that the film would be shot entirely inside the building, the image I dreamed of for it had a "cubist" quality, for gathering a myriad of perspectives and fragments. The HU, when it "fit" in the camera frame, concealed its complexity – it was just another building of modern architecture. The idea of dividing the screen, therefore, had already been suggested by the *HU series* photographs, but it was necessary to conform them to the cinema device. That was when we came up with the idea of running the film with the 2:1 (two to one) window, that is, the length of the screen would be twice its height. An unusual proportion in cinema, but common in the History of Art. In addition, this ratio allowed us to work, when the screen was divided, with two squares. The interviews would thus happen inside a square, a format, let us say, with the largest possible right foot, a reference to the architecture of the building.

There was also an experimental disposition regarding the interviews, we wanted

to challenge a certain idea of intimacy, very present in the discussions about the documentary at the time. Our interviewees were positioned in the centre of the picture, far from us: a body in the midst of architecture. The institution insisting on overlapping people. The latter, always identified by the name, but also by their functional framework in the institutional structure. The option for the two squares also allowed the construction of an electronic debate, with two juxtaposed interviews. Even the most neutral image of the building, when juxtaposed, was suggestive. The work with the squares was, in fact, a montage on the montage. And it required tremendous discipline when filming: we measured the height of the camera, the size of the plan, the lens used. When we juxtaposed images of the two halves of the building, this rigor was extremely necessary. The camera monitor was occupied by countless lines and markings. Therefore, there is no way to think of form and content in isolation. There is a way to be careless. Strictly speaking, the same applies to a series of dichotomies: body and spirit, nature and artifice, etc. Everything is only one thing and that is all.

As you made the short film *Homenagem a Matta-Clark*, I imagine his work was somehow a reference. What other works, artists or texts were mobilised in the pre-production of the film? And what dialogues do you believe they establish with the final version of *HU*?

Certainly, the work of Gordon Matta-Clark is the most fundamental reference of this set of films. I do not remember any other. We saw Frederik Wiseman's *Hospital* only once during the preparation, but it was, let us say, a reference in opposition; we did not want to film that way.

As far as sound is concerned, it seems extra-diegetic, but sounds as if it were the result of a collage of sounds that could be diegetic. How did the conception and mixing take place?

The direct sound is diegetic, recorded on location by Edson Secco, also responsible for the sound editing. As the tacit nature of some images required no synchronised sound recording, on some occasions I asked Edson to sonically explore the so-called "lame leg". On one of these occasions, Edson, who is also a musician, percussed a melodic rhythm on pieces of iron abandoned around the place. In the edition, this "melody" was associated with the sound of walking on pieces of broken glass (a sound of agony, which reminds me of Cildo Meireles' installation *Through*) – some floors of the "dry leg" were covered in fragments of glass from the windows, which had been stolen in search of the aluminum of the frames. There is also the original soundtrack of the film, composed by the experimental musician LC Csekö. It was recorded live in a studio in Embu das Artes while the film was showing on a small computer. The track uses symphonic instruments, sometimes percussed in an unconventional way. The mixing took place at the CTAv and counted on the composer's monitoring.

But perhaps the moment of the soundtrack that calls more attention is the implosion of the abandoned half of the building. In the film, the building falls in silence, in slow motion, and only when the image is obliterated by the thick cloud of dust do we hear the sound of the implosion. This temporal disjunction of sound and image is related to my experience of the event. The image captured by the

camera played at normal speed and synchronised with the sound was nothing like the experience of the implosion recorded in my memory. It was also necessary to avoid the replay from numerous angles, a common place of audiovisual records of implosions.

In a sense, I see the film as the encounter of a generation of documentary filmmakers with the history of their city/country, so that this encounter would result in a discourse that seems to call attention to issues such as the national past and its consequences on society today. Is it a political film?

The film incarnates a movement to try to understand how things have become what they are. In this sense, it points to an intervention in the present. Or, at least, it produces the discomfort that can result in an intervention. There is a visceral criticism to the idea of *tabula rasa*, so dear to the modernist generation; perhaps this is the most radically political component of the film: there is no way to “mend” Brazil by ignoring its past.

At the same time that the white elephant that the hospital has become is perceived, there is a nostalgic speech, especially in architect Margareth Pereira’s talk. Could the ruin of the hospital have been avoided or was it already predestined at birth?

No doubt there is the temptation to put the failure of the building on the account of the architect, on the hospital project. The fact of having chosen a vertical hospital, which depends so much on lifts, was certainly a complication. Still, however monumental the project would be, there is, today, even greater demand for health services. And no one will convince me that there is no State money for that, one can only observe the amounts that go around the circuits of corruption or the daily pardon of millionaire debts like the recent 25 billion that a bank owed to the Federal Revenue, but had the debt forgiven by the CARF [*administrative council of tax appeals*]. I am not just saying that the ruin could have been prevented; I am saying that the ruin, not only of the HU, but also of public health and education in Brazil, is a project. We spend a lot of energy, money and lives every day to keep our backwardness. It is not by chance, it is not an accident, it is a project. The point is to wonder: who benefits? It is worth remembering, finally, that while we were shooting *HU*, a new candidate for white elephant was being built in Rio: the City of Music, then City of Arts, in Barra, a project of a French architect for a building planned in the urbanism of the neighbourhood (designed by Lúcio Costa).

How do you, as a documentary filmmaker, relate to the legacy of Cinema Novo? And here I think not only of the most general inheritance (imagery, themes, ideology, all that...), but also of the particularity of space (especially that of Rio de Janeiro) and the idea of underdevelopment (backwardness, failure, etc.).

The first Brazilian film that marked me, still as an adolescent, was *The Guns*, by Ruy Guerra. My first experience in feature films was in a documentary by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, who lived in the same street as my parents. Therefore, I have no, let us say, “problem” with that generation or their films. I especially like

Glauber, Nelson, Ruy. But they are very distant references to me nowadays. I never thought about the relation between *HU* and Cinema Novo films. I lived most of my life in Rio de Janeiro. In Brazil, the option for underdevelopment is more alive than ever in times of Temer and his group's coup d'état. Thus, I would bet that the relationship you suggest comes through the modernist project in architecture, one of the central issues of the film. Cinema Novo would bring a little of this modern perspective, a certain passion for the idea of the "new", etc., but this is perhaps its most problematic aspect. This love of the "new" in me has given way to the love of difference, something of who is passionate about the deep history of the planet. I am xenophilic, like my best contemporaries.

Vincent Carelli

Interview by Skype on August 30, 2018

In the text *Moi, un Indien*, you recover some of your trajectory in *Vídeo nas Aldeias*, commenting also on the implementation of the filming workshops, a milestone for the project. How did this implementation take place and what characteristics would you highlight?

The first workshop was in 1997. That was when we started to try out what format would work. It happened in the region of Parque do Xingu and was, in fact, a great meeting, a mega production, with 30 people participating. We gave them some cameras and they started making contact with each other. This was a national workshop. Then, we decided to try out what a regional workshop would be like, which took place in the context of a training course, in fact, of indigenous authors, researchers and teachers, but in which we took the opportunity to insert a video workshop and an animation workshop. Finally, we chose the model of each one in their village, speaking their language, with an already consolidated intimacy. Then we took some time experimenting with various formats until we got to that. There were usually two cycles: three weeks of production and then one month for editing. But that was also changing halfway through, when the digital revolution happened. In the first workshops, it was still analogic, so we had to get people to edit at the head office. With the digital revolution, it has already been possible to edit in the village, which ends up leaving it open for new shooting in case it is seen as necessary in the process of making up the film. Even so, it is hard to do it in a month. So there was all this process until finding something that worked most productively, always considering the language barrier and the barrier of intimacy with people as well.

You mentioned periods of three weeks and a month, relatively long periods for workshops. Would you say that the material, then, ends up being built to the extent that there is conviviality?

Of course, this is fundamental. If you arrive in a village, even if you know the people, it takes a week for the people to get used to your presence, to start some closeness. It can no way be less time. You are entering other worlds and establishing relationships with people who are very present. So either you go into an immersion, or you run on the outside.

In a conversation with Ariel Ortega, he commented on the pre-disposition

and curiosity to participate in the workshops, while other colleagues were not interested. Is there a prospect, in this sense, to select the participants?

There are those who entered mistakenly and those who became a little mistaken, it is a bit like this, the public of the workshops are young people appointed by the community. It may be a political indication, the tribal chief's son, for example. But whatever the case, there is a commitment to the collective, because it is the collective that appoints. We accept what they suggest. Then there is the practice, and then it is hard. So if the guy entered just for a little show to the camera, he will quit soon. Because it is also an immersion on their part: to shoot in the morning, to watch in the afternoon, to make films in the evening. It is three weeks. Now, there are the talents, and this is not taught. And there are the guys who sort it out, who are smart, who will do cool things, but to whom videoing will be a temporary thing in their trajectory. There is everything, but, in general, they are young people who will quickly gain some leadership in the group, be president of an association or even enter politics. And others who will make it a profession, as a cameraman, as a reporter. It is a field open for them, which is very good. Anyway, we had an era of workshops. Nowadays, we are doing very little, with the dismantling of the Ministry of Culture.

In *Moi, un Indien*, you even comment on the project budget. Does financing come mostly from foreign country bodies, like Norway?

Norway left as well; they would cut 50% every year until it was definitively over. We had no funding, so it was years of drought. We gave some workshops, but with damage compensation resources from big companies like Eletrobrás and Vale, punctual things. Some groups continue to do so. The fact is that we lived a moment in which we profited from the wave of Lula's era and from the Pontos de Cultura programme and a lot of things could be done: expanding to other groups, giving many workshops, publishing a lot. And it was important because the films reverberated, opened new spaces, were in festivals that were not specific about ethnographic documentaries, the key in which we were normally framed. *Corumbiara* and *The Hyperwomen* have just opened frontiers, and *Martyrdom* has brought consecration. The success that the films and the workshops made attracted the attention of the artistic class, of the film people, of the big festivals, of the critics, of the scholars, and finally it was spreading. And this also had a return in the sense that a lot of people started to propose collaborative works, this is happening throughout Brazil. The State failed, but that did not stop the thing from happening. *Vídeo nas Aldeias* has become a source of inspiration. Despite the crisis, it is a phenomenon that is under way. Today, almost all work with indigenous people in Brazil has an audiovisual component.

On the issue of authorship, Ariel Ortega said that this is a concern of the white man. Some speak of co-authoring films, others speak of hybrid films. How do you see this point within the production of *Vídeo nas Aldeias*?

They are all collaborative. Ariel's view is cool because, deep down, it does not matter if the blood is white or mixed; the important thing is that the film is being made. Even among them, for example, in the case of *Bicycles of Nhanderú*, the collective is bigger. Ariel's and Patrícias's brothers take part and could sign as

well. As both had already come from the experience of another film, they ended up signing for bureaucratic convenience, because they have to register with Ancine and etc., and if there are five or six people in the direction, there has to be the documentation of all of them in the process... Anyway, it becomes a nightmare, so there is also this factor, but the brothers could also sign. Other films, such as *Tava*, are explicitly a collaborative job, in which each one in the team plays a part. I think I had a leading role because I signed a commitment to Iphan [*National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute*], but this film would not be made without Ariel or Patrícia. It is the result of a trajectory of the previous films. *Bicycles of Nhanderú* already consolidates this religious and philosophical restlessness of Ariel's, so the investigation on this theme [*of the jesuitic reductions in São Miguel das Missões*] was part of his restlessness and is a theme that can be dealt with only by them. We would never enter it. Ariel is even more qualified in the sense that, whether in Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Argentina, all the interviewees had been to his grandfather's village. He has not only an important but fundamental credit, without which there would not be a film. And Patrícia managed the second camera with a very timely sense of capturing images, interviewing people as well.

Now, it is evident that we have a role, even in the *Bicycles of Nhanderú*, once the material is produced, to build a visual narrative from a set of sequences, of moments that are portrayed there. Anyway, but every film has it, even the ones I sign. This is the editor's role, and editing is, in general, in our hands. But whether it is a big question, this question of authorship, or not, it is always on our side. In the 25-year book of *Vídeo nas Aldeias*, we have tried to reconstitute the multiple inputs in the process of building some films, how certain collaboration took place, because each case is a case. But it is as if the workshop films were too good to be true. It is the fake diamond. I do not know what the interest of this discussion is. In the book, we chose some films and, with the participants, Indians and workshop instructors, tried to reconstitute the trajectory of those films and give some concreteness to a normal collaborative workshop project. You do the workshop, you suggest, you encourage. It is a bit of a thesis supervision job, especially because, in the first experiences, we work without a prior script. The script is being built from the sequences they are doing, the daily things, very much the result of their interaction with their characters. In brief, they are varied *inputs* that take place in a very open and fluid way.

In an interview to the ECO-Pós journal of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, you comment on the production of Andrea Tonacci, in particular the documentary *Hills of Disorder*. You said that you were called in to take part in the extra material on the DVD, but you did not participate because you thought the extra should be the main character talking in that film, since that would be missing from the film itself.

I do not think it is missing. It is his choice, his point of view, his place of speech as narrator. Tonacci, to the end, was always reticent about the intrusion, the interference that this new technology would be.

I also talked about *Hills of Disorder* to ask about the Brazilian cinema production on the indigenous issue apart from *Vídeo nas Aldeias*. How do

you see this relationship, thinking as from Cinema Novo, with *Iracema – Uma Transa Amazônica*, for example, until today?

In *Iracema*, the Indians enter very peripherally. There is no interaction between Paulo César Pereio [*actor who plays Tião Brasil Grande in the film*] and the Indians specifically, they appear more as background. But this dynamic, this mechanism to get an actor and throw him in the scene was very cool.

There are also *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*, *Pindorama*, *Macunaíma*, films that directly or indirectly touch on the indigenous issue. Has this been lost since the Cinema da Retomada?

With the Sectoral Fund and the Prodav [*Audiovisual Development Support Programme*], a number of edicts were launched and the theme started being included, mainly on television series. There was a lot of interest and I think a lot was produced, although I have not seen it yet. Even fiction, which went to Cannes, went to Berlin. I do not like to comment on the work of others, it is kind of picky. But it is resumption, there is still everything. To summarise, without mentioning names or titles, it is still much of Indians instrumentalising the script of the whites, that old romanticised image.

Speaking more specifically about your films, critic and researcher Victor Guimarães says that *Corumbiara* is the film of defeat and *Martyrdom* is the film of confrontation. In both, there is a very strong discussion about space. In *Corumbiara*, especially, the territory appears as a destroyed territory, the village left behind, a road built with the only purpose of destroying that village. From the director's point of view, how do you convey such a situation through images?

This is a movement which is sort of ours. In this case, of mine and of the whole team involved. In relation to the indigenous issue, everything is a dispute. Territory, resource, space, earth. This is the eternal struggle. Today, the image has become a tool of flagrant action and of dispute. Yesterday they were attacking a village and they filmed the helicopter themselves... The image, witnessing, denouncing, was incorporated. And also the images of the ceremonials, shooting a little piece, posting it on Facebook. It is a bargaining chip, of affirmation in relationships, which has been incorporated in many ways. Now, building narratives about these stories is yet a more complicated step. *Corumbiara* is a 25-year trajectory summary. A history. And *Martyrdom* as well. And the other two we are making, too. These are stories that happen over time. A testimonial record of history. These films have this character. But they all relate to the territorial dispute, to the dispute of resources, to the colonial process in progress, to the colonial relationship asserting itself. The dispute takes place in unequal terms. Everything is expropriation, anyway. But at the same time they all give the dimension that everything looks like a tragedy, it is not. In the sense that they give answers to all this, to all attacks, through technology. They have a survival strategy, they are not passive. The key is these two readings: for all aggression, there is an affirmation and a process of resistance. Expropriation of spaces and resources, on the one hand; but also their appropriation of technology in a new context. Otherwise it is very simple and manicheistic. This indigenous issue

always ends up in this simplistic thing. The challenge is to do something that goes beyond that, to give an understanding from the other side as well.

The images of territorial disputes also permeate *Two Villages, One Path, Guarani Desterro* and *Tava, The House of Stone*. In the latter, the ruins of São Miguel das Missões are even more striking. Not only the ruins themselves, but the boundaries of that territory and the riverbanks intended for the sale of indigenous crafts.

I really like *Tava*. I sent it to some festivals, it was refused. But just for having made it, I am already satisfied. For me, it was an adventure. Getting those testimonials, translating all that material. And we got a lot more, but we had to select. The footage itself deconstructed Iphan's expectation. They had already taken a step ahead and published a book called *Tava, Sagrada Casa de Pedra*; that was actually why we called the film *Tava, The House of Stone*, because there are some who say it is sacred, but there are others who say it is not. All this not to give a closed version of their memory. It is a living, reconstructed memory. And always in the sense of complexifying it, because there are several versions about whom the Jesuits were, whether the *tavas* were *tavas* or things of the white man, anyway. After the documentary, there was a mega project by the National Iphan to make a great museum in São Miguel das Missões, because they discovered that the *tava* is the oldest and most important architectural monument in Brazil. Then they called Ariel and called me to discuss the project, and I proposed a change in the relationship between the project and the Indians. Because the museum would have one half oriented to the missionaries and another half oriented to the Indians. And I proposed that this part for the Indians would have to be built with the Indians. But not just with Ariel. You have to open a general consultation process with the Guarani groups, discussing in loco what the museum would be like, how they wanted to be represented. The architects who planned it accepted it, but there was the impeachment and everything began to go backwards at Iphan. It was already a dream at that time, and now... It has become a nightmare.

Ariel Ortega

Interview by WhatsApp on July 19, 2018

When did you start getting involved with the Vídeo nas Aldeias project?

In 2007, through an inventory of the Iphan, the Vídeo nas Aldeias staff came to my village to make an audiovisual record. At the time, I was one of those selected to attend a workshop that they were going to give in a small village on the outskirts of Porto Alegre and another in São Miguel das Missões. But I went not knowing exactly what it was or how it would be. No one else wanted to do it, so I went. It was the first time I had access to a camera. I was about 22 years old.

How does the workshop dynamics work? Do you receive the camera right away or is there any theoretical stage before that?

In this first workshop, we had two teachers. They showed how the camera works, basic things really, and we went out to shoot really early. At the end of the day, we would gather the material filmed by each one and show it. We would show it

to the people in the village and also discuss the filming, if it was crooked, if it was shaken. Every day, for two weeks, we would do that. The second stage of the workshop is two more weeks dedicated to editing. The *Two Villages, One Path* project emerged from this workshop.

But do you already start the workshop with an idea for a film or is it something that is being built throughout the process? What was it like in the case of *Two Villages, One Path*?

During this first workshop, I, for example, did not know how to make a film. Or even the village where the shooting began. So I had to explain to the villagers about the importance of making the film, but, at the same time, I did not master that either. Considering the other boys who were also attending the workshop, I was the one who knew a little more about the importance of audiovisual, of the political importance of those tools. But at first we did not know what to show or what he wanted to show, because the village was small and in the middle of the city. Then we saw that that difficulty was part of that village, and that was what we had to show.

But was the narrative of the film being elaborated as the images were being made or only after the material was all shot?

In fact, during the projections at the end of the day, we would more or less see the stories, who was becoming a character in the village, who would be the main characters, so that the next day we could continue from it. It was when we realised that besides the production of handicrafts, the main issue was the question of the territory, the relation with the land and the relationship between the village and that surrounding city. The lack of more woods, the lack of raw materials to make handicrafts. And also the relationship with spirituality. So we would build the script and the story from that. We projected the film to the village and we would build it together.

Mariano is one of those main characters you mention. How was the approach towards him? Did he agree easily to take part in the documentary?

I already knew Mariano before the shooting, because I live in the same village as he does in São Miguel das Missões. I gradually learned to identify the characters, and I started teaching the other boys to do it. With some, you know right away that it will not work, but with Mariano it worked from the first time. Especially because he was very interested in this issue involving the Jesuit reductions, spirituality, our history... So he was very fond of talking about it.

Was your relationship with the ruins of São Miguel das Missões already something strong in your life or was it something that was accentuated by the filming?

I do not know... I had a more a relationship of wanting to know, of curiosity. I always wondered if I was a descendant of the Guarani who lived there or of those who went to take refuge in the woods. That was a curiosity I had. Interviewing and filming the people, many of them see the *tava* as a sacred place, that the

Jesuits came and helped the Guarani, that they built something together, that is, they see it as something positive. And I was not sure whether I saw it as positive or negative, I was somewhat in the middle. Because many Guarani died, and the Jesuit priests were also invaders who, somehow, exploited the Guarani. So I have always identified myself more with those who took refuge, those who did not accept to live in the reductions. But there are still many other issues that can be shown. I, as a Guarani, ask myself many questions. Why did that happen? Why did many Guarani accept the presence of the priests? Many converted to Christianity, but not entirely. I think it was more of a strategy. Because if they had not agreed to live in the reductions, we might not have been able to circulate in this place today. I try to interpret it this way. And after the film, this place has become a place of reference for the Guarani people.

There are many images in common or similar in *Two Villages, One Path*, *Guarani Exile*, and *Tava, The House of Stone*. How did the unfolding of these projects happen? Were they thought of at the same time?

In the case of *Two Villages, One Path*, it was very difficult to decide to make only one film, because each village wanted a film. But we did not know that there would be continuity with *Guarani Exile*. It is that *Two Villages, One Path* circulated a lot and people wanted to know more stories, so we saw the need to go a little deeper. *Guarani Exile* is more political, it is very important for people who do not know the reality of the Guarani, the territories, how the lands are demarcated ... and having had the experience of narrating the film was something very different from what I had done before.

But is *Guarani Exile* the result of another workshop or was the material also captured in that initial workshop?

We needed to make more trips to make new images, so we called the people who had participated in the first workshop to come with us. It is when Patrícia [Ferreira, an indigenous filmmaker], who had already made *Bicycles of Nhanderú* with us soon after *Two Villages, One Path*, joins us to make *Guarani Exile*.

What about *Tava, The House of Stone*?

That was later. We decided to make a documentary as a way to make a document about the origin of the *tava*, to investigate whether it should be called *tava mirim* or not, that is, whether it was a sacred place for the Guarani or not because it was built with the Western invaders. That was the discussion. The film happened as from another inventory of Iphan, who invited Vídeo nas Aldeias to register the *tava* ruins. Since we had already done the workshop, they called us again.

I would like to talk a little about the issue of authorship in these films. The credits are usually separated into direction, sound and images. In practice, how was division of tasks?

Each one did a bit of everything. Nobody just directed. Sometimes I would do the audio; sometimes I would do the camera. It was a team in which each one did various things.

Did you also take part in the editing process?

I have always participated in every editing. When Ernesto [*de Carvalho, member of Vídeo nas Aldeias*] could not come here to the village, I would go to Olinda, in Pernambuco [*head office of VNA*], and stayed there for a couple of weeks, mainly to help translate the material.

How do you see the discussion around authorship in the films of Vídeo nas Aldeias? Do you think your work or the work of your colleagues have a signature of their own or do they follow the same profile?

For having done the workshop, I think I was part of the film as a small tool. But, in fact, the whole village is entitled to the film. Speaking as a Guarani, I do not think anyone can take ownership of it. I cannot simply put it as mine, of my own, because others may have the same point of view.

Are you saying then that there would be no need to claim such authorship?

It is a collective job for the collective. It is a very Western thing to try to keep insisting on this. Once again, we come to this thing of property, which is mine, which is my authorship, which is my idea. It is not very “collective” to think that way.

Over the past ten years, in addition to continuing to produce documentaries, you have gone from being a student to a workshop facilitator. How do you see this movement?

For me, it is really cool. Arriving in the villages and hearing from the boys that they also want to make documentaries. Seeing that they understand the importance of knowing how to use this tool in order to help strengthen and rescue some things of our culture.

Apart from the production of Vídeo nas Aldeias, do you think other Brazilian films have been dealing with the indigenous question today?

Very few. Although Vídeo nas Aldeias workshops are a little stuck now, because we have had a lot of resource cuts. It is important to continue this work of training more indigenous filmmakers to tell our own history. If we do not do this, it will always be the non-indigenous who go to the villages to register.

In addition to directing the films, you appear on the scene as a character. Has this transition been smooth for you? Was it a prior decision or something that naturally happened during the shooting?

It was natural. In *Two Villages, One Path*, for example, it was indeed a necessity. From the beginning of the workshop, I understood that it was necessary to reach out to the characters, talk to them, and the other boys were shy to do so. So they came and filmed me talking, thus I also became a character.

Translation by Betânia Azevedo

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