Male Homosexuality in Brazilian Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s

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James N. Hodgson

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures
Abstract

The representation of homosexuality in the Brazilian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s is generally dismissed as homophobic on the grounds that it confirms stereotypical and oppressive views of homosexual men. While it is true that many films produced during the era repeat conventional notions of sexual identity, this dismissal arguably overlooks a variety of subtle and subversive representations of homosexuality. To contest the prevailing view, eleven films have been selected from important movements of Brazilian cinema of the period; these include examples of avant-garde and popular filmmaking. An analytical approach informed by queer theory – a critical account of homosexuality and sexual identity – is used to make a series of close readings of narrative form and content. It is suggested that the apparent heterosexism of many of the films is shown to be tacitly or accidentally subverted via the implication that sexual identity is unstable and contested. A number of films are shown to illustrate ways in which oppressive hierarchies might be disabled through a reconfiguring of homosexual identity. It is argued that film form – the films’ self-referential or reflexive aspects, as well as the way in which the films construct spectating positions – is the central factor in subverting conventional views of homosexuality. Such form facilitates multiple readings of the content, therefore enabling a queer interpretation to be posited. Ultimately, it is argued that the value of these films lies in the sometimes contradictory fashion in which they present oppressive notions of homosexuality on-screen while at the same time gesturing towards ways in which such oppression could be challenged.
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Introduction

The representation of homosexuality in Brazilian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s is widely regarded as lamentable by critics. The vast majority of the films that deal with the topic, or mention it in passing, have been dismissed for perpetuating intolerance and disparaging the homosexual subject in the name of entertainment – these films sketch outrageous caricatures of gay men, and play to popular stereotypes for comic effect. This thesis will begin from the premise that the dismissal of such productions as ‘homophobic’ makes two errors. Firstly, such critics often unthinkingly affirm models of sexual identity founded on the notion that sexual identity constitutes a subject’s essence, as they tend to call for representations of homosexuals as good citizens – as respectable individuals who take pride in their sexual identity – in the place of pejorative stereotype. A wealth of scholarship has demonstrated the complicity between sexual essentialism and the continued subordination of sexual minorities to the dominant form by which sexuality is organized (heterosexuality).

This is due to the implicit relationship of hierarchy established between hetero- and homosexual identity – a feature that will be explored in more detail shortly. In this sense, the appeal for homosexuals to be respected as citizens, rather than presented in terms of stereotype, would seem to unwittingly repeat the oppression against which

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such critics appeal. Secondly, these critics miss the potential for a critique of oppressive ideology that might be derived from the formal features that characterized the cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, including the tendency to encourage critical spectating practices, and the use of strategies that call to attention the film’s status as an artificial production (reflexivity). Without a consideration of the nuances of form, an outright rejection of these films overlooks ways in which stereotype and caricature might be tempered or transformed by the cinematic medium itself.

This project will re-evaluate the cinematic production of the 1960s and 1970s in light of this. To do so, it will use an approach to sexual identity influenced by queer theory — a branch of critical thought concerning sexuality, explained in more detail shortly. It will examine cinematic representations of men who experience same-sex desire — both homosexual men and ostensibly heterosexual men — in Brazilian cinema from the 1960s to the early 1980s. The project will examine how such representations point towards reconfigurations of male identity that might arguably be described as queer and achieve a negation of the binaristic categories deployed to subordinate otherness and to naturalize heterosexist ideology — again, these terms will be clarified shortly. Not only do such queer men challenge dominant paradigms by which sexual identity is understood while exposing the contradictions within homophobic belief-systems; they also point to methods and strategies which may be used to challenge the hierarchical organization of social relations. Partly, this thesis will examine how the spectator is invited to participate in the undermining of oppressive ideology, often inadvertently or unintentionally, thanks to reflexivity — the importance of this formal trait to the Brazilian cinematic production of the period will be demonstrated later.

Throughout the project it will be argued that the principal value of the films examined lies in their tacit or accidental capacity to disturb oppressive social structures and undermine conventional notions of sexual identity, usually through configurations of film form.

**The Films**

The principal rationale behind the choice of films will now be offered. The major criterion used to determine inclusion was a cinematic treatment of (male) same-sex desire; specifically, films were selected that encouraged a discussion of sexuality in Brazilian culture through their engagement with same-sex desire. This project considered films from the major cinematic trends of the 1960s and 1970s with the aim of determining underlying consistencies in the treatment of same-sex desire across the output of the two decades. This includes examples from the well-known movement of avant-garde cinema, Cinema Novo – Ruy Guerra’s *Os cafajestes* (1962) and Glauber Rocha’s *Barravento* (1962) – which enabled an account to be taken of the way same-sex desire is dealt with in the ideological projects of marginal political directors of the early 1960s.

This thesis also examined the treatment of same-sex desire when cinematic production is driven by profit, thus popular and commercial cinema is taken into consideration. The homosexual is a stock figure in the popular genre of *pornochanchada*, and is usually a figure of comedy or ridicule – this will be explained in greater detail later on. In keeping with the principal criterion of film selection, three films were chosen where same-sex desire was expressed on-screen in some way, often deliberately
obscured or effaced: Fauzi Mansur’s *Uma verdadeira história de amor* (1971), Antônio Calmon’s *Nos embalos de Ipanema* (1978), and Alfredo Sternheim’s *Corpo devasso* (1980). Finally, Levi Salgado’s *Os rapazes das calçadas* (1981) presents the viewer with several instances of explicit homosexual pornography but it nonetheless retains and elaborates on the formal features shared by the examples of *pornochanchada* – for this reason, its inclusion was deemed valid.

Homosexual representation in cinema increased dramatically between 1960 and 1980 – in order to attend to the flourishing cinematic presence of homosexuality, a second criterion was used to select the films for this project. Films considered by critics and contemporary commentators to be significant to the filmography were chosen – either as exemplary of a particular trend in representation, or as noted departures from convention. Carlos Hugo Christensen’s *O menino e o vento* (1967) has been celebrated for its pioneering, sensitive treatment of homosexuality; while this sentiment may or may not be defensible, it was considered a suitable criterion to justify inclusion in this study.\(^5\) On the other hand, Antônio Carlos de Fontoura’s *Rainha diaba* (1974), Paulo César Saraceni’s *A casa assassinada* (1974), and Arnaldo Jabor’s *O casamento* (1976), have been derided by commentators for their especially negative portrayals of homosexuality: they indulge in an exaggerated rendering of the male homosexual as an effeminate, sadistic monster.\(^6\) These were included in the study in order to offer a rounded assessment of the treatment of same-sex desire and its relation to the representation of the homosexual subject, with the hope that an ostensibly unflattering portrait of homosexuality might be shown to have a productive dimension. Both *A casa assassinada* and *O casamento* are adaptations of literary texts

\(^5\) Moreno, *A personagem homossexual*, p.74.
it was considered legitimate to engage with a third adaptation, Bruno Barreto’s *O beijão no asfalto* (1980), in order to establish how the adaptation process can transform the representation of male homosexuality given in its source text.

A word on procurement of the titles in question: many of the films examined in this thesis are not currently in commercial circulation and only televised copies could be obtained. These films were presumably recorded from television broadcast to VHS cassette and then converted to digital format - as a result, the stills provided in this thesis are occasionally of poor quality. The limited availability of some of the cinematic production of the decade also meant that although the thesis aimed to cover the chief movements and trends in Brazilian cinematic production in the 1960s and 1970s, there were elements of production that were not included. Critics suggest that Glauber Rocha’s infamous short film *A cruz na praça* (1961) contains homoerotic content, but no copy is currently known to exist.⁷ Similarly, Djalma Limongi Batista’s short film *Um clássico dois em casa nenhum jogo fora* (1968), which explores homoeroticism in relation to football, could not be obtained for reasons of availability. On the other hand, the sheer quantity of 1970s popular Brazilian cinema that refers to male homosexuality made a selective approach necessary – Antônio Moreno’s extensive catalogue of such films points to seventy-one titles in the 1970s, of which the project has been able to consider eight. Given the time-frame of the project, it was not feasible to examine films from the avant-garde movement known as Cinema Marginal – an example that might be of interest for further study is João Silvério Trevisan’s 1971 film *Orgia, ou o homem que deu cria*, which has a variety of characters that express unconventional gendered and sexual behaviour, including the

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titular pregnant man. Although the project is clearly not exhaustive, it was able to suggest certain formal consistencies running throughout the cinematic production in Brazil by examining examples from main cinematic movements of the two decades.

**Film Form, Film Context**

One such consistency – cinematic reflexivity – is central to the arguments set out in the thesis. In brief, cinematic reflexivity describes instances where the film makes it clear that the illusion of reality it constructs is artificial. The spectator is temporarily ejected from absorption in the ‘reality’ of the diegesis – this separation might occasion a critical commentary on social structures, or merely a ridiculing of the narrative events. This suspension is temporary – the film’s illusion of reality resumes shortly after each reflexive instance. Robert Stam makes the point that the anti-illusionism of self-reflexive cinematic technique was held in high regard by those political and avant-garde filmmakers who sought to challenge the perceived illusionism of Hollywood’s classical, commercial cinema and to demystify bourgeois ideology. But he also warns against a simplistic equation between progressive cinema and reflexivity, noting that reflexivity can just as much disenchant a spectator as ‘[conceal] the deadly seriousness of the commercial – the fact that it is after the spectator’s money’.\(^8\) He also signals that neither self-reflexivity nor illusionism would be necessarily mutually exclusive; art has been nourished by a perpetual tension

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between the two tendencies, which interpenetrate one another and can easily exist within a single text.\(^9\)

Brazilian cinema certainly seems to confirm his view, in that both avant-garde and popular cinematic productions frequently employ reflexive components. Two examples of the movement of radical filmmaking known as Cinema Novo were considered (\textit{Os cafajestes} and \textit{Barravento}) in Chapter 1, and two directors whose work has been associated with it at various points are discussed in Chapter 4 – Paulo César Saraceni and Arnaldo Jabor. Cinema Novo is generally considered to have lasted from 1960 until 1972.\(^{10}\) As Randal Johnson and Robert Stam note, early examples were characteristically optimistic and mobilized savage critiques of the social order, in part realized using radical cinematic form: a fusion of Brechtian stylistics, Neorealism, and the auteurist production practices taken from French Nouvelle Vague.\(^{11}\) The directors shared a view of cinema as political praxis – as a method of resisting US neo-colonialism by presenting the Brazilian public with images and narratives that dealt with their economic and cultural subordination. It is important to point out that \textit{Os cafajestes} and \textit{Barravento} are not entirely representative of Cinema Novo, as they were produced during the movement’s infancy. A Neorealist aesthetic is more obvious in Nelson Pereira dos Santos’s \textit{Vidas secas} (1962), for example, while Rocha frequently used Brechtian elements in his 1964 masterpiece, \textit{Deus e o diabo na terra do sol}. Nevertheless, it is still possible to detect the stylistic features of Cinema Novo in \textit{Os cafajestes} and \textit{Barravento}, including Brechtian attitudes to the spectator and a critique of the status quo.

\(^9\) Stam, \textit{Reflexivity in Film and Literature}, p.17.

\(^{10}\) Mario do Socorro Carvalho, ‘Cinema Novo Brasileiro’ in \textit{História do cinema mundial}, org. by Fernando Mascarello (Campinas, Brazil: Papirus Editora, 2008), pp.289-310 (pp. 307-308).

Brecht theorized and produced theatre that aimed to combat the alienation of bourgeois ideology by temporarily severing the spectator from an unthinking (emotional) engagement with the diegesis and thus raising them up into political consciousness. Part of his strategy involved ‘Verfremdungseffeckt’, or distanciation, where an element draws attention to the play’s status as a play itself, disconnecting the spectators from a position of passive enjoyment and reforming them as active critics, thus making clear both the workings of ideology present within the play’s content and the relations of production that underwrite the play itself. Brechtian strategies became the principal method by which a spectator might be inducted into political awareness and formed a key part of the filmmakers’ attempts to press their case for political change.

Maria do Socorro Carvalho notes that the combination of Neorealism, Brechtian techniques and overt critique of the status quo became less common in the Cinema Novo films produced at the end of the decade, as many of the original directors had adopted a more commercial attitude to their filmmaking and traded mordant social commentary for higher budgets, colour productions and carnivalesque allegory – evident in Leon Hirszman’s 1967 film Garota de Ipanema, and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade’s 1969 film Macunaíma, for example. Several factors brought about this shift in aesthetic approach. On one hand, the overthrow of civilian democracy in the coup d’état of 1964 saw Brazil led by a series of increasingly extreme right-wing governments, the severest of which emerged out of a second coup-within-a-coup in 1968 and passed the AI-5 (Institutional Act No. 5) – an act that mandated censorship

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of all cultural production in Brazil. This drastically restricted the possibilities for making films (as well as other cultural products) critical of the government and created the need to present social commentary via concealed means, for example, using allegory.\textsuperscript{14} On the other hand, Stephanie Dennison and Lisa Shaw point out that many of those who took part in the movement came to the realization that ‘their preaching of a revolutionary utopia was both misguided, given the new political climate, and falling on deaf ears’.\textsuperscript{15} For these reasons, many filmmakers pushed for an aesthetic approach designed to attract the public. Still, traces of the distancing strategies inherited from Brecht could be seen in the 1970s work of directors associated with Cinema Novo (a point that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4).\textsuperscript{16}

For much of popular cinema, parodic self-referentiality served as a primary strategy by which an audience might be entertained. Dennison and Shaw argue that mimetic and parodic appropriations of the formal, stylistic and narrative conventions of Hollywood are frequently evident in popular Brazilian cinema. These appropriations would be congruent with other hybridized cultural productions prevalent in Latin America – themselves the result of complex processes in which cultural producers negotiate the hierarchical relationships that result from a domestic domain structured as the periphery to a centre that lies abroad.\textsuperscript{17} Reflexivity, in the form of parodic reinterpretations of Hollywood classics, was frequently manifest in the home-grown \textit{chanchada}, a genre of light comedy films modelled partly on Hollywood musicals but

\textsuperscript{14} Carvalho, ‘Cinema Novo Brasileiro’, p. 305.
\textsuperscript{17} Dennison and Shaw, \textit{Popular Cinema in Brazil}, pp. 4-5.
also infused with elements taken from Brazilian comic theatre, which arose as a serious contender for Brazilian audiences in the 1940s. While the chanchada fell out of popular favour in the 1960s, it resurfaced in the 1970s in a new guise: the pornochanchada. Like their chanchada forbears, early pornochanchadas offered audiences light-hearted comedy but traded musical numbers for soft-core erotica, and while the porno- prefix might suggest the genre included sexually explicit material, in practice nothing more than light titillation and sporadic female nudity ever made it to the screen. With the rise in pornochanchadas, the 1970s saw a resurgence in parodies of Hollywood films, including Bacalhau (1976), a spoof of Jaws (1975) and Nos tempos de vaselina (1979), a spoof of Grease (1978). Dennison and Shaw note that the genre tended to ridicule the propriety of an idealized Brazil with a ‘bad mannered, sluttish, utterly stupid’ version of Brazilian society. They point out that the infamous censorship of the early 1970s meant the transgressive content of pornochanchadas had to be implied or connoted rather than directly presented to the spectator. Parody of Hollywood production would inject pornochanchada with a kind of reflexivity, although an intertextual reference to another film might not necessarily break the illusion of the diegesis. It more clearly approximates the form outlined by Stam when the films attempt to appease (and outfox) the Brazilian censors. This could involve a self-conscious signalling of the film’s status as an aesthetic construction in order to tacitly include the forbidden material in the film (this point is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3).

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18 Dennison and Shaw note that chanchadas often made social commentary through parody of Hollywood itself, a strategy whose value lies in the capacity to ‘remorselessly [poke] fun at the modern, exposing the contradictions and failings of modernity, as experienced in Brazil, with a critical laugh’. Dennison and Shaw, Popular Cinema in Brazil, p. 5.
19 Dennison and Shaw, Popular Cinema in Brazil, p. 158.
Evidently, reflexivity is employed for a variety of different reasons in Brazilian cinematic production of the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, it can be suggested that reflexivity is often central to the construction of specific spectating positions – for example, the use of Brechtian stylistics as part of an attempt to generate active and critically engaged spectators. Given the relationship between reflexivity and the spectator, a short discussion of the way the project views spectatorship was deemed useful here. It is important to point out that a great deal of film scholarship centres around the construction of the spectator. Attempts to theorize spectatorship in terms of the psyche began with a group of theorists in the 1970s, most famously Laura Mulvey, author of the ground-breaking article ‘Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema’ in the journal *Screen* (1975). Mulvey’s thesis has been heavily criticised for effectively subsuming all spectating positions within that of the heterosexual male gaze, while refusing women a space within cinema – Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gamman detail multiple attempts to adjust Mulvey’s ideas to include the gaze of other spectators. One relevant attempt is made by Steven Drukman, who attempts to recoup Mulvean gaze theory for a gay spectator. Drukman suggests the gay male gaze derives pleasure both from the ego-identifications made with a male image and by taking it as an object of desire, producing a homosexual spectator ‘vigilant, questioning, reformulating … ever ready to claim and enunciate gay desire’.

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21 Using psychoanalytic concepts taken from both Freud and Lacan, Mulvey contends that classic Hollywood narrative cinema constructs a spectatorial position characterized in terms of the ‘male gaze’ that upholds and enforces patriarchy by encouraging spectators into a narcissistic identification with the male protagonist while negotiating the fact of sexual difference with recourse to a fetishizing or a sadistic punishment of the female characters of the film. Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema’, in *Screen*, vol.16, no.3, Autumn 1975, pp. 6-18.


Ultimately, however, Evans and Gamman argue against the attempt to theorize the spectator’s psychic processes in any sort of generalized fashion by factoring in recent anti-essentialist models of identification which stress the plurality of identities assumed by a subject reading (or viewing) a text or film.\textsuperscript{24} The complexity of a subject who makes multiple, simultaneous identifications will inevitably compromise ‘essentialist ideas that relations of looking are determined by the biological sex of the individual/s you choose to fornicate with, more than any other social relation’.\textsuperscript{25} Indeed, the ultimate insufficiency of Mulvey’s model to account for the myriad possible spectators and their responses to the filmic image leads Evans and Gamman to conclude that no adequate model of spectatorship based on psychoanalysis has been posited for any individual or social group: male or female, gay or lesbian.\textsuperscript{26} Psychoanalytic models of spectating have been eschewed by this project, as the sexual and gender essentialism they imply would appear to be in conflict with its aim to seek out subjects that destabilized fixed sexual identity. It is arguably more useful to consider if and how certain spectating positions are constructed by the films through of the intersection of reflexive elements of film form with representations of same-sex desire.

One final point on the question of the spectator is necessary before proceeding. In \textit{Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics and Subjectivity} (2004), Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit speak of the importance of the ‘work’ of spectatorship in recognising the ways in which cinema can illustrate alternate forms of subjectivity (discussed in more detail

\textsuperscript{24} This is echoed by Drukman, who openly acknowledges the problems that arise from his use of psychoanalysis, and a consequential reliance on psychosexual essentialism, for a constructivist agenda - he argues that a new model of spectatorship would remain a valid proposition so long as it concedes the ‘ultimate undecidability’ of any theory of spectatorial identification. Drukman, ‘The Gay Gaze’, p. 84.

\textsuperscript{25} Evans and Gamman, ‘Regarding Queer Viewing’, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{26} Evans and Gamman, ‘Regarding Queer Viewing’, p. 35.
in Chapter 2): ‘It involves, first of all, allowing ourselves to be transferred from one mode of vision to another, to be jolted out of our ingrained habits of cinematic viewing’. Bersani and Dutoit gesture towards a necessary willingness or openness on the part of the spectator to read against the grain; in a parallel way, it might be suggested that viewing these films as useful for a politics of identity requires a spectating practice which at least accepts the possibility that stereotype could also be subversive, that effeminacy might seen as both reactionary and transgressive, and that such signs of oppression might also offer potential strategies for resistance. In this sense, the project might be productively complemented by a more sociological study focused on audience reception that determines how these films were understood and consumed in Brazil by men who experience same-sex desire (whether homosexual-identified or otherwise), and establishes the extent to which the viewers’ attitudes to sexual identity were transformed, shifted or even solidified by them. With that in mind, the emphasis of this thesis lies on an examination of the ways in which the films challenge conventional understandings of (homo)sexual identity through the ways they represent the issue themselves, and how they position the spectator in doing so. It will be argued that specific formal attributes belonging to the films in question invite the spectator to collude in the undermining of oppressive ideology, while also suggesting to the spectator potentially subversive forms of homosexual subjectivity.

**Sexual Identity in Brazil: *Machos, Bichas and Entendidos***

Peter Fry makes the argument that Brazilian homosexuality cannot be accurately discussed in terms of object-orientation alone – the categories of ‘homosexual’ and

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‘heterosexual’ are too broad to encompass the divergent identities attached to same-sex desire that manifest in Brazil, and furthermore occlude important variations in identity across class and location.\textsuperscript{28} As Richard Parker notes, the dominant models of sexual and gender identity in Brazil are deeply influenced by patriarchy – namely, the hierarchical organization of men and women in such a way as to afford the former dominance over the latter – for this reason, some details on dominant forms of male identity are necessary before proceeding. Parker suggests that Brazilian patriarchy has a heritage in its colonial past, wherein the patriarchal family emerged as the dominant social unit and the authority of the patriarch was established as unquestioned.\textsuperscript{29} According to Parker, male identity was fairly uncomplicated in this system: masculinity was staked on the sexual prowess of the man, and would involve ‘a vision of power, of action and virility’.\textsuperscript{30} This ideal continues to shape gender relations and male identity in Brazilian society, evident in the kind of values that cluster around the figure of the \textit{macho}: force, aggression, virility and sexual potency.\textsuperscript{31} In her work on male identity in the 1940s and 1950s, Maria Izilda Santos de Matos describes the idealized form of masculine identity as a version of the paterfamilias: ‘assim, ser homem significava ser honesto, trabalhador e provedor [...] O masculino, o trabalho e a paternidade reforçavam-se mutuamente, garantindo e consolidando o modelo de autoridade e de poder a ser desempenhado pelos homens’.\textsuperscript{32} Her remarks imply that this idealized form of male identity was informed both by patriarchal views of women as subservient to men, and by patriarchal dictates on (sexual) behaviour – in other words, compulsory heterosexuality. In a similar fashion, João Silvério Trevisan also

\textsuperscript{30} Parker, \textit{Bodies, Pleasures, Passions}, p. 34.  
\textsuperscript{31} Parker, \textit{Bodies, Pleasures, Passions}, p. 44.  
\textsuperscript{32} Maria Izilda Santos de Matos, ‘Discutindo Masculinidade e Subjetividade nos Embalos de Samba-Canção’, in \textit{Gênero}, July/December (2001), pp. 77-78.
suggests that the male subject is dependent on his feminine opposite – an ‘other’ that is coded as weak or lacking – for the security of his own identity. However, Trevisan points out a peculiar irony that afflicts heterosexual male subjects: the process of defining oneself as a ‘man’ involves a rejection of the mother or the ‘feminine’ home, which precedes a search for male identity in male-dominated society. However, as these other men are themselves organized hierarchically, the male subject would more often than not join the patriarchal order as a subordinated (lacking) subject.33

This patriarchal view of gender informs what Parker calls the ‘traditional’ model of sexual identity formation, which structures relations between individuals in terms of an active/passive binary – taking the active role in a sexual encounter is culturally synonymous with masculinity; likewise, the passive role is associated with femininity and feminization.34 The cultural associations made between biological sex and sexual role code male activity and female passivity as ‘natural’; as a result, a male could penetrate another man during intercourse and theoretically retain the same sexual identity as a man who only had female sexual partners (a macho) – his homosexual desire is occluded so long as he continues to affirm male behaviour in public. Submission to another man transforms the gender identity of a penetrated male from active macho to passive bicha or viado. His deviation from the cultural coordination between biological sex and sexual role renders him ‘unnatural’, as the other to natural heterosexuality.35

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33 Trevisan, Seis balas num buraco só, p. 48 and p. 169.
35 Parker, Beneath the Equator, p. 31.
Fry suggests that a second model had begun to appear within the middle-class populace at the beginning of the 1960s – the term *entendido* designated a determination of identity via sexual desire rather than sexual activity, a result of the propagation of Western notions of homo- and heterosexuality through the efforts on the part of medical and legal institutions to regulate individuals that they saw as deviant through categorization.\(^{36}\) James Green notes discrepancies between accounts of exactly when the term *entendido* became popularized – Fry marks its appearance at the beginning of the 1960s, José Fábio Barbosa da Silva suggests the prevalence of the *entendido* in the 1960s was merely the result of an intensification of processes that had already begun in the 1950s.\(^{37}\) The word *entendido* is polysemic, indicating a person ‘in the know’ who possesses some awareness of homosexual subcultures in urban spaces in Brazil.\(^{38}\) It serves as an umbrella term for those who experience same-sex desire but have not chosen to categorize themselves according to the first model – ‘um personagem que tem uma certa liberdade no que diz respeito ao seu papel de gênero e à sua "atividade" ou "passividade"’.\(^{39}\) By denying stigmatized identities, a homosexual who defined as an *entendido* traded exemption from stigma for a certain degree of ‘closeted-ness’ or invisibility.

According to Moreno, rather than address (homo)sexuality itself, cinematic production of the 1960s was overwhelmingly concerned with social and political themes – his catalogue of Brazilian films referencing homosexuality notes thirteen titles that deal with the topic in the 1960s, most of which portray homosexuals as

\(^{36}\) Parker, *Beneath the Equator*, pp. 36-42.  
\(^{38}\) Green, *Beyond Carnival*, p.179.  
\(^{39}\) Fry, *Para Inglês Ver*, p.93.
effeminate men. This reflects the comments made by Green that during the 1960s ‘the average Brazilian conflated male homosexuality with effeminacy’ because the bicha was the primary term in the bicha/macho dyad that made visible and signified ‘homosexuality’ to society. The figure of the bicha was not necessarily maligned in this small output, however – Rogério Sganzerla’s O Bandido da Luz Vermelha (1969) presents its audience with a bicha figure who is somewhat fondly received by the protagonist. It should be pointed out that O Bandido da Luz Vermelha belongs to intellectual, avant-garde cinematic production and its director might therefore be more inclined to consider popular culture (and stereotype) in critical terms. Christensen’s O menino e o vento (discussed in Chapter 2) is a notable exception both to the tendency of 1960s cinema to address political matters and the tendency to represent homosexuality according to the bicha/macho dyad. The film receives Moreno’s praise for its subtle treatment of homosexuality and its avoidance of ‘gestualidade […] não estereotipada (natural)’ – in other words, it foregoes the ‘traditional’ model and opts instead to present a minor character who approximates the entendido type. The entendido is treated with some ambivalence in O menino e o vento, as a shadowy figure who manipulates society for survival or personal gain. When cinematic output explicitly or implicitly touched on homosexuality it was almost always as incidental to, rather than the focus of, the main narrative. Moreover, the representation was somewhat neutral on the whole – just as many films show homosexual characters to be likeable or misunderstood as represent them as dangerous or deviant.

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40 Moreno, A personagem homossexual, p. 66-74.  
41 Green, Beyond Carnival, p.6.  
42 At the same time, the critical bent of the avant-garde does not automatically include a liberal view of sexuality – Glauber Rocha, scion of the Cinema Novo movement, was a notorious homophobe. Trevisan, Seis balas num buraco só, p.136.  
43 Moreno, A personagem homossexual, p. 205.
Green suggests that a new way of conceiving and expressing sexual identity began to emerge alongside the *bicha/macho* dyad and the *entendido* model as early as 1967 – signs of the rise of a more politicized identity based around the affirmation of homosexual desire were visible, he suggests, in the struggles between *bichas* and more masculine-identified *entendidos* that were played out in the gay magazine *O Snob*.\(^{44}\) He writes: ‘masculinity was no longer divorced from homosexuality. Instead of being "either/or", one could be both’, a shift that can in part be tied to the emergence of the gay rights movements in the US and Europe and the popularization of the terms ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ following the Stonewall riots.\(^{45}\) Adriana Nunan suggests that, in fact, the emergence of a closeted *entendido* identity presaged the appearance of an object-oriented ‘gay’ identity in Brazil.\(^{46}\) Indeed, a nascent gay rights movement emerged over the decade, a process which culminated with the organization of the first Brazilian congress on gay rights in 1980.\(^{47}\) These shifts – the rise in cultural visibility of same-sex desiring subjects, accompanied with a shift away from the *bicha/macho* dyad, or at least the introduction of an alternative to the traditional model – might illuminate the fact that the number of films that referenced homosexuality rose from thirteen titles in the 1960s to 1970s to a total of seventy-one titles in the 1970s – a boom also partly explained by the flourishing of the *pornochanchada*, as described above.\(^{48}\)

The vastly increased on-screen presence did not necessarily reflect the changes that took place within homosexual subcultures themselves – such films largely constructed

\(^{44}\) Green, *Beyond Carnival*, pp. 190-192.

\(^{45}\) Green, *Beyond Carnival*, p.270.


\(^{48}\) Moreno, *A personagem homossexual*, pp. 46 -47.
homosexuals as *bichas*, figures of comedy and ridicule. Moreno lists a score of films that use a conception of homosexuality as male effeminacy in order to produce laughs.\(^{49}\) He notes that the genre often conflated effeminate homosexuals with the figure of the travesti (a highly feminized male prostitute specific to Brazil) – for example, *Os machões* (1972), *O roubo das calcinhas* (1975) and *O sexualista* (1975).

As mentioned above, Dennison and Shaw suggest that the prevalence of stereotypical, effeminate homosexual men would calm the anxieties of male spectators: ‘laughing at these modern-day court jesters proved the audience’s masculinity and exorcised their sexual insecurity and fear of impotence’.\(^{50}\) Their comments align with arguments put forward by Karl Posso, who discusses how the increased prevalence of the Western object-choice model of sexual identity in public discourse resulted in ‘questions raised about all (same-sex) structures of male privilege or exclusiveness’, which triggered a kind of homosexual ‘panic’ amongst the institutions of Brazilian society.\(^{51}\) The increase in the representations of the *bicha* in Brazilian cinema could be taken as an attempt on the part of cultural producers to reconfirm a notion of homosexuality as ‘merely’ male femininity in order to conceal or deny the existence of same-sex desire.

The work by Moreno, Dennison and Shaw, and Posso indicates the importance of the relationship between heterosexual and homosexual men, a bond that has been productively explored by queer theory.

**Theoretical Frame: Queer Theory**

\(^{49}\) Moreno, *A personagem homossexual*, pp.75-80.

\(^{50}\) Dennison and Shaw, *Popular Cinema in Brazil*, p.161.

Queer theory is a body of scholarship that emerged out of Gay and Lesbian Studies during the late 1980s in the US. Annamarie Jagose suggests that queer theory’s deconstructive account of gender and sexual identity developed out of the shift, demanded by AIDS activists, from a view of sexual identity in terms of an unchanging essence and towards a focus on the sexual practices and behaviours in which the subject participates.\(^5^2\) Scholars took forward the lessons learned through activism, and, with recourse to a post-structuralist account of identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions, exposed a series of problematic assumptions at the heart of gay and lesbian identity politics.\(^5^3\) One advance made by queer theory is to indicate the complicity between a fixed, immutable sexual identity and a homophobic society; a connection that has been obscured by the ideological structures that maintain heterosexuality in a hegemonic position: that is, heterosexist ideology.\(^5^4\) The notion of heterosexist ideology originates from Adrienne Rich’s famous 1982 essay, ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence’, where she argues that heterosexuality itself should be understood as a social construct (rather than a natural given) that is used by patriarchal culture to shape the sexual desires of men and women with the aim of ensuring the reproduction of society.\(^5^5\) In a similar vein, Jagose stresses the historical contingency of the understandings of hetero- and homosexuality, a contingency that flies in the face of heterosexuality’s maintenance of an ideological claim ‘to be a natural, pure and unproblematic state which requires no explanation’.\(^5^6\) Compulsory heterosexuality is enforced through institutionalized

\(^{52}\) Jagose, *Queer Theory*, p. 20.  
^{53} Jagose, *Queer Theory*, p. 3.  
^{56} Jagose, *Queer Theory*, p. 17.
ideology – a cluster of beliefs and values – that must consistently disguise its own artifice and naturalize heterosexuality.\textsuperscript{57}

Queer theorists argue that, by endorsing an essentialist understanding of identity that tacitly fosters the notion of subjective unicity, stability and permanence, gay and lesbian identity helps to prop up a dominant, bourgeois (heterosexual) subjectivity to which it is always subordinate.\textsuperscript{58} As Lee Edelman writes,

\[ \ldots \text{heterosexuality has thus been able to reinforce the status of its own authority as ‘natural’ (i.e., unmarked, authentic, and non-representational) by defining the straight body against the ‘threat’ of an ‘unnatural’ homosexual – a ‘threat’ the more effectively mobilized by generating concern about homosexuality’s unnerving } \ldots \text{capacity to ‘pass’, to remain invisible, in order to call into being a variety of disciplinary ‘knowledges’ through which homosexuality might be recognized, exposed, and ultimately rendered, more ominously, invisible once more.}\textsuperscript{59} \]

The heterosexual male subject maintains authority by setting up heterosexual male identity in terms of the ‘natural’, the ‘real’ or the ‘authentic’, which enables him to claim to be ‘naturally’, that is, legitimately, dominant. Each of these qualities relies on the prior claim that the heterosexual male subject has direct access to or experience of his identity in an unproblematic way – that heterosexual male identity is ‘present’ to

\textsuperscript{57} As Harold Beaver writes, ‘This is Marx’s definition of “ideology”: an established order which is masked as natural order [\ldots] to function it must constantly disguise its own artifice; for ideology can only function as a totality’. Harold Beaver, ‘Homosexual Signs (in memory of Roland Barthes)’, in \textit{Camp}, pp. 160-178 (p. 167).
\textsuperscript{59} Edelman, \textit{Homographesis}, p. 4.
that subject. Edelman suggests that in order to sustain this claim and protect the
authority of the heterosexual male subject, heterosexist ideology puts into place a
process of othering in which the homosexual male subject is coded as the opposite of
the heterosexual male subject – as having an unnatural, deviant, or false form of
masculinity. The maintenance of heterosexuality as ‘natural’ requires a notion of
desire as ‘naturally’ occurring between binary terms that have what Edelman calls an
‘internal’ purity – in other words, it requires that desire passes only between
man/woman, self/other, same/different, and that these terms are comprehended as
distinct, secure opposites.\(^{60}\) Clearly, this logic is secured by homosexuality, which
would be set up as the denigrated other to heterosexuality. At the same time, same-sex
desire posits a threat to the coherence of the system itself – the notion that desire may
be directed towards the same sex posits an internal difference within the terms
man/woman. This ruptures its purity as a binary term – man cannot be opposed to
woman so easily – which then makes the preservation of a convenient analogy
between the various opposites (man/woman, same/different, self/other) problematic.
In other words, same-sex desire points out the conceptual instability of heterosexist
ideology because it threatens the security of the binaries that underpin it – this can, in
the end, challenge the legitimacy of the authority of the heterosexual male subject
himself.\(^{61}\) Indeed, Fabio Cleto names ‘queer’ praxis as that which works in strategic
opposition to assimilationist identity politics via a deconstruction of the binaries that
fuel heterosexism – exposing how the natural is just as unnatural, how the authentic is
just as inauthentic, how the claim for the self-presence of maleness is dependent or
founded on the representational.\(^{62}\)

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The work of a variety of thinkers on sexuality will be employed in order to demonstrate how heterosexist assumptions about sexual identity are undermined in the cinema in question. Edelman’s insights into the dependence of the heterosexual male subject on a spurious claim to self-presence will be referred to throughout the thesis. Eve Sedgwick’s model of ‘homosocial desire’ will be used in order to map out the part played by same-sex desire in the early political cinema of the 1960s. Jacques Lacan provides this project with the concept of the mirror stage – a well-known idea of identity-formation that will be used to demonstrate how sexual identity is fundamentally alienating. Georges Bataille’s work on eroticism will be used in order to demonstrate how the subject of sexual experience actually resists categorization according to binary categories of sexual identity. Finally, Bersani’s work on reimagining relationality in non-binary forms will be used. Rather than deconstruct the binary logic that underpins heterosexism, in both *Forms of Being* and *Homos* (1995), Bersani looks for ways of reconfiguring the relation between subjects in such a way that does not repeat social hierarchies. Partly, this involves an activity whereby the self is seen to reappear elsewhere – both extended or multiplied, and lost or dissolved – which foils the demand that homosexuals identify themselves as legible subjects and prevents the repetition of self-other relations that are, at base, hierarchical and antagonistic. The formulation of a Bersanian-inspired approach to homosexuality in Brazil has been spearheaded by Posso in *Artful Seduction: Homosexuality and the Problematics of Exile* (2003). In Chapter 2 it will be suggested that some of the subjectivities in Brazilian cinema approximate those outlined in *Homos*, and here this thesis owes a debt to Posso’s work. This project will extend the application of Bersani’s thought to representations of homosexuality in

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Brazil; to do so, it uses the notions that are developed concerning aesthetic subjectivity in *Forms of Being*. Indeed, although the body of work on male homosexuality in Brazilian cinema is currently small, a growing number of studies address the subject, some of which employ queer frameworks in their analyses.

**Literature Review**

Writing in the gay magazine *Lampião da Esquina* in 1979, João Carlos Rodrigues catalogues the principal examples of male homosexuality in Brazilian cinema to date. While brief, Rodrigues’s article provides a contemporary perspective on the subject of homosexual representation in film from an individual who is also gay. While he remarks: ‘o mais freqüente, quase uma regra geral, é a associação do homossexualismo com decadência moral e mesmo social. São as loucas caricatas, os balzaquianos, que corrompem adolescentes, as harpias do baixo mundo, os intelectuais com “problemas”’, Rodrigues’s assessment is nuanced and he does not condemn Brazil’s cinematic production outright.64 Instead he implies that representations which might seem to be offensive caricature to the modern eye were treated with a pinch of salt at the time. For example, Carlos Kroeber is considered to have inflected his portrayal of the mad homosexual Timóteo in *A casa assassinada* with a sensitivity to the difficulties of his circumstances, similarly so for Paulo Vilaça’s portrayal of the hysterical Zé Honório in *O casamento*. Conversely, Rodrigues’s response to the hypermasculine actor-director and star of *Corpo devasso*, David Cardoso, points out that homosexual spectators certainly found ways to obtain

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their own visual pleasure: ‘a intenção talvez seja apenas hipnotizar a platéia feminina de baixa renda, mas convenhamos que o exibicionismo de David Cardoso e Tony Vieira já está dando o que falar... As bonecas a-do-ram!’ \(^{65}\) Lastly, he points to films that communicate homosexuality through aesthetics and mood but avoid directly mentioning the subject. He signals Carlos Hugo Christensen as a director who inflected his stories with homoerotic elements. In the same vein, Rodrigues suggests that a lingering homoeroticism also percolated through a variety of political films produced during the 1960s, including Rocha’s short *A Cruz na praça*, Sebastião de Souza’s short *Coração de Mãe* (1969) and João Silveiro Trevisan’s contribution to the avant-garde *Orgia, ou o homem que deu cria*, indicating that certain spectators viewing avant-garde material were attuned to homoerotic subtleties that straight audiences might have missed.\(^{66}\)

The most comprehensive investigation of cinematic representation of homosexuality to date is Moreno’s 2001 study, mentioned previously. Moreno’s catalogue ranges from 1923 to the early 1990s and provides information on 125 films that present homosexual characters; while his work is ground-breaking in its breadth and remains a vital resource for scholarship of the subject, he is generally dismissive towards homosexual representation during the 1960s and 1970s and his individual analyses tend towards reductive descriptions of costuming, behaviour and gesture in terms of stereotype. In his somewhat bleak concluding comments he suggests that the vast majority of the films produced in Brazil have taken a pejorative attitude towards

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\(^{65}\) Ibid.

\(^{66}\) Trevisan himself provides a short overview of homosexual representation in cinema in *Perverts in Paradise* (1986). Along similar lines to Rodrigues, he argues that much of the cinematic production in the 1970s was conventional and conservative in its treatment of homosexuality, ‘generally caricatures, gay men serve as nothing more than a pretext to provoke mocking laughter from the macho spectator’, but he also comments on the subtle homoeroticism of Glauber Rocha’s more well-known work. Trevisan, *Perverts in Paradise*, p.126.
homosexuality and set the homosexual figure up as a ‘gay clown’ – a figure that serves to remind a heterosexual audience to remain on the straight and narrow, while at the same time disparaging those who actually transgress sexual and gender norms.\textsuperscript{67}

In Moreno’s eyes, the homosexual subject is always

\[\ldots\] um sujeito alienado politicamente \[\ldots\] que usa, freqüentemente, um gestual feminino exacerbado, o que se estende ao gosto pelo vestuário \[\ldots\] que mostra tendência à solidão e é incapaz de uma relação monogâmica, pois utiliza-se de vários parceiros, geralmente pagos, para ter companhia \[\ldots\] É um modelo cruel, marcado pelo preconceito e a incomprensão, o deboche e a caricatura... onde indagariamos: Estas marcas têm vínculo com a realidade do homossexual brasileiro? É assim que ele deve ser representado?\textsuperscript{68}

Denilson Lopes suggests that Moreno might temper his rejection of stereotype if he considered that ‘o estereótipo \[\ldots\] tem pelo menos um mérito em iniciar um diálogo que pode dissolver o próprio estereótipo pela dinâmica dos conflitos sociais’.\textsuperscript{69} This sentiment is echoed by João Bôsco Hora Góis, who, alongside criticizing Moreno for failing to consider the context in which the films were made, suggests that stereotype, while highly problematic, was one of the only ways with which marginal characters would be represented on-screen, and he takes Moreno to task for failing to consider recent studies on gender and sexuality in his analysis.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{67} Moreno, \textit{A personagem homossexual}, pp. 280-281.
\textsuperscript{68} Moreno, \textit{A personagem homossexual}, pp. 291-292.
Following the comments of Lopes and Góis, it is arguable that a general criticism can be levelled at Moreno for his response to effeminacy – his problematic treatment of which can be intimated in the long citation given above. Alongside his appraisal of the few films that represent the homosexual as a good citizen, his rejection of stereotype conceals a general rejection of male effeminacy, repeating the same logic that marginalizes passive homosexuals in the traditional model of sexual identity – a man behaving ‘like a woman’ incurs social stigma and is to be repudiated. In Moreno’s defence, he suggests that the homosexual figures in question are products of, and perpetuate, that stigma. Furthermore, it is arguable that Moreno is frustrated with the heterosexism within directorial intention, at least in part. However, his broad dismissal precludes the possibility that such representations might hold political or cultural value – in Moreno’s view, all feminized men are failed, perverse and distorted representations of an (idealized) homosexual subject. Conversely, Moreno pleads for representations of the ‘good homosexual citizen’ – an antidote to the effeminate male, and one able to satisfy the desire for participation in society – which performs the assimilationism that lies within gay and lesbian identity politics. His appeal for representations of masculine, normalized homosexuals invokes a fixed conception of sexual identity, which supports the bourgeois notion of a stable subject, as pointed out by Cleto and discussed above. Such a move can only work in the name of an oppressive social order by at once eliding the logic of othering that produces male effeminacy as detestable and, at the same time, repeating that logic in the appraisal of an essentialized homosexual subject, who is always located in a position of subordination to a heterosexist majority.

71 Moreno, A personagem homossexual, p. 280.
Building from Moreno’s conclusions, Tatiana Heise compares *Rainha diaba* and Karim Ainouz’s *Madame Satã* (2002) – two distinct portraits of the life of João Francisco dos Santos (Madame Satã) – by highlighting the differences in the respective representations of violence, marginality and homosexuality. She argues in favour of the more humanistic depictions of homosexuality in *Madame Satã* and claims that *Rainha diaba* merely abuses the clichés that surround the popular view of homosexuality – comical effeminacy, criminal behaviour, and amorality. Heise offers an intriguing reading of the film as an allegory for the military dictatorship and views the pathological sadism of the homosexual characters as pejorative stereotype. Her interpretation does not take into account recent advances in queer theory, which might be used to retrieve a positive or productive capacity from the film. Somewhat more problematic, though for opposite reasons, is Lizandro Carlos Calegari’s investigation of the 1976 film *Dona flor e seus dois maridos*, an adaptation of Jorge Amado’s 1966 novel of the same title, for tentative attempts to undermine heteronormativity via a consideration of the roles played by non-generative sex and carnival. While Calegari concludes by admitting the film’s ultimate reassertion of heterosexism, more troubling is the way in which his version of ‘queer’ amounts to a turning away from the norm. This is effectively an elision of the deconstructive capacity of queer – a carnival, after all, has been described as nothing less than the authorized transgression of norms and is hardly the choice method to undermine heterosexism.

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72 Heise, ‘*Rainha diaba e Madame Satã*’, p.76
73 Heise, ‘*Rainha diaba e Madame Satã*’, p.76
Homoerotic content can be found in some of the oldest Brazilian films: according to Bruce Williams, Mário Peixoto’s 1931 film *Limite*, one of the first examples of Brazilian avant-garde film-making, demonstrates a homoerotic subtext which can be uncovered via an exploration of the fetishistic processes working within it; Williams’s argument foreshadows a consideration of male-male-female triadic structures in which the woman enables the expression of an otherwise inexpressible desire between men. David William Foster’s study *Gender & Society in Contemporary Brazilian Film* (1991) partly focuses on the workings of homophobia in Brazilian films of the 1980s and makes an argument for the prevalence of homophobic constructions of homosexuals within Brazilian culture. His claim for the all-pervasiveness of homophobia occasionally elides the contradictions present within the films he studies. For example, his reading of *O beijo no asfalto*, an adaptation of a Nelson Rodrigues play by the same title, overlooks the challenges to heterosexism that arise as a result of the adaptation process itself – for example, the film’s representation of the Brazilian public shows it to be far from unified on the matter of homosexuality (a point discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). Stephanie Dennison compares the same film with an earlier adaptation, Flávio Tambellini’s *O beijo* (1965), and examines the way in which the film manoeuvres around and repeats the heterosexist implications of its source, while also acknowledging that the adaptation clearly modifies the original – in her essay, this takes the form of a series of comments on the sexist generic

conventions of pornochanchada itself. Foster and Dennison both foreground the importance of attending to the subtleties of heterosexist ideology. Along with Calegari, they demonstrate that terminology supplied by queer theory (heterosexist ideology, queer reading) has found its way into the debates around the films of the period.

Thomas Waugh adds further complexity to the subject in his analysis of what he calls ‘new queer Latino cinema’. Writing with regards to the 1980s, Waugh makes the argument for the emergence of ‘small but recognizable gay (or protogay or cryptogay) cinemas in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico [and] Cuba’. His insights are particularly relevant and will be reproduced here:

One recognizes the same avoidances and deploys the same subtexting strategies in the face of ‘nongay’ works [...] One recognizes [...] familiar generic patterns: the male-male-female triangles of Adios Roberto, Kiss of the Spider Woman, and Pixote; the all-male institutional settings of The Intruder, City and the Dogs, and Los chicos de la guerra, entailing the safety valves of both male-male violence and intimacy, as well as endless other subterranean dynamics; associations of homosexuality with moral depravity or bourgeois decadence [...] the stereotypes of clowns, transvestites [...] rigid active or passive roles, and of course the dead queer.

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The films that Waugh assesses differ slightly from those discussed in this project, as they are mostly produced by (closeted) homosexual directors, or have homosexual components that are hidden but more clearly ‘intended’. Nevertheless, the generic patterns that he points out are arguably evident in the cinema of the 1960s and 1970s in Brazil, as will become clear over the course of this project. This could lead to a speculative suggestion that those Brazilian films of the 1980s quietly addressing homosexual themes and issues might have in part borrowed strategies from the cinema of the 1960s and 1970s which (accidentally) encouraged audience members to read for homosexual subtext in order to convey their content. At least, his work demonstrates that an engagement with film form specific to the historical context, along with an awareness of the limitations faced by directors when representing same-sex desire, would be essential to the study of homosexuality in the cinema of the period. This sentiment is missing from Moreno’s study – as Rafael de Luna Freire suggests, one of Moreno’s more serious errors is to neglect the historical contexts in which these films were located.81 Waugh’s work would arguably make clear the need for a study of the films of the 1960s and 1970s that pays close attention to the nuances of cinematic form, and is particularly attentive to the way form might conceal same-sex desire, incite spectators to imagine it where there ostensibly is none, or to tacitly or accidentally challenge stereotype while seeming to confirm it.

**Concluding Remarks**

The literature review has made clear the necessity for a re-examination of the representation of male homosexuality in Brazilian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s that addresses problems in the extant scholarship. Firstly, any such study would need to attend closely to the workings of ideology that inform the representation of homosexual men. Secondly, it would also need to attend to the formal qualities and generic aspects of the films themselves in order to remain aware of how such ideology could be disrupted or undermined. Lastly, it would have to avoid replicating oppressive notions of sexual identity as fixed or essential. This project aims to fill a gap in the existing scholarship bearing these considerations in mind. It will employ an interpretative framework influenced by queer theory to investigate how, in different genres and movements of Brazilian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, the representation of same-sex desire might lead to challenges made to the notion of sexual identity as fixed or stable. This thesis will demonstrate that a variety of queer subjects can be seen to emerge in Brazilian cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, and will test the extent to which these characters challenge the status quo. It will pay close attention to film form, particularly the prevalence of reflexivity and the subtle or accidental positioning of the spectator, to contest the assumption that the cinema production of the two decades is largely valueless. It will suggest that the films’ value lies in their refusal to occlude the oppression suffered by homosexual subjects – this allows a more incisive, albeit often accidental, critique of heterosexist and patriarchal ideology to be presented to the spectator.

**Chapter Summaries**
Chapter 1 will discuss reworkings of male subjectivity in early Cinema Novo, and suggest that queer men can be found in the films produced at the start of the movement. Using Eve Sedgwick’s concept of homosocial desire – a bond of desire between men it will be argued that same-sex relations are central to Ruy Guerra’s *Os cafajestes* and Glauber Rocha’s *Barravento*. In *Os cafajestes*, narrative action focuses on an ambiguous camaraderie between a pair of heterosexual men who exploit romantic relationships for financial gain. Eventually, one of their victims successfully interprets their underlying relationship and turns them against each other. Here, same-sex desire is routed through the practice of *malandragem*, which then drives the men to threaten the nuclear family. *Barravento* deals with the inability of a group of fishermen to break away from their superstitious customs and achieve political consciousness; the protagonist remains entranced by the mysticism of Candomblé until the arrival of a man with whom he forms an intense adversarial bond, which eventually leads to the politicization of the former. In this case, the subversive political activity of the antagonist can be seen as similar to the *malandragem* of *Os cafajestes*, that is, as enabling the articulation of desire between men. In *Os cafajestes*, the use of Brechtian technique exposes the constructed nature of all sexual relations within capitalist, patriarchal society and points out the objectification of women that underlies the ideology of compulsory heterosexuality itself: a direct result of the conjunction between the production of heterosexuality’s other, in the form of male homosocial desire, and self-reflexive cinematic technique. In *Barravento*, Brechtian techniques combine with homosocial desire to at once liberate the protagonist from mystification and produce him as a subject that cannot be easily assimilated into capitalist society. The tacit emergence of a queer male subject will be shown, in both
cases, to be wedded to the ways in which the men in question negotiate and deflect same-sex desire.

Chapter 2 will discuss reworkings of male homosexual identity in *A rainha diaba* and *O menino e o vento*, and suggest that both films contain examples of queer men that, while apparently very different, are similar structurally in that they eschew self-other relations. *A rainha diaba*’s narrative focuses on the efforts of a disturbed homosexual drug lord, the titular Rainha diaba, to retain control of his territory: homosexuality is made synonymous with sadism, insanity, and effeminacy. The narrative of *O menino e o vento* recounts the relationship between an engineer, the protagonist, and an adolescent village boy who has gone missing. The protagonist is put on trial for the boy’s disappearance; he refuses to affirm or deny a (homo)sexual dimension to their relationship. Ultimately, the boy – in the form of a wind – returns to demolish the courtroom itself. Both films position the spectator in ways that challenge heterosexism. In the case of *A rainha diaba*, the spectator is directed to seek out the repetition of certain aesthetic forms which, it is argued, also traces one possible way in which self/other relations might be transformed. In the case of *O menino e o vento*, the spectator is made aware of the complicity between the ascription of a fixed sexual identity and the heterosexist social order. The chapter will employ the models of subjectivity that Leo Bersani reads, in *Hosos*, as nascent within André Gide’s pederasty, and the aesthetic subject that Bersani develops in *Forms of Being*. *A rainha diaba* suggests a mode of non-hierarchical relationality almost by accident when it presents its homosexual subjects as extravagantly decorated men – again, an extreme version of the homosexual subject conceptualized as heterosexuality’s unnatural other. Ironically enough, the associations with artifice and decoration afford the
homosexual characters the possibility of a non-hierarchical relationality that takes the form of a communion with near-similar versions of each other. A similar movement of mutual self-extension coterminous with self-loss is visible in a comparable fashion at the climax of *O menino e o vento*, where a mode of relationality close to what Bersani calls ‘homo-ness’ – a communion with near-similar selves or a communal network of being – can be seen. In both cases, formal components direct the spectator to eschew fixed models of identity and heterosexist modes of identifying homosexual subjects, while also illustrating forms of queer male subjectivity that escape oppositional logic.

Chapter 3 will assess the disturbances effected on the heterosexual male (macho) subject when he is figured as an object of same-sex desire in *pornochanchada*. It examines the presentation of homosexuality in three examples of *pornochanchada* – Fauzi Mansur’s *Uma verdadeira história de amor*, Antônio Calmon’s *Nos embalos de Ipanema*, Alfredo Sternheim’s *Corpo devasso*, and one example of explicit pornography closely related to the genre, Levi Salgado’s *Os Rapazes das Calçadas*. In *Uma verdadeira história de amor*, the protagonist comes to believe he has fallen in love with a young boy; his eventual discovery that the boy is a woman in disguise neutralizes the possibility of homosexual desire and confirms the accuracy of his ‘innate’ heterosexual instinct. The discussion of male prostitution in *Nos embalos de Ipanema* juxtaposes spectacular heterosexual eroticism with concealed homosexual sex, seemingly to naturalize the former via a denigration of the latter. Similarly so in *Corpo devasso*, where the hustler-protagonist’s engagement with homosexual sex is posited as labour or as a purely financial transaction that acts as a foil to the

82 Bersani, *Homos*, p. 150.
romanticized encounters he has with well-paying women. *Os rapazes das calçadas* eschews a single, linear narrative for a fragmented portrait of the urban life of homosexuals in the late 1970s, interspersing narrative vignettes with pornographic material. Each film uses a variety of reflexive formal techniques, including direct appeals to the spectator, to re-affirm the status of the heterosexual male subject as natural in relation to a denigrated homosexual other. The chapter will suggest the fictional status of an fixed conception of sexual identity, and engage, in part, with the work of Lacan and Bataille to do so. Instead, identity is shown as a mere performance, the specifics of which are defined by circumstance. In *Uma verdadeira história de amor* it is employed as part of an erotic experience in which the protagonist experiences a moment of self-loss as a result of fantasizing about a male object of desire whilst having sex with a woman. In *Nos embalos de Ipanema* and *Corpo devasso*, it becomes a major selling point for male prostitutes who wish to attract homosexual clients – a fantasy of naturalized masculinity is therefore offered and at the same time exposed as a construct by virtue of the film’s reflexive elements. The commercialization of heterosexual male identity is developed in *Os Rapazes das Calçadas*, which explicitly suggests that the experience of penetrating a virile stud is offered by male prostitutes as a purchasable commodity. The film then uses certain configurations of form to illustrate the claims of masculinity for a status of ‘natural’ or ‘real’ as untenable. The analyses will attend to the ways in which the attempts to re-establish the heterosexual male in a position of dominance are ironically undercut by the need to censor representations of same-sex desire (in the case of the first two films) and by formal features (in the case of the other two films). The end result of this is the suggestion that, in the cinema of the 1970s, a series of queer men can be found at the heart of the attempt to reassure male identity.
Chapter 4 examines three films that pit the homosexual subject in a conflict with the paterfamilias himself. Each film posits same-sex desire as an essentially destructive force that generates the narrative action while at the same time leading to the notion that homosexuality is inescapably tragic. Each film is an adaptation – for this reason, the readings offered will aim to show how the representations of homosexuality are complicated and transformed when literary texts are adapted for the screen. Firstly, the chapter discusses the effects of adaptation on underlying heterosexism in Bruno Barreto’s *O beijo no asfalto*, and argues that the additional material required to translate the original play onto screen weakens its underlying ideological position, despite the director’s intention to maintain a high degree of fidelity to his source. The chapter then considers how the directors of *A casa assassinada* and *O casamento* adapt their homosexual subjects ‘unfaithfully’, arguing that the alterations complicate the heterosexist attempts to produce homosexuality as a definite other. In *A casa assassinada*, the mad Timóteo affirms his identity as both artificial and as authentic or truthful, which complicates his figuring as an other to the heterosexual male subject. In *O casamento*, the effeminate ‘bicha suburbana’, Zé Honório, resurrects his dead mother and repeats his father’s abuse through performances of identity – in doing so, he reveals homosexual identity to be void of depth or essence. These combine with spectatorial positionings that, in turn, lead to the undermining of (heterosexist) notions of a fixed subject.

The chapter will then show that, in all three films, a general critique of the father figure is present. In each case, this challenge is articulated via the demystification of various ideological assumptions that support his claim for authority. These include the
demonstration that the opposition of copy to original is in fact contradictory, and a critique of the assumption that the father’s identity is present to himself rather than representational. These challenges make room for the emergence of new forms of subjectivity, akin to those suggested in Chapter 2, wherein the subject is replicated and erased in the same move. In this way, the two films illustrate the enfeeblement of the father, the general hypocrisy and insufficiency of heterosexist and patriarchal ideology, and the contradictions that riddle the heterosexual male subject. They also offer new forms of male subjectivity – queer characters that might survive beyond the collapse of the ideological house of cards that their very existence seems to engender.
Chapter 1

Signs of Deception, Suspicious Activity

Same-Sex Desire in Os cafajestes and Barravento

It seems appropriate to commence a discussion of same-sex desire in Brazilian cinema with two examples from the beginning of what is arguably its most celebrated movement: Cinema Novo. This chapter examines Ruy Guerra’s Os cafajestes (1962) and Glauber Rocha’s Barravento (1962) to make the argument that both films implicitly offer a comparable representation of same-sex desire in relation to queer male identity. It is important to make clear that neither Os cafajestes nor Barravento discussed queer characters explicitly, unlike the other films discussed in this thesis. Both films feature marginalized individuals who struggle with authority, lawbreakers who survive by their wits and their aptitude for deception, men who might be described as malandros – this term will be fully explained shortly. Eve Sedgwick’s work in Between Men (1985) will be used to analyze the relationships between these men. Paying attention to the use of reflexivity in each film, it will be suggested that same-sex desire emerges as an important, if concealed, component in the critiques of oppressive ideology articulated by the films. The chapter will argue that Os cafajestes combines expressions of same-sex desire and Brechtian aesthetics to make its critique of bourgeois society. Barravento, on the other hand, is largely concerned with the political radicalization of the protagonist – the reaffirmation of male identity as (sexual) activity is shown to be central to this process. This chapter will demonstrate that a concern with male (sexual) identity, and with the ideologies informing it, featured in Cinema Novo’s political project from the very start. It will aim to show
that Guerra and Rocha tacitly acknowledge the importance of same-sex desire in the respective challenges they make to the status quo.

**The Films**

According to Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, both *Os cafajestes* and *Barravento* are among the most important contributions made to the so-called ‘first phase’ of the Cinema Novo movement, a stage that began in 1960 and ended with the military coup d’état of 1964.¹ Both films are significant in the development of the movement – Glauber Rocha considered *Os cafajestes* to have inaugurated Cinema Novo in Rio de Janeiro.² As Stam points out, *Barravento* also played an important role in the ‘Bahian Renaissance’ – the flourishing of films that brought the cultural riches of Salvador (Bahia) to cinemas in the 1960s.³ As early examples of Cinema Novo, they stand somewhat apart from the movement itself. *Os cafajestes* lacks the utopian optimism and stylistic experimentation that characterized later productions such as *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*, although it does contain several instances of Brechtian distanciation (a point discussed later on in this chapter). *Barravento*, on the other hand, was not originally intended as a piece of political cinema – its original script was written by Luis Paulino dos Santos, a documentary maker who aimed to present an acritical, celebratory vision of Candomblé.⁴ Glauber Rocha took over after dos Santos left following a dispute with the producer, bringing with him revolutionary politics and a desire to transform the film from a ‘love story’ to a ‘political-cultural

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¹ Johnson and Stam, *Brazilian Cinema*, p. 33.
manifesto in favour of the black liberation struggle’. While somewhat marginal, it is also true to say that both films tackle some of the central concerns of the cinemanovistas – they both explore ways in which bourgeois ideological, political, and economic oppression might be challenged through cinema. Barravento also makes strides towards a representation of the Brazilian people that might shock them into a critical awareness of their own exploitation. An explanation of some of the terminology used throughout the chapter is required before the analysis begins. Eve Sedgwick’s well-known theory of homosocial desire will be used in the analyses of both films, the details of which will now be given.

**Homosocial Desire**

Sedgwick begins with a neologism: she appropriates ‘homosocial’ (social bonds between persons of the same sex) from the social sciences and combines it with ‘desire’ understood in psychoanalytic terms as ‘the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship’ to produce the notion of homosocial desire. Sedgwick reviews the suggestion that current manifestations of patriarchy obligate their subjects to express only heterosexual desire. Michael Warner points out that Sedgwick considers ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ to result in the ‘the repudiation of erotic bonds between men’ and their projection onto stigmatized figures (homosexual). So, homosocial social structures might be constructed on powerful bonds of male-male desire but that desire must not be expressed directly as that would

invite suspicion of homosexuality. Sedgwick discusses how it might be expressed using the work of literary critic René Girard, who suggests that in canonical European literature, the bonds of rivalry that link men to men, and the bonds of love that link men to women, are equally powerful and often equivalent with each other. At points, the male-male bond supersedes the bonds between male and female in terms of importance.8 As Lawrence Schehr writes elsewhere, Girard is concerned with desiring scenarios in which men compete with each other for a female love object, arguing in these cases that ‘if desire is effected according to the desire of another, that is, if I as a man desire a woman, it is because another man already desires her’.9 Girard draws on Freudian psychoanalysis for theoretical support, and argues that such intense rivalry finds its genesis in the formulation, development and regulation of the child’s psyche. In order to arrive at a fixed sexual identity, the child must first proceed through ‘a complicated play of desire for an identification with the parent of each gender: the child routes its desire/identification through the mother to arrive at a role like the father’s, or vice versa’.10 The polymorphous perversity of the pre-Oedipal infant is transformed, eventually, into a desire for one parent, but not before repressing desire for the other. According to Sedgwick, the rivalry carried over into male-male-female love triangles is precisely an expression of homosocial desire – the indirect expression of desire between men. Simply put: men express desire for each other through the proxy of the woman for whom they compete. Men may therefore obey the laws of compulsory heterosexuality and still articulate their hidden passions.

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It might seem that Sedgwick’s theory is only partially transferable to a Brazilian context – she is commenting on a social phenomenon that is more explicitly centred on sexual desire, and draws her model from nineteenth-century English literature. However, it is also true to say that the various models informing Brazilian sexual identity are structured by patriarchy (these models were set out in the Introduction). Furthermore, as Parker suggests, neither the traditional nor the object-choice model is fully isolable from the other.\(^\text{11}\) Nor is Sedgwick’s rivalrous triangle intended as an ahistoric ‘Platonic’ form but, as she points out, ‘a sensitive register precisely for delineating relationships of power and meaning, and for making graphically intelligible the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment’.\(^\text{12}\) Sedgwick’s theory can plausibly be mapped onto Brazilian cultural production so long as that mapping is attentive to local forms of sexual identity. This is relevant for the analysis of Barravento as the film represents sexual identity primarily in terms of the ‘traditional’ model centred on sexual activity or passivity.

**Malandros and Malandragem**

The protagonists of *Os cafajestes* and *Barravento* share some important similarities with the *malandro* type, particularly in the ambivalent stance that the *malandro* often takes in relation to the status quo. As will be pointed out later, neither character matches up with this figure exactly but some details were nevertheless deemed appropriate for contextual purposes. The word *malandro* is variously interpreted as ‘wide-boy, rogue, hustler, pimp, black marketeer, gangster’, and names a well-known

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\(^\text{11}\) Parker, *Beneath the Equator*, p. 50.  
\(^\text{12}\) Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 27.
figure in Brazilian popular culture. Antônio Cândido suggests that the *malandro* has its roots in the figure of Leonardo, a rebellious rogue-type character in Miguel Antônio de Almeida’s *Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias* (1854). Roberto DaMatta proposes the folk hero Pedro Malasartes as the archetypal *malandro*, a crafty and rebellious character who uses trickery and cunning to undermine those with power whilst also refusing to be integrated into the social order. According to DaMatta, Malasartes’ status as *malandro* can be seen in a classic tale in which Malasartes takes revenge on a landowner who exploited his brother. The landowner employs workers under a strict contract that effectively means they will never be paid – Malasartes agrees to the terms of the contract but he follows it so faithfully that the landowner’s commands inevitably lead to the ruin of his own property. This demonstrates a central quality of the *malandro* – the capacity to find a way to survive and to resist oppression or injustice using trickery rather than direct confrontation.

At the same time, DaMatta points out that the *malandro* does not necessarily want to change the social order itself, preferring to ‘use the prevailing social rules to his own advantage without destroying them or calling them into question’.

According to Simon Webb, the *malandro* figure is tied above all to Afro-Brazilian culture, and was a subcultural response to shifting historical circumstances that included the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the state’s attempts to incorporate the
marginalized black population into the national labour force.¹⁸ Dennison and Shaw characterize the *malandro* as a ‘mythical black [figure] who spurned manual labour, too closely associated with the institution of slavery, and took on the system, becoming the popular hero of the marginalized’.¹⁹ The *malandro* practised *malandragem* to survive; Webb notes that *malandragem* is a polyvalent, slippery term:

> [it] can signify anything from utter self-interest and a willingness to exploit all social relationships and values for purely selfish reasons, to a desultory antiessentialism (a refusal to abide by social rules or morality or to fit into models of national identity, scorn for the positivist work ethic), or to subaltern resistance.²⁰

The fluid semantics of *malandragem* reflect the modus operandi of the *malandro* – he depends on wits, changeability and inconsistency in order to survive. The *malandro* can be thought of as a marginal construction of male identity. The *malandro* threatens dominant forms of masculinity insofar as he expresses a viable way of being that ‘not only resisted attempts at assimilation … [but] challenged the very tenets of positivist capitalism’ through an anti-authoritarian stance taken towards the state on the one hand, and through a rejection of the work ethic required for a productive labour force on the other.²¹ Webb suggests that the *malandro* displayed a ‘combination of patriarchal and antiestablishment values’ but, more tellingly, appeared alongside stock stereotypes of women, against which he was constructed. Not only would the

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¹⁸ Webb, ‘Masculinities at the Margins’, p. 228.
²⁰ Webb, ‘Masculinities at the Margins’, p. 239.
malandro obey a ‘masculine code of sexual prowess’ that involves demonstrating the
capacity to seduce and exert power over women, but he avoided marriage for the very
same reasons he resented work as it was seen as entwined with ‘responsibility, the
home, work and the absence of pleasure’.\textsuperscript{22}

Webb notes that the lyrics of samba often featured malandros who eschewed romantic
and marital commitments precisely because they were too closely associated with the
established order, and because they prevented the malandro from enjoying samba
itself.\textsuperscript{23} In a similar vein, Lisa Shaw argues that the malandro was characterized ‘as
an inveterate womanizer and philanderer’. However, she also points out that several
figures who might be considered important historical examples of the malandro were
also homosexual. These included Ismael Silva, an iconic writer of samba lyrics whose
songs frequently featured malandros, and who ‘clearly lived the malandro ethos’
despite his marginalized sexuality.\textsuperscript{24} The case of another famous malandro figure is
similar – João Francisco dos Santos, or Madame Satâ, rose to fame both for his
resistance to police oppression and his avowed homosexuality. Shaw states that ‘in
apparent contradiction of his malandro persona […] dos Santos never tried to hide the
fact that he liked sex with other men’.\textsuperscript{25} These comments gesture towards a view of
the malandro figure as embodying a tension between a refusal of conventional
behaviour and a degree of complicity with the status quo, at least in regards to male
sexual identity – domesticity is rejected while sexual prowess and the domination of

\textsuperscript{22} Webb, ‘Masculinities at the Margins’, p. 247.
\textsuperscript{23} Webb, ‘Masculinities at the Margins’, p. 247.
\textsuperscript{24} Lisa Shaw, ‘Afro-Brazilian Identity: Malandragem and Homosexuality in Madame Satâ’ in
Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Breaking into the Global Market, ed. by Deborah Shaw
to conceal his homosexuality; dos Santos, on the other hand, was open about his enjoyment of sex with
other men. Shaw, ‘Afro-Brazilian Identity’, p. 103, n. 34.
\textsuperscript{25} Shaw, ‘Afro-Brazilian Identity’, p. 94.
women is applauded. It might also be argued that the homosexuality of dos Santos and Silva inflects the *malandro* with a certain sexual ambivalence, at least, it would further underline the marginal status of the figure. It should be pointed out that the tension described here would not necessarily be specific to the *malandro* only – it might be seen in other, marginalized men who eschew the patriarchal family yet affirm their virility. It is argued below that there are instances in *Os cafajestes* and *Barravento* in which the male characters seem to approximate the *malandro* type; it will be suggested that these instances are shot through with a similar kind of sexual ambivalence or tension described here: a result of the presence of homosocial desire.

**Deceptive Desires in *Os cafajestes***

The narrative of *Os cafajestes* centres on Jandir and Vavá, two friends who work together to exploit women for financial gain. Vavá’s father is close to bankruptcy. In order to prevent this and preserve his opulent lifestyle, Vavá must procure a large sum of money. He joins forces with Jandir to blackmail his rich uncle by taking compromising photographs of his lover, Leda. Jandir seduces her and drives her to a beach while Vavá is concealed in the boot of his car. She is lulled into a false sense of security by Jandir; Vavá then photographs her naked. It soon turns out that their deception may have been in vain, as Leda is no longer dating Vavá’s uncle. Under pressure to obtain the photographs, and seeking revenge, Leda suggests that the pair reattempt the blackmail with the daughter of Vavá’s uncle, Wilma. Although Vavá initially resists this (it is implied that he is in love with Wilma) Jandir is insistent: the trio force Wilma down onto a beach in order to photograph her. Vavá’s love for Wilma overrides his relationship with Jandir and he fights with his companion to
prevent any further abuse. This conflict takes place under the watchful eyes of Leda and it seems that Leda has used Wilma in her own act of revenge. The film ends with Wilma and Vavá united as a couple, and Jandir left alone.

Jandir and Vavá are not typical *malandros* in the sense discussed above – certainly, they are not financially impoverished but rather bourgeois figures. Nevertheless, they both face the prospect of economic marginalization (continued, in the case of Jandir, who is considerably poorer than Vavá). Their willingness to exploit others for personal gain, and their reliance on trickery and deception to sustain their financial circumstances, could be argued to share some similarity with the *malandro*. The opening sequence makes an initial connection between trickery and sexuality. Jandir picks up a woman on the street; he asks her to have sex and she agrees on the condition that he wakes her at five a.m. as she has to work. After they have sex, he tricks her into leaving an hour earlier by altering the alarm clock’s time. Jandir stands at his window and laughs as the woman discovers his deception. A key theme is established here: Jandir intertwines sex with deception for pleasure and personal gain. The film leaves the reasons for Jandir’s deception unclear, although clearly he derives some pleasure in exercising mastery over others. As a result of this sequence, the spectator is encouraged from the first moments of the film to treat Jandir, and later his companion, Vavá, with suspicion. His intentions, particularly his expressions of sexual desire, are not to be trusted. In *Os cafajestes*, the trickery and deception employed by Jandir and Vavá puts their sincerity into doubt as regards sexual and romantic matters; this chapter will argue that the unintended consequence of this is to draw suspicion over the nature of the relationship between the two men.
The film unites the trickery of the *cafajestes* with dubious male sexual identity in a figure that is central to the narrative: Vavá has to climb into the boot of the car in order to photograph Leda. He must remain undetected while Jandir drives Leda to a beach and seduces her into a false sense of security; when she is undressed, the former can then take photographs of her in a compromising state by springing out from within the boot (fig. 1). The car becomes the central mechanism through which the film communicates the form of same-sex desire discussed by Sedgwick, as it permits Jandir to express desire for Vavá through a proxy. For example, at 22.10, Jandir caresses the bonnet – beneath which Vavá lies – he leans in close and maintains physical contact when a passer-by questions this seemingly inexplicable behaviour (fig. 2). Following Sedgwick, it can be argued that Jandir finds he is able to express in this sequence exactly that which otherwise he must repress – a desire for Vavá. The metal bonnet serves as a barrier that, just as it precludes contact of a more intimate nature, also permits its expression. The expression of desire for contact and intimacy between men takes place when it is impossible to realize. A second example can be seen later, when Jandir, Leda and a still-concealed Vavá arrive at the beach. Jandir whispers to Vavá as Leda walks off. When she returns, Jandir makes ambiguous physical contact with the car again, caressing its frame in a gesture that might be considered erotic (fig. 3). The object of Jandir’s desire is the car, at the same time, the spectator has been made aware of Vavá’s presence inside the car only seconds before, through a shot taken from his perspective. When Jandir talks to the car, he secretly talks to Vavá – it follows that any physical intimacy he might express towards the car is also directed to Vavá, and can be interpreted in terms of homosocial desire. The car, in which Vavá is literally repressed, acts as a proxy for Jandir’s homosocial desire to
find expression. The vehicle for their trickery both permits and precludes male intimacy.

An objection to these interpretations might be raised by the existence of an entirely plausible, non-sexual explanation for his behaviour – Jandir merely has a passion for cars. This can be addressed by considering the acting in the film. James Naremore suggests that, in general, actors take one of two approaches to performance. The first is a naturalistic approach derived from the work of Konstantin Stanislavski. It aims for an illusion of verisimilitude, the communication of emotional truth, and eschews any trace of staginess or overt artifice. On the other hand, acting according to a Brechtian aesthetic calls out the ‘artificiality of performance, foregrounding the staginess of spectacle’ in order to reveal the relations between theatrical performance and society, and foster critical consciousness in the audience as mentioned before. There are specific instances where the film employs Brechtian stylistics in order to break spectatorial engagement with the narrative; these will be discussed later on in the chapter and chiefly involve montage and mise-en-scène. Aside from these moments it is fair to say that the acting of Os cafajestes is primarily naturalistic insofar as the actors strive towards a realistic, rather than reflexive, presentation of the diegetic world. Arguably, Jece Valadão (Jandir), Daniel Filho (Vavá) and Norma Bengell (Leda) aim to convey the internal, psychological experiences of characters they portray. During the dénouement this leads to a tendency towards long, silent pauses and contemplative gazing to indicate decision-making, which occasionally pushes the acting towards a sense of staginess. However, this tendency is far from a

self-conscious commentary on the acting; nor is the camera’s presence recognized in a reflexive way by the actors themselves.28

Naremore comments that actors commonly use props as part of their communicative apparatus: ‘part of the actor’s job […] is to keep objects under expressive control, letting them become signifiers of feeling’.29 Valadão’s caress expresses Jandir’s passion for cars; it lends Jandir a masculine identity tied to conspicuous consumption. The car actually belongs to Vavá and will be given to Jandir as payment for his role in the con. So, Valadão’s caress might also express his imminent ownership of the vehicle; that this is performed in front of Leda further strengthens our impression of Jandir’s sadistic streak. But any interpretation of the caress is complicated by Vavá’s incorporation within the car itself. Vavá warps the car into a sign of his concealed or unshowable presence. Whether Valadão intended to express his character’s homosocial desire for Vavá or not is less relevant than the way the film leads the spectator to read for it via specific elements of the mise-en-scène. The spectator has been encouraged to discount superficial explanations for Jandir and Vavá’s desiring activities from the opening sequence onwards. As Jandir drives Leda to the beach he communicates information concerning the weather to Vavá. So that Vavá will adjust the aperture on his camera to the correct size for the strength of the light, he loudly shouts ‘atenção! Sol bonito! Diafragma onze!’ Leda questions Jandir’s behaviour immediately, ‘ta ficando maluco?’. Jandir replies that, ‘é que cada sol tem um nome diferente’ and he explains away his shouting as merely his desire to scream.30 Jandir camouflages information destined for Vavá as merely a charming, quirky expression

28 Othon Bastos’s infamous Brechtian-inspired portrayal of the cangaçeiro Corisco in Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol can be taken as a point of comparison within contemporary avant-garde cinema.
29 Naremore, Acting in the Cinema, p. 87.
30 Os cafajestes, dir. by Ruy Guerra, 13.39.
of inner frustration – he flirts with Leda in order to talk to Vavá. The sequence is fraught with irony; not only is Leda seduced by a coded message containing knowledge soon to be used against her, but she is encouraged to shout ‘diafragma onze!’ herself, thus furthering her own exploitation. Jandir’s trickery – in this case, the romantic or seductive endeavour – might be seen as serving in the same capacity as the car did before, as a conduit or proxy. So, this sequence can be considered an articulation of homosocial desire within the film: a heterosexual encounter facilitates a same-sex emotional investment while at the same time providing its cover. The orchestration of desire and signification in this scene presents to the spectator a striking reason to suspect any statement of heterosexual romance or seduction, and in particular those that indirectly involve another man. In colouring the male-male-female triangle (Jandir, Vavá and Leda) in terms of truth and artifice, the film clearly allocates inauthenticity to the heterosexual bond while the same-sex bond is marked as authentic.

A further example serves to demonstrate how Os cafajestes arranges signs of heterosexuality in ways that mean they are dubious or discredited, while also illustrating the interplay between homosocial desire and male identity. Following Leda’s humiliation, she establishes an uneasy truce with Jandir and Vavá. As they return to town the two men talk with each other while Leda remains silent. As they discuss matters of marriage, sex and romance, Vavá boasts of his previous romantic success with women by presenting his beloved with an orchid that flowers in her birth month. Jandir doubts this, suggesting that Vavá’s behaviour seems steeped in ‘frescura’.31 ‘Frescura’ is a term that derives from ‘fresco, with the dual meaning of a

31 Os cafajestes, 34.34.
fairy or faggot and something fresh’ – here, it is used as a pejorative to indicate effeminacy. Vavá defends himself; Jandir parks the car and breaks into a florist to retrieve a box of orchids so he might prove his point. Writing on film noir, Richard Dyer suggests that the orchid often connotes homosexuality: ‘orchids are rare and precious, signs of extravagant love during heterosexual courtship, they are also suspect, over-elaborate blooms [...] the product of unnatural cultivation’. The orchid’s qualities match up with the tendency to represent ‘queers as decadent’ in film noir – as well-dressed men who display a rarefied taste for extravagant decoration. The environmental conditions conducive to their cultivation are more abundant in Brazil, nevertheless, the orchid might still connote more than heterosexual desire in Os cafajestes owing to its ornate appearance. Posso points to a further semantic double entendre – as flowers, orchids are literally the reproductive organs of the plant, but they sustain an association with genitalia etymologically as the word ‘orchid’ is derived from the ancient Greek word for testicle, ‘orkhis’. The orchid is arguably clustered with meanings that might complicate its ostensible function as certifying Vavá’s manliness. Vavá’s claims for heterosexual aptitude seem to be subtly inflected with ambivalence. His sexual proclivities are put into doubt by the very object that would confirm his heterosexuality (fig. 4).

The ambiguity implicit in this scenario is elaborated when Jandir puts Vavá’s theory to the test as the trio are driving on a highway. He speeds up to a car driven by a

32 Green, Beyond Carnival, p. 27.
34 Dyer, ‘Queer Noir’, p. 91.
35 A. Abraham and P. Vatsala note that while the campos of Brazil is too arid to support orchid growth, and the Amazon itself is poor in orchids, the tropical regions of the South East of Brazil is one of three major orchid-growing regions in the world (the others being the tropical regions in Africa and the Indo-Burmese and South East Asiatic region). See Introduction to Orchids (Trivandrum, India: The St. Joseph’s Press, 1981), p. 12.
36 Posso, Artful Seduction, p. 77.
blonde woman; Vavá climbs out of his seat to offer the woman the orchid, shouting ‘olha aí gostosa!’ as he throws the flower into her car.37 As with the previous examples, the sequence has a seemingly innocent explanation: the dialogue between Jandir and Vavá sees masculine identity contested and asserted, lending the scene an air of friendly competition. In other words, the scene might be explained away as nothing more than a bit of male banter based around Vavá’s attempts to prove his manhood. However, while Vavá’s display of masculine daring appears entirely heterosexual in its content, at the same time, it could never be taken for a serious romantic gesture. It is a performance of heterosexual romance – a joke between Jandir and Vavá. In this way, it follows the logic of the orchid by pointing towards a secondary meaning; just as the orchid conceals a homoerotic reference to male genitalia behind its floral appearance, Vavá’s act of heterosexual daring is motivated by, and conceals, a same-sex desiring bond. That the flower connotes homoeroticism only further casts doubt on his masculinity.

The three structures of meaning and desire outlined above – the car, the coded flirtation and the orchid – indicate same-sex desire in a similar way, through implication or innuendo. One final example evidences an argument for the centrality of same-sex desire to male identity in Os cafajestes in a more literal fashion. The tables turn on the two men from the middle of the film onwards. As girlfriend to Vavá’s uncle, Leda is already aware of the complicated emotional and financial relationships of Vavá’s family, the ‘matérias da família’.38 She seeks revenge on the two men by disrupting the formation of desire in which she finds herself a passive conduit for male same-sex desire (the male-male-female triangle). She replaces

37 Os cafajestes, 38.10.
38 Os cafajestes, 43.16.
herself with Wilma, Vavá’s cousin and long-running object of his affection. When the time comes to take compromising photographs of Wilma, Vavá chooses to defend her from the predations of Jandir and the bond between the men collapses into violence. The sequence continues into the night. While Vavá and Wilma discuss their relationship in private, Jandir attempts to have sex with Leda but is unable to perform. Jandir might be thought of as having elements of the malandro to his character – it certainly seems that he obeys a ‘masculine code of sexual prowess and control over women’, given the frequency with which he is shown attempting to seduce and dominate women.39 If Jandir subscribes to this code, nothing could throw his masculinity into doubt more than erectile failure – it suggests a lack of sexual potency and a failure of (hetero-) sexual prowess. He has one option left to redeem his manhood: he eventually forces Wilma into having sex with him. This act is carried out in full view of Vavá and Leda, which repeats the homosocial desiring structure one final time: Jandir can sexually perform only when he gazes at Vavá (figs. 4 and 5). In this final scene, the very action which redeems heterosexual prowess effectively precludes it: he can only have sex with women if he desires another man. The film suggests that Jandir’s masculinity itself is contradictory: the redeeming attribute of his male identity, an ostentatious display of heterosexual desire and sexual ability, is fundamentally dependent on same-sex desire.

The film orchestrates a series of semiotic and desiring scenarios that reveal the centrality of same-sex desire to heterosexual sex, courtship and romance. The spectator is trained to doubt the veracity of the cafajestes’ heterosexuality while acknowledging the presence of same-sex desire as the ‘truth’ that motivates their

actions during the narrative. In *Os cafajestes*, the deception of women allows the articulation of a desiring bond between men; this secures male identity by complicating claims for heterosexuality. This has consequences for the treatment of ideology in *Os cafajestes*, as will now be shown through an attention to the film’s form.

**The ‘Long Take’ and Brechtian Aesthetics**

Alongside encouraging the spectator to read for homosocial desire, *Os cafajestes* engages the spectator using reflexive techniques derived from Brechtian dramatic theory, as has been briefly mentioned before. One of the central concepts in Brecht’s theory is Verfremdung, related to Marx’s Entfremdung (‘alienation’) and translated variously as ‘de-alienation’, ‘disillusion’, ‘dislocation’, ‘distanciation’ and ‘de-familiarization’. When applied in cinema, this technique would eject the spectator from narrative absorption through self-reference which points out that the film is not some magical ahistorical product but emerges from within a social and historical context determined by material relations (capital). Guerra uses Verfremdungseffekte, or ‘V-effects’, sparingly in *Os cafajestes*, but the film’s most provocative moments are arguably its most Brechtian, namely, the long take of Leda’s humiliation, as Randal Johnson points out, and the scene set in the coastal fort.40 *Os cafajestes* makes a convincing critique of both heterosexist and patriarchal ideology using the reflexivity provided by Brechtian stylistics. The centrality of homosocial desire to the long take, wherein the film makes its major ideological critique, will now be shown.

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40 Johnson, *Cinema Novo* x 5, p. 97.
The long take runs from approximately 25.50 to 29.05. It begins when Jandir drives off with Leda’s clothes and leaves her naked on the beach. She begins to run after him; he returns soon after with Vavá emerging from the boot. Jandir drives the car in circles around Leda while Vavá photographs her, yelling and cajoling. Leda is exhausted and defenceless; her attempts to cover herself are futile. The car winds inexorably closer to Leda. Eventually a freeze-frame temporarily transforms the film into a still of Leda begging for mercy (see figs. 8 to 12). Jean-Claude Bernardet argues that Leda’s dehumanization aims to stimulate public outrage and so belies a pretension to notoriety, while demonstrating ‘mais autodesprêzo do que vontade de atuar sobre o mundo’. Randal Johnson is more sympathetic, suggesting that the long take aims to foreground reification – the notion that an object can be removed from its material context and fetishized as a desirable, magical thing – and bring this process into critique. Alternatively, it is important to point out that the photographs that Vavá takes are also commodities that can be traded for a profit. The value the photographs would hold – the reason the two men use them for blackmail – is based primarily on the fact that they compromise Leda’s social standing and so indirectly mar the reputation of Vavá’s uncle, to whom she is attached. In this way, the long take arguably deals with the familiar patriarchal equation of women with objects and men with subjects – both processes demystified by the long take, as shall now be shown. Each ideological system invoked here (capitalism and patriarchy) relies on the occlusion of historical and material conditions – objects are divested of their material context and repackaged as commodities, just as women are naturalized as objects in relation to men. The V-effect is produced in the first instance by the film’s identification of the filming camera with Vavá’s photographic camera (fig. 7). This

42 Johnson, *Cinema Novo x 5*, p.97.
equation reflexively exposes the film to be an aesthetic object by pointing to its own production processes. If the film is actually located in a historical context, so too are the ideological systems at work fabricated or constructed – in the words of Fredric Jameson, they are “‘historical’”, to which may be added, as a political corollary, made or constructed by human beings, and thus able to be changed by them as well, or replaced altogether’.43 In other words, Johnson’s arguments can be extended to suggest that the long take also reveals the material and historical constructedness of the commodification and objectification of women.

The long take can also be shown to make a tacit critique of sexual identity, as the truth of Jandir’s seduction is made clear. Up to this point, the film suggests that homosocial desire motivates the cafajestes’ behaviour: Vavá serves as the ‘true’ object of Jandir’s desire so long as he is hidden in the boot, as detailed above; this casts suspicion on non-homosocial explanations of instances of desire by coding the surface (the commonsensical or obvious explanation) as ‘false’. However, Vavá’s emergence renders the male-male-female triangle blatant, which introduces an alternative, non-homosocial explanation for their behaviour: the two men desire to exploit Leda via her objectification. However, his emergence also collapses the surface/depth binary that previously allowed the assignment of ‘true’ and ‘false’ to the various possible explanations of their desire. Arguably, this makes it equally true to suggest that they exploit Leda for money as it is true to say that they have exploited her to express desire for each other. By suggesting that the desires of Jandir and Vavá for each other, and for Leda, are all simultaneously ‘true’, the ‘truth’ of desire can no longer be seen in absolute terms. Rather, the film shows the desire of the two men to be ambiguous.

and plural – not so much that Jandir and Vavá want a variety of different objects, but that their desire takes multiple objects simultaneously: a desire for Leda is also a desire for homosocial intimacy, a desire for profit or for commodities is also a desire for another man, a desire for one object is also a desire for another at the same time. This might be seen to erode the certainty that a professed sexual identity, determined by desire for a single female (or male) object, matches up with the subject’s particular experience of desire (for multiple, contradictory objects). In other words, while the two men frequently profess heterosexual identity, the film suggests that a sexual identity defined by a single fixed object-choice would appear to be a reductive or limited way of describing the desire of the subject. In this way, *Os cafajestes* might be said to produce two queer characters that, somewhat accidentally, question the idea of a fixed (object-oriented) sexual identity itself.

**Subversive Romance at the Coastal Fort**

As explained previously, Jandir and Vavá agree to give Leda the photographs if she helps ensnare Wilma. The two men wait in a small coastal fort for Leda to orchestrate Wilma’s arrival. They are approached by two young women, one of whom asks Jandir for a light. The film bifurcates into two conversations that run parallel to each other. Jandir and Vavá both ask the young women a variety of probing questions. Jandir tries to ‘rescue’ the first young woman from the mundane routines of school and family life, offering her ‘empregadas, boas roupas’ if she comes with him. He introduces her to the possibility of life elsewhere; her ambivalence suggests that she is tempted by his proposition. Vavá asks the second young woman about her father, spliced between dialogue from the first young woman concerning morality. Vavá then asks her about her virginity and seeks to coerce more information from her at the same time as
affirming that premarital sex is ‘nada de mais’. Vavá and Jandir tease out notions of sexual purity, Catholic notions of sin and redemption, the daily life and the education of women in this conversation. The two dialogues interlace. It becomes increasingly difficult to keep track of who is speaking to whom as the interrogations splice together religious dogma and patriarchal questions of sexual behaviour. Johnson suggests that the irregular, disjointed montage produces a V-effect by disorienting the spectator and dissuading them from an unthinking enjoyment of the narrative. The sequence is also reflexive: by deliberately mismatching audio and image, interlocutor and response, the film breaks narrative illusionism and exposes itself as an artificial construction. The spectator is, once again, ejected from engagement with the narrative while at the same time instructed to view the content with a critical detachment. The various fragments delivered by the women form part of the belief-systems which are used to control female sexuality. The film draws a correlation between the cutting up of ideological fragments and the production of cinematic montage. By making this correspondence while self-referentially drawing attention to its own production processes, the film points towards the constructedness of the ideologies themselves and emphasizes their determination by a historical context. Patriarchy, Catholicism, and traditional narratives of female sexuality are exposed as artificial fragments, spliced together by the social order in order to control its subjects.

Jandir and Vavá seek to undermine and discredit these fragmented snippets of ideology in order to wrest the women away from the nuclear family. Again, the film suggests that this behaviour is underpinned by an ambiguous homosocial desire. At the beginning of the sequence, a single take establishes the male-male-female

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44 Os cafajestes, 59.00.
45 Johnson, Cinema Novo x 5, p. 97.
structure and sets the two men up in competition with each other; the staging of the shot also positions men over women and repeats patriarchal notions of male predation or activity, and female vulnerability or passivity (fig. 13). Jandir comments on their activities in the coastal fort and states that Vavá almost ‘ganhou uma orquídea viva’.\textsuperscript{46} His words reintroduce the idea that the two men compete with each other for women, figured as objects to be won, that was elaborated during Vavá’s previous attempts to seduce using orchids. This not only reiterates the importance of the concealed homosocial bond but also redoubles the ambivalence that inflects Vavá’s heterosexual identity. Jandir confirms this when he suggests that their failure to seduce either woman has an element of ‘frescura’ about it, using the same word to imply homosexuality or effeminacy as he did previously. Here, the competitive relation, fraught with homosocial desire, drives the two men to behave in ways that bring oppressive, sexist ideology to the screen. In effect, the sexist behaviour of Jandir and Vavá means that the film can demystify this ideology using reflexive distancing strategies.

Despite their attempts to blackmail the absent father-figure, it is arguable that Jandir and Vavá exhibit an ambivalent attitude to the patriarchal social order that borders, at points, on complicity with it. Certainly, their objectification of Leda and their treatment of the women in the coastal fort as prizes to be won can be seen as compliant with patriarchal ideology, as mentioned above. They seem to repeat patriarchal ideas around women even as they aim to disrupt or challenge the authority of the patriarch. It is possible to suggest that Jandir and Vavá’s assault on paternal authority is actually an ironic consequence of patriarchal ideology itself. The

\textsuperscript{46} Os cafajestes, 59.55.
prohibition on male same-sex desire enforced by (heterosexist) patriarchy inadvertently creates the possibility of relationships between men and women that are primarily driven by male homosocial, rather than heterosexual, desire. It follows that the men in such relationships might faithfully obey certain imperatives of patriarchal ideology but have no inclination assume the role of the father, or defend the father’s interests. Jandir and Vavá are disturbingly ambivalent when seen in this light. While it is clearly important to criticise their treatment of women, their behaviour might be seen as gesturing towards contradictions within patriarchy itself: they threaten paternal authority by upholding the same ideology that the patriarch employs to secure his power. Here, Jandir and Vavá display a similar kind of ambivalent attitude to the social order as the malandro – they uphold the letter of law (in terms of patriarchal ideology, at least), but they do so to undermine those in power. This point will be discussed more extensively in the conclusion to this chapter, where Os cafajestes will be brought into comparison with Barravento.

So far, this chapter has argued for the centrality of male identity, and of the patriarchal and heterosexist ideologies that inform it, to one of the earlier examples of Cinema Novo. Guerra’s film ends with a bleak assessment of life under capitalism, as suggested by Johnson’s conclusion – Os cafajestes is structured by a series of exchanges ‘that in the end lead to nothing at all’ save the reification of human beings, while the film’s interpersonal relationships are all essentially determined by money.

Nevertheless, by exploring the interaction between representations of Sedgwickian homosocial desire and Brechtian form, the chapter has argued that the film makes an

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47 Johnson, Cinema Novo x 5, p. 96.
important contribution to the representation of queer male identity in Brazilian cinema of the 1960s.

**Barravento: The Activity of Ownership**

*Barravento* deals with a small community of fishermen on the coast of Bahia. Their life is dominated by their impoverished economic circumstances. They eke out just enough food to survive by fishing in the tempestuous Atlantic sea – they rent a large net from rich white capitalists but most of their catch is taken in ‘payment’, and the net itself is failing due to its age. They practise Candomblé, a form of syncretic polytheism centred on the worship of gods, or *orixás*, a belief-system rooted in African spiritualist traditions and originally introduced to Brazil by slaves. The fishermen must obey certain rules, prohibitions and limits set by the Candomblé priestesses, or *ialorixás*, to appease the *orixás* and ensure their continued wellbeing.

Firmino, a young man who had previously been exiled to the city, returns to the community. He has become radicalized during his time away; on his return he decries the impoverishment of the fishermen and resolves to change their fortunes. He aims to demystify the figure of Aruã – another young man who is said to be the favourite of the *orixá* Iemanjá. So long as Aruã bears the blessing of Iemanjá, the seas will remain calm enough for fishing – the condition of Iemanjá’s protection is that Aruã remains without a sexual partner. Firmino sabotages the net of the community, but this does not produce the revolutionary change he desires. Then he asks his prostitute friend Cota to seduce Aruã. Following Aruã’s sexual awakening a storm devastates the community and claims the lives of various members – the community itself begins to develop political consciousness. Aruã emerges as the leader of the community,
promising to journey to the city and return with a net, allowing the fishermen the chance of escaping from poverty.

In order to assess the film’s representation of same-sex desire and male identity, it is useful to begin with an examination of the way identity is related to the social order. Society is ordered hierarchically in two ways in Barravento: firstly, by the customs and traditions of Candomblé, secondly, by the Brazilian capitalist state. In the first, worshippers are subservient to an array of orixás. The second structures their existence according to an economic hierarchy based on ownership of capital: the bourgeois net-owner leases the net to the fishermen in exchange for a share of their catch and extracts a profit from their labour. The film uses marking to communicate the different hierarchies at work within the film, and to assign identity to the characters. For example, Cota, a prostitute, is marked by Firmino when he buys her services – he uses chalk to inscribe his initial on her cheek (fig. 14). This identifies Cota as his property. Firmino owns Cota because he has purchased her services (her body) – it can be surmised his ownership is contingent on his capacity to remunerate her for her time. Within a society ordered by capitalism, identity has a certain potential for fluidity: in Cota’s case, her ‘owner’ will depend on fluxes of capital. Nevertheless, Cota will always remain the object to a paying subject. Another woman, Naina, is marked in a contrasting way. She is presented as mentally unstable or disturbed – a friend perceives her distress to be based in sorcery and takes her to a terreiro to seek a cure. Naina reacts to the terreiro worship with an outburst of violentfitting. The ialorixà interprets her reaction by claiming that Naina ‘é de Iemanjá’, suggesting that she can cure her malaise by serving in the terreiro as the goddess’s
priestess for a year. The marks that designate Naina as belonging to the goddess are physiological, as the fishermen point out that ‘é tudo por causa da cor dos olhos e do cabelo’. Unlike the transient ownership to which Cota is subjected, Iemanjá’s mark is non-negotiable. It is permanently inscribed on Naina’s body and forms the basis of her social identity – her name is a contraction of Janaina, a synonym for Iemanjá.

Aruã also belongs to Iemanjá. Her patronage is initially relayed by the fishermen ‘Quer ver Iemanjá? Ela só aparece para Aruã’. Then, when Firmino asks the ialorixá to place a curse on Aruã, she refuses because of his protection under Iemanjá. It might be argued that the film accounts for his ownership by the orixá using a series of ambiguous statements which connote homosexuality. Most indicative of this interpretation are Cota’s remarks later on: ‘se [Aruã] gostasse de mulher, talvez eu não andasse tão jogada fora’. Her comments introduce the condition that comes with Iemanjá’s patronage or ownership: Aruã may not sleep with women and instead is compelled to live with the Mestre, a man who also bears the mark of Iemanjá. Although she makes no suggestion that Aruã and the Mestre have a sexual relationship, her comments indicate that an association with Iemanjá casts aspersions over Aruã’s sexuality – he does not like women, a statement that comes with the implication that he is interested in men. For Firmino, the intimation of homosexuality lies beyond the pale and he rebukes Cota with a slap. D. A. Miller explores this kind of indirect expression of homosexuality in Alfred Hitchcock’s Rope (1948) and argues that homosexuality is only ever connoted in Hitchcock’s film – expressed using a secondary system of signification that takes as signifiers a series of primary signs –

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48 Barravento, dir. by Glauber Rocha, 23.29.
49 Barravento, 10.24.
50 Barravento, 12.24.
51 Barravento, 25.32.
and never made explicit. This allowed the film to side-step the 1934 Production Code, which prohibited discussion of homosexuality in US cinema. Miller underlines that the expressive capacity afforded by connotation is ambivalent: ‘connotation enjoys, or suffers from, an abiding deniability. To refuse the evidence for a merely connoted meaning is as simple – and as frequent – as uttering the words “But isn’t it just…?” before retorting the denotation’. It is arguable that the dialogue between Cota and Firmino directs the spectator towards the possibility of homosexuality using connotation, but rather than explain away homosexual possibility (Aruã’s indifference to women) as something else, Firmino physically admonishes Cota. His act designates homosexual possibility as unspeakable, and prevents Cota from commenting further on the subject. The connotation lingers as a meaning that is only forbidden, not inaccurate.

Further examples that might connote homosexuality can be found later in the film as various characters attempt to account for Aruã’s mystical power; these centre on his difference from the other men. Naina comments on his isolation at night ‘[ele fica] sentado na praia, olhando pro céu, contando as estrelas’ – this points towards Aruã’s status as other to the men of the community. Later, the ialorixá discusses those unfortunates who have previously held Iemanjá’s attention: ‘Joaquim era um homem muito bonito demais, por isso a Rainha não queria que ele casasse’ which indicates that Iemanjá’s mark is related to male beauty. The ialorixá uses the word ‘demais’, signifying that his beauty considered is excessive for a man, becoming an attribute which consequently separates him from society. Furthermore, her grammatically

53 Barravento, 39.20.
54 Barravento, 46.22.
incorrect use of 'muito' serves to further underscore the emphatic nature of the sentence. It is patent that these lines do not denote homosexuality. Thanks to the effects of connotation, however, Cota’s original comment recruits the examples of Aruã’s otherness as supporting evidence of sexual deviance, further inflecting Iemanjá’s mark with the sense that it indicates homosexuality. In order to fully grasp how Iemanjá’s mark translates into an identity, and how it relates to the wider social order, it is necessary to consider the relationship between homosexuality and orixá possession.

**Candomblé: Spirit Possession and Sexual Identity**

Iemanjá’s mark might be seen as a kind of patronage. In his study of Candomblé, Peter Fry notes that the sexual identity of the participants is perceived to reflect the gender of the orixá that patronizes them – males who are ‘sons’ of female deities are presumed to be effeminate homosexuals (*bichas*). Fry notes that many Candomblé practitioners themselves believed that homosexual men populated the possession cults in such high numbers because the mechanics of possession allowed individuals to be ‘possessed by female spirits so that they may give rein to their feminine tendencies’ and provided a legitimate outlet for effeminacy. James Matory extends these remarks in his discussion of how participants of Candomblé rituals often find themselves possessed by their various patron orixás. Such possession is an act which is loaded with sexual connotation – according to Matory, ‘riding’ and ‘being ridden’ by an orixá becomes equated with sexual penetration and being sexually penetrated.

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55 Fry stresses that this is slightly different in practice, as often ‘bichas’ were possessed by male spirits, and indeed were possessed by male spirits most frequently and for the longest periods. Peter Fry, ‘Male Homosexuality and Spirit Possession in Brazil’, in *Anthropology and Homosexual Behaviour*, ed. by Evelyn Blackwood (New York: Haworth Press, 1986), pp. 137-153 (pp. 144-146).
respectively. This stems from the way that Candomblé preserves ‘a West African logic of “mounting” [possession]’ within its devotional practices, which converges with Brazilian models of sexual identity (the active/passive binary discussed in the Introduction to this thesis). As the orixás are always those that descend, possess or ‘ride’ the priests, they are coded as active or male regardless of their ostensible gender identity. The capacity for frequent possession by the orixás would come to indicate passivity, as one is always passive in relation to a penetrating orixá. For this reason, Matory suggests that women and ‘passive’ men were considered to be the natural candidates for possession as they ‘share [...] the symbolically loaded fact of their penetrability’, evident in the existence of category of male possession priests, the ‘adé’, who were assumed to be homosexual.57 If spiritual penetrability is perceived to be derived from or imply a propensity to submit to physical penetration, then it is not surprising that men wishing to preserve their status as a macho or (sexually) active, would resist or even fear possession by an orixá. As Matory writes, possession by ‘an exogenous Other [...] is both a precondition to eligibility for the possession priesthood and a great threat to those who regard masculinity as their only ticket to some semblance of authority in daily social interactions’ precisely because being possessed would disturb the masculinity (conceived as activity) of the host.58 At the same time, he points out that the actual behaviour of machos, bichas and adés in social and sexual situations is frequently more diverse and varied than the ‘passivity’ or ‘activity’ associated with their identity might suggest, but that ‘local ideological assumptions and expectations tend to link habitual male "passivity" with transvestism, feminine gestures [...] and the social subordination of the penetrated party’.59

58 Matory, Black Atlantic Religion, p. 214.
59 Matory, Black Atlantic Religion, p. 208.
As shown above, Iemanjá’s mark determines Aruã’s identity in a comparable way to Naina, who ‘é de Iemanjá’, establishing Aruã as an object over which Iemanjá exerts her authority – he is her property or possession.\textsuperscript{60} The only possible relation with an orixá is one of non-negotiable passivity; Iemanjá’s mark (a relation) arguably codes Aruã as passive. Of course, this is not to suggest that Aruã could be easily described as a bicha - the traces of femininity that he displays are subtle and contrast strongly with the undeniably effeminate bicha-type figures discussed later on in this thesis. Nevertheless, as suggested above, it does have consequences for his sexuality, as he must effectively abstain from heterosexual ‘activity’ entirely. Iemanjá’s mark also serves in a homeostatic capacity in Barravento. The community believes that as long as Aruã remains in Iemanjá’s possession (coded as passive) then she guarantees calm seas and plentiful fish; when the fishermen are forced to run the risk of fishing on the open sea, they credit that it is only her protection reducing the threat of bad weather. This guarantee effectively prevents the community from questioning the status quo – they will not interrogate the material relations that impoverish them so long as they imagine Iemanjá as ensuring their wellbeing. Regardless of whether Iemanjá is represented as having any real effect on the sea itself or not, the film suggests moreover that Aruã’s passivity effectively stabilizes and protects the hierarchies that oppress the community, including the unequal relationship between the owners of the net (the means of production) and the fishermen. His passivity perpetuates the wider political inactivity (passivity) of the community itself. At the same time, Aruã is somewhat removed from the social order as a venerated man. In this sense, it is arguable that his relative isolation from other men preserves the hierarchies of the

\textsuperscript{60} Barravento, 23.27.
social order, which would appear to function as a system whose internal stability is
dependent on what is kept outside its limits. Firmino, recently returned from the city,
rightly views Aruã’s position as productive of political paralysis. At the same time, it
is Aruã’s status as an outsider that draws Firmino to him. His efforts to liberate the
community from the various systems that oppress them focus on shattering an ossified
social structure by removing Aruã from the equation. In order to offer a consideration
of how Iemanjá’s mark might determine Firmino’s political activity further, it is
necessary to give details of the scholarship on the question of Firmino’s motivation.

Interpreting Firmino: A Queer Approach?

Jean-Claude Bernardet and Robert Stam both offer different interpretations of
Firmino’s role and motivations, although it is arguable that neither is satisfactory in
fully explaining his behaviour. Using a Marxist lens, Bernardet suggests that
Barravento is concerned with the emergence of a revolutionary leader from the
masses and that the film uses the figure of Firmino to make its point. Bernardet
describes him as a political radical who represents not the political vanguard of the
fishing community but ‘um indivíduo que, pessoalmente, resolveu agir sôbre o povo’
who acts on Aruã alone to bring about the political awakening of the community.61
Bernardet points out that his return from the city as a politically conscious individual
is in keeping with a tendency in Brazilian culture to see the urban space as ‘uma fonte
de idéias perturbadoras e renovadoras’.62 In Bernardet’s reading, Firmino aims
primarily to demystify the fishermen and expose Candomblé as a meaningless,
alienating sham. Bernardet’s interpretation accords with the prefatory intertitles:

61 Bernardet, Brasil em tempo de cinema, p. 60.
62 Bernardet, Brasil em tempo de cinema, p. 60.
‘aceitam a miséria, o analfabetismo e a exploração com a passividade característica
daquêles que esperam o reino divino’ and arguably accounts for Firmino’s fiery
rhetoric delivered to the community when the white capitalists come to take back the
net.

Bernardet’s reading is made problematic by Firmino’s choice to ‘fazer uma macumba
contra Aruã’. The decision to use magic against Aruã suggests Firmino’s actions
cannot be fully understood in terms of a Marxist framework, as Firmino must credit
Candomblé enough to use its practices for his own ends. If Firmino has enough faith
in witchcraft to use it, it would imply that other mystical beliefs are equally credible,
including the notion that Iemanjá will provide for the villagers regardless of the
quality of their net or the behaviour of the exploitative whites, so long as Aruã
remains her possession. This leads to a somewhat contradictory formulation: Firmino
believes in Candomblé, while he simultaneously seeks to kill off or demystify Aruã,
and so undo the protections afforded by that system itself. Seeking to resolve this
contradiction, Robert Stam explains Firmino’s apparent willingness to use black
magic in an alternative interpretation that associates him with Exu, another orixá akin
to a trickster god: ‘a liminal, beyond Good and Evil, border-line character […] he too
is a messenger between two worlds; he too is associated with alcoholic drink, with life
on the road’. This association is often made through music – for example, the film
plays a chant exalting Exu on the audio-track when Firmino is spying on Cota and
Aruã. Reading Firmino as Exu might explain his disruptive behaviour, ‘his words

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63 Bernardet, Brasil em tempo de cinema, p. 59.
64 Stam, Tropical Multiculturalism, p. 222.
65 Stam, Tropical Multiculturalism, p. 223.
indiscriminately mingle the discourses of the Civil Rights movement, Brazilian populism, and Marxist dialectics. He is a catalyst for mobilization."\(^{66}\)

In this interpretation, Firmino would fight Aruã because Exu fights Iemanjá – it is not uncommon for *orixás* to fight amongst themselves for followers or power. Stam’s reading would be complicated by the general critique that Firmino levels at Candomblé at the end of the film – one of his final political statements suggests that sorcery is a thing for ‘gente atrasada, vai ser preciso acabar com isso! É preciso acabar com isso!’\(^{67}\) While it makes sense for one *orixá* to steal power from another, it seems counterintuitive that they would attempt to devalue the system of Candomblé itself and so undermine their own powerbase. For this reason, Stam goes on to suggest that he is less decided on either interpretation than Bernardet. He points out that the film is essentially ambivalent – at once embracing the language and symbolism of Candomblé by associating characters with *orixás* while providing a materialist analysis of the fishermen’s conditions. In the same way, Firmino’s aim to disturb the status quo in order to improve the lives of the fishermen involves two contradictory premises: his behaviour contains elements of Marxist politics and seems to acknowledge the power of Candomblé at the same time. A third interpretation can be put forward via an examination of the role of same-sex desire and its relation to the film’s construction of male identity. This might offer a way to understand Firmino’s behaviour which takes into account the contradictions raised by Bernardet and Stam, while allowing a greater challenge to the underlying structure of the status quo to be drawn from the film.

\(^{66}\) Stam, *Tropical Multiculturalism*, p. 223.

\(^{67}\) *Barravento*, 1.02.30.
Although Firmino spends the duration of the film in an antagonistic relationship with Aruã, much of this conflict is mediated through the prostitute Cota – this triadic structure is similar to the erotic triangle that was shown to drive the narrative of *Os cafajestes*. Firmino procures the services of Cota early on in the film and his desiring encounters with Cota are always defined at a certain point with reference to Aruã (and Aruã’s only sexual experience in the film contains the shadow of Firmino, as will be discussed shortly). This is evident when Firmino and Cota have sex on the beach for the first time. Firmino suddenly interrupts the act. Cota embraces him again and the two briefly resume their activity, but Firmino interrupts her kiss again in order to discuss his feelings for Aruã. Firmino explains angrily ‘Todo mundo aí anda de coração mole por Aruã […] Aruã] fica alegre no meio do povo. Todo mundo passando fome e ele fazendo festa’ 68 This sequence suggests that Cota serves Firmino both as a sexual partner and as a confidant with whom he can discuss his plans for demystifying Aruã: Firmino does not, or not only, pay Cota for her sexual services but for providing a vessel through which he can route his feelings for Aruã. She serves as the female object that enables Firmino to desire Aruã, safely and indirectly.

A further example can be found later on in the film, when Firmino encounters Cota on the beach. Their conversation begins with a discussion of why Firmino will not settle down with Cota – he cannot have a stable life because he resents the idea of fishing for a living. Here, Firmino seems to exhibit behaviour typical of a malandro figure. Regarding the attitude of the malandro towards work, DaMatta argues:

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68 Barravento, 18.58.
As Marx pointed out, putting one’s labour power on the market implies putting one’s moral person on the market. This the rogue refuses to do. The rogue prefers to retain his labour power and his abilities to himself. The vagabond is the one who does not enter the system with his labour power; he floats in the social structure, able to enter it, leave it, or even transcend it.69

In a comparable fashion, Firmino rejects the stability of regular work and chooses instead to live off his wits as an ‘elemento subversivo’. Firmino’s response to Cota is also in line with the suggestion made by Shaw and Webb that the malandro is characterized as rejecting domesticity and marriage.70 Arguably, Firmino does display some aspects of the malandro. However, Shaw also points out that the malandro figure would live a life of ‘idleness, pleasure-seeking, and petty crime’. Such a lifestyle does not seem to apply to Firmino, given his engagement with subversive political activity.71

The conversation soon turns to the topic of the community’s oppression – a discussion centred on Aruã. As before, an interaction fuelled by heterosexual desire shortly falls back to a discussion of Aruã; it clearly illustrates that romantic or sexual activity with a woman provides Firmino the opportunity to articulate his feelings towards Aruã. Firmino justifies his politicizing activities to Cota in a variety of ways. Firstly, he hates those who exploit others, and feels that Aruã has tricked the community into venerating him undeservedly. Aruã is merely a man, not ‘um santo de carne e osso’.72

As suggested above, Firmino believes that the veneration of Aruã perpetuates the

69 DaMatta, Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes, p. 230
72 Barravento, 1.02.24.
fishermen’s suffering because they feel that Iemanjá will always protect them, which prevents them from questioning their material conditions. Firmino also mentions that Aruã does not want to live by convention or to remain subordinate to others; Firmino states that Aruã is like Cota in this respect. Nevertheless, the Mestre bends Aruã to his will, reaffirming his passivity. The hierarchy of active/passive that defines their relationship can be located within what might be called a ‘chain’ of active/passive (hierarchical) relationships – Aruã is dominated by the Mestre, who leads the community but is himself dominated by the capitalists – for example, he refuses to challenge them when they arrive to repossess the net. Aruã could take the Mestre’s place at the helm of the community, but, as suggested above, the community relies on his passivity to calm the seas and ensure the plenitude of fish. In this way, Iemanjá’s mark is crucial in guaranteeing Aruã’s passivity, securing him within a set of active/passive relations (between him and the Mestre, between him and Iemanjá, between the Mestre and the net-owners) and so sustaining the structure of a hierarchical, oppressive social order. Not only does Firmino want to demystify Aruã to bring the community into political consciousness and make them aware of their exploitation; it is arguable that he wants to remove Iemanjá’s mark in order to disturb the oppressive active/passive hierarchies that preserve the status quo.

As in Os cafajestes, it can be demonstrated that homosocial desire plays an important part in the social and political circumstances of Barravento. But there are differences. In the former, various performances of heterosexual romance enabled and concealed a same-sex bond. On the other hand, in Barravento, Firmino’s contemplation of Aruã’s passivity always interrupts his lovemaking with Cota. The indirect expression of homosocial desire is never fully realised. The film suggests that Firmino cannot
perform heterosexual sex as long as Aruã belongs to Iemanjá – not only does her mark paralyse society but it freezes Firmino’s capacity to complete coitus. As a structuring of male desire designed precisely to avoid the open acknowledgment of homosexuality, the male-male-female triangle cannot securely function if one of the men is considered homosexual – this would preclude the female member serving as a convincing proxy for the desires of the other two men, thus raising the suspicion of homosexuality over the male-male desiring relation itself. It is arguable that Firmino’s frustration arises from the inability to properly articulate a bond of homosocial desire with Aruã. Here, *Barravento* displays a tension between two systems of sexual meaning – Aruã’s passivity (an identity determined by the traditional model of active/passive) prevents Firmino from articulating a homosocial bond. This leads to a third, related explanation for Firmino’s repeated attempts to disrupt Iemanjá’s protection: he needs Aruã to be a real (active, ostensibly heterosexual) man so that he might express his desire legitimately, through a proxy. In other words, it can be suggested that Firmino’s subversive activities aim to produce a secure (male-male-female) structure through which homosocial desire might be articulated.

Firmino makes three attempts to demystify Aruã, and the first two can be shown to work within the terms of the social order. First, Firmino aims to dislodge Aruã from a position of power by turning Candomblé against itself. This inadvertently repeats hierarchical logic – by directly contesting the protection afforded by Iemanjá, an *orixá* arguably more powerful than the sorcerer who casts Firmino’s spell, Firmino only duplicates the relationship of active master/passive subordinate. When that fails, Firmino hopes to rouse the people from their miserable conditions by sabotaging the net, and depleting their resources to unbearable levels. Again, Firmino remains within
binary logic – he aims to force the subordinate term (the fishermen) to rise up against the dominant term (the capitalists). The sole consequence of his actions is to weaken the community further and increase their dependence on Candomblé. The film makes the resilience of the system to change clear via these two failed attempts. Firmino cannot take action that will replicate hierarchies without the system accommodating the changes that he makes. Neither can Firmino force Aruã to bring about social change through fighting him, forcing him, or through ordering him to do so: this would place him in an active position over Aruã and reproduce the same hierarchies that Firmino seeks to dislodge. *Barravento* provides a solution to the conundrum that is presaged in the duplicity of the film’s title itself. One sense of the word ‘barravento’ is ‘changing wind’ or ‘transformation of events’, while another is ‘possession by an orixá’. It is through the simultaneity of meaning contained within the ‘barravento’ that Aruã breaks free from the prison of binary logic – this will now be explained.

**The Final Scene: Suspicious Activity**

Cota is persuaded by Firmino to seduce Aruã in order to break the prohibition placed upon him and demystify him once and for all. The sequence is vital for *Barravento*’s project of politicization. Aruã lies on the beach. Cota enters the sea as Aruã looks on – moments later the pair engage in intercourse. Firmino watches them have sex from his hiding place nearby and takes an evident pleasure in witnessing Aruã’s corruption (fig. 18). His presence enables the entire event, in a comparable fashion to the final scene of *Os cafajestes*, where Jandir can sexually perform only when Vavá is present. In this sequence, Firmino’s voyeuristic gaze shapes Aruã’s first experience of sexual activity with a woman (fig.16). The pleasure denoted in his gazing suggests that
Firmino uses Cota in order to articulate his own prohibited desires for Aruã. This implies that Firmino has effectively engineered a desiring formation that enables the articulation of male same-sex desire (the male-male-female triangle) – Aruã’s sexual encounter removes Iemanjá’s mark and transforms him into an active man. Firmino is finally able to express his desire for another man by breaking the law that forbids Aruã from having sex with women. The problem with the suggestion that Firmino has engendered this ménage-à-trois is that he would effectively replicate relations of active and passive. According to this reasoning, Aruã’s liberatory loss of virginity is really a transferral of mastery from Iemanjá to Firmino, by way of Cota.

The film proceeds to make a series of visual correspondences between Aruã and Naina on the one hand, and between Cota and Iemanjá on the other. Cota begins to seduce Aruã; his eyes are half-open when she enters the sea naked – he looks and yet he tries not to look. The film cuts intermittently to Naina’s initiation into the terreiro as a devotee of Iemanjá. Her possession is cinematically signalled when she directs her startled gaze towards the camera – this arguably simulates a psychological experience of contact with a being exterior to the mundane world (Iemanjá). Importantly, the camera is addressed by Naina and equated with Iemanjá. Naina’s ambivalent expression is similar to Aruã’s response when faced with Cota: she stares at the camera only to look away (figs. 15 and 16). The correspondence made between Aruã and Naina goes on to equate Cota and Iemanjá – both Cota and the camera simulating Iemanjá hold the fascinated yet frightened gaze of Aruã and Naina, respectively. The film extends this equivalence as it shows Cota frolic playfully in the sea to the sound of extradiegetic music taken from Candomblé ceremony; strongly associated with the ocean, Cota seems to perform as the sea-goddess. This is
supported as Cota emerges from the sea – she lies on the beach, her reflection in the wet sand doubles her image and connotes a dual status as both Cota and Iemanjá (fig. 17). The film suggests that Aruã is at once an active gazing subject and, when equated with Naina, a figure about to be possessed. Likewise, Cota is both a passive sexual object and when, performing as Iemanjá, an active subject.

Aruã and Cota continue to occupy both active and passive roles when they have sex. The film strongly suggests that Cota is penetrated by Aruã – Aruã would take the active role, and Cota the passive, by default. But Aruã does not initiate sexual pursuit; instead, it is the ‘activity’ of Cota that generates, and perhaps sustains, their sexual activity. She dominates Aruã when he is positioned beneath her. Cota seems to possess Aruã in a very literal sense, pulling his hair and cradling his head as if he were a coveted object. So, not only is Cota intimately associated with Iemanjá, but she has sex with Aruã as if he were her possession. As the film cuts back and forth between Naina and Aruã, it seeks to maximize the correspondence between their respective experiences. The hypnotic music of the terreiro serves to muddy the difference between the shadowed interior set of the terreiro and the night-time beach. This propinquity suggests that Aruã’s experience is both sexual activity – where he takes the active role over a woman and breaks free from Iemanjá’s curse – and a possession – where he remains possessed by Iemanjá thanks to Cota’s performance. Sex with Cota-as-Iemanjá is both holy and profane, an activity of penetration and a passive possession. His passivity is disproved as he has penetrated a woman, but the moment of penetration is also, paradoxically, a moment in which his status as possession or object is most visibly affirmed. The film employs correspondences between near-similar elements of mise-en-scène in order to encourage the spectator to
suspect Aruã’s activity. A conjunction between cinematic form and diegetic event produces his identity in terms no longer comprehensible according to active/passive logic: Aruã is transformed from a structurally passive individual into a subject whose active or passive status is unknowable (both and neither) – his essence made uncertain – a fracture within the otherwise inescapable binary system.73

Firmino witnesses the profanation of Aruã with glee. A storm engulfs the coast soon after and kills Cota, Naina’s stepfather and another fisherman. Firmino returns to cajole the community into political action and explains the storm is a manifestation of Iemanjá’s wrath, shouting angrily that Aruã is no longer protected by the orixá: ‘ele é homem, igual que os outros – gosta de mulher, e não domina o mar!’74 Here, Firmino sells the community a vision of Aruã as a regular man who lost Iemanjá’s mark when he penetrated a woman – a performance of virility that cancelled out his passive essence and affirmed a masculine (active) identity. Now, according to Firmino, he is just the same as the other men. Aruã is superficially recoded as a stable, masculine subject; his paralysing difference is effaced. Firmino’s actions free the community from the mystification of Iemanjá’s mark – the fishermen can no longer depend on Iemanjá’s blessing but must face up to the risks that come with fishing on the open sea. This, it is hoped, allows them to come to terms with their economic subordination. But the spectator knows that Aruã’s interior status has been made unintelligible according to the active/passive binary terms of the social order. Aruã might be considered a queer character, as he cannot be understood according to the ‘traditional’ model of sexual identity. Bersani writes that a subject that makes a break from conventional (in this case, active/passive) relations is free to imagine new forms

73 This interpretation draws from Leo Bersani’s reading of Jean Genet’s play The Maids. See Bersani, Homos, pp. 174-177.
74 Barravento, 1.02.24.
of community that avoid repeating oppressive structures. In this sense, Aruã seems to be afforded the chance to avoid perpetuating the hierarchies that paralyzed the community in the first place.

It must be pointed out that Aruã’s break with the hierarchies of the social order is somewhat limited and partial. As the film comes to a close, Firmino attempts to place Aruã at the helm of the community and champions his leadership over the Mestre, who is an ‘escravo’ (in this context, he bears the mark of Iemanjá and so remains locked within active/passive relations). This would seem to reproduce the leader/follower, master/subordinate, active/passive binary that he otherwise worked to remove, and count as an ironic reaffirmation of the status quo. However, it is also true Aruã is only accepted as leader based on the assumption that he is an ‘active’ man – the film suggests that he is both an ‘active’ man and remains a passive possession of Iemanjá. Bernardet points to an ambivalence in Aruã’s subsequent behaviour: ‘no fundo, seu primeiro ato, após ter-se tornado líder progressista da comunidade, foi afastar-se dela’. In leaving the community, Aruã acts as a leader in relation to a group of followers who depend on his return, and in this sense his actions clearly reaffirm binary hierarchies. His departure is fraught with ambiguity, as Aruã seems to affirm hierarchy by eschewing power – an act of leadership that removes the leader from the community. The limits of the film for a truly radical break with the active/passive, hierarchical relations of the social order are clear, although Aruã’s final act of leading via abandonment might be seen as an attempt to defer a complete return to the status quo. At the very least, his journey to the city leaves the future somewhat open and indeterminate. The city figures as the locus of change and

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75 Bersani, *Hemos*, pp. 176-177.
transformation in *Barravento*, as suggested above; in ending the film with Aruã’s departure, the film might be read as suggesting that the city holds solutions to the problematic elements of Aruã’s newfound, ambiguous active/passivity. In this sense, *Barravento* presents a reworked form of male sexual identity – both queer and problematic – as one possible way in which the community might move forward without falling back into the trap of oppressive hierarchy, at least not immediately.

**Conclusions: Queer Malandros in Early Cinema Novo**

This chapter has aimed to sketch out queer forms of male subjectivity in two examples of early Cinema Novo, *Os cafajestes* and *Barravento*, by analyzing the subtle ways the films dealt with the issue of same-sex desire. Although a similar structuring of desire (the male-male-female triangle) could be seen in both films, differences emerged in the way that the subjects made a queer view of sexual identity manifest. Jandir and Vavá follow the rules of patriarchy by expressing prohibited same-sex desire only through proxies, but this leads them to erode the authority of the patriarch. Firmino’s liminal status as both a Marxist radical and an Exu-like figure is used to illustrate the stultifying binary trap of the social order; his method for disrupting this paralysis ultimately aims at scrambling the underlying structure of the social order itself. The difference in approach leads to contrasting conclusions: while the trickery of the *cafajestes* suggests that patriarchal ideology might be subverted precisely by exposing its contradictions, Firmino’s subversive activities imply that an escape from oppression requires a more serious rethinking of the active/passive logic that structures relations between individuals. The disruption of the binary logic underlying the social order via a transformation of the way subjects relate to each other is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.
It was suggested that the characters of Jandir, Vavá and Firmino demonstrated elements of the *malandro*, although it was also pointed out that the three men did not wholly embody this figure. All three men eschew work for a life at the economic margins – Jandir and Vavá more obviously resorting to trickery to fund their hedonism, while Firmino concentrates his energies on political goals. Arguably, all three approximate the *malandro* in their refusal of manual labour, their rejection of domestic stability and marital life, and their reliance on wits and cunning to survive.

The comments on the *malandro* made by DaMatta, Shaw and Webb all point to the tension between an ambiguous resistance and a potential complicity between the *malandro* and the status quo. It will be remembered that DaMatta suggests the *malandro* does not necessarily call into question the laws and structures of the social order but often follows them precisely in order to undermine those in power, evident in the tale of Pedro Malasartes.\(^7\) This resonates with the activities of the three men discussed in this chapter, and particularly Jandir and Vavá, who abuse the patriarchal mandate that women be coded as objects to blackmail the patriarch himself. Here, Firmino might be said to differ from the typical *malandro* figure discussed by DaMatta, as his subversive activity aims to find a way of breaking the hold of a social order that manages to neutralize any challenges it encounters. It is arguable that the ambivalent resistance and complicity of the *malandro* surfaces most clearly in the attitude to women that the three men display. The desiring activities of the men in question are realized via an affirmation of fairly conservative relations between men and women – Jandir and Vavá trick women so they can indirectly desire each other, while Firmino resorts to political subversion to render Aruã a real, active man so his

\(^7\) DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes*, p.230.
own homosocial desire will not be tainted by homosexual suspicion. In both cases, a male-male-female structure requiring women to figure as the object of desire is the condition for the disruption of the social order. This underlying tension between sexism and a critique of sexual identity might be taken as evidence of complicity between three characters and the status quo that resonates with the malandro figure as both a liminal or marginalized male, and an ‘inveterate womanizer and philanderer’.78

The role played by cinematic form is essential to the production of queer subjects in both films, specifically, in the address made to the spectator: Os cafajestes employs Brechtian technique to disengage a passive spectator, while Barravento impels the spectator to recognise correspondences between Cota and Iemanjá within the diegesis. This reflexive engagement is vital to the ideological critique made in both cases. Os cafajestes demonstrates to the spectator the historical and material context in which ideological assumptions about women and homosocial desire emerge. In Barravento, spectatorial awareness of the aforementioned correspondence preserves Aruã’s passivity just as he asserts his activity. Each film assumes a didactic position from which they aim to educate the spectator out of ideological complicity, directing them towards the inconsistencies in the status quo, and suggesting possible avenues for social change. Both films demonstrate above all the potential for a critique to be made of the status quo via the conjunction of same-sex desiring relations with reflexive formal strategies – it is precisely through such a conjunction that male identity is itself productively ‘queered’.

78 Shaw, ‘Afro-Brazilian Identity’, p. 94.
Images for Chapter 1

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6
Chapter 2

Male Homosexuality and Sameness

in *O menino e o vento* and *A rainha diaba*

This chapter will examine shifts in the paradigms by which male homosexuality was understood in two quite different films from the late 1960s and early 1970s. Antonio de Fontoura’s *A rainha diaba* (1974) has been condemned for its garish and effeminate queens, whose outrageous cruelty strengthens an association between homosexuality and pathological sadism.¹ Carlos Hugo Christensen’s *O menino e o vento* (1967), on the other hand, is considered to be a landmark film in terms of the representation of homosexuality – applauded for its sensitivity to the subject and for its criticism of homophobia.² Firstly, it will be argued that both films offer critiques of a fixed homosexual identity. *A rainha diaba* demonstrates the contradictions that come with casting the homosexual as a feminized male, while *O menino e o vento* points to the complicity between the closeted homosexual, or *entendido*, and the social order. This chapter suggests that responses to heterosexist ideology need not involve a confrontation based on the affirmation of a fixed homosexual identity – a struggle with the heterosexual male subject that would always find the homosexual in a subordinate position, as was explained in the Introduction. It draws on suggestions made in Chapter 1, where the characters remained within the terms of the social order only to make the fundamental contradictions riddling oppressive ideology apparent. Both films examined in Chapter 2 demonstrate a similar form of queer male

subjectivity that results from a reworking of homosexual identity – to explore this, Leo Bersani’s work with Ulysse Dutoit in *Forms of Being* (2004) will be used to analyse *A rainha diaba*; his radical reconception of male homosexuality in *Homos* (1995) will be used to analyze *O menino e o vento*. Both theoretical texts provide different versions of a form of subjectivity where the self is both multiplied and dispersed at the same time – this will be fully explained in due course. Ultimately, this chapter aims to explore the possibilities for resisting oppression that result from the increasing recognition of desire between men on-screen.

**The Films**

*A rainha diaba* was directed by Antônio Carlos da Fontoura – a director well known at the time for his 1968 production *Copacabana Me Engana*, a critical and financial success.³ Famously, Fontoura describes *A rainha diaba* as a ‘thriller pop, gay, black’.⁴ The script was written by both Fontoura and the playwright Plínio Marcos, who was enlisted primarily because of his previous work depicting marginal characters. Certainly, the homosexual characters in *A rainha diaba* continue Marcos’s tendency to present such subjects as ‘bichas proletárias […] decadentes e espinhadas’, evident in his 1967 play *Navalha na Carne*.⁵ Marcos filled the dialogue with slang typical of Rio de Janeiro street culture in order to exoticize the marginal characters that populate *A rainha diaba*.⁶ The film was praised for its cinematography; although it was initially denied a showing at Cannes, it garnered positive reviews from critics when it

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⁴ Name not given, ‘Um Filme que só pode ser defindo por Quatro Palavras em Inglês’, *Jornal da Tarde*, 21 June 1974, page number not given.
⁵ João Carlos Rodrigues, ‘O homossexual e o cinema Brasileiro’, p. 15.
⁶ Name not given, ‘*A rainha diaba*: Sangue e Lantejoulas na Outra Margem do Rio’. p. 45.
was eventually accepted. In contrast, Carlos Hugo Christensen forged a productive directorial career in Argentina before relocating to Brazil permanently in 1954 due to a political climate unfavourable to film production. Christensen’s early films were considerable commercial successes in Brazil. *Viagem aos seios de duília* (1964), his first adaptation of the Brazilian writer Aníbal Machado’s tale of the same name, gave him enough financial security to found his own production company, Carlos Hugo Christensen Produções Cinematográficas. Jorge Ruffinelli notes that *O menino e o vento* is one more demonstration of Christensen’s recurrent interest in the ‘realidad perturbadora de la sexualidad’.

Given the undeniable homoerotic subtext to the film, it is reasonable to assume that his personal control of production allowed for greater freedom regarding choice of subject matter and its treatment. This in turn suggests that *O menino e o vento* was not released as a wholly commercial venture – it might be speculated that the film was a personal project instead.

It should be acknowledged that although both films engage with homosexuality, they do so to varying degrees. Arguably, homosexuality is the subject of *O menino e o vento*, although the film does not explicitly affirm it to be so, as will be explained shortly. An analysis of the film can be given that proceeds more or less according to

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11 That Christensen lacked external financing is made clear in the fact that, according to one newspaper, he eventually had to sell his car to complete the project. Miriam Alencai, ‘Christensen, *O menino e o vento*’, in *Jornal do Brasil* (Estado de Guanabara), 9 Nov 1966, page number not given. Indeed, Moreno points out that these financial limitations resulted in an emphasis on creative cinematography to surmount the low budget. Moreno, *A personagem homossexual*, p. 202.
the chronological development of the narrative. On the other hand, *A rainha diaba* presents figures that are explicitly identified as homosexual, but the subject of homosexuality takes a back seat to other narrative concerns, primarily the struggle to control the criminal underworld. Homosexuality is one more exotic component of the marginal world that the film presents. It is therefore less practical to present an analysis of the film that follows the chronology of the narrative.

**A Queen of Many Colours: *A rainha diaba***

*A rainha diaba* draws the basis of its narrative from the life of João Francisco dos Santos, also known as Madame Satã. However, Fontoura clearly stresses the independence of his project from the figure of dos Santos: ‘o personagem não tem nehuma ligação com Madame Satã, embora possa haver alguma coincidência ocasional’. Instead, the narrative is largely concerned with a power-struggle between the titular Rainha Diaba and his henchmen. *A rainha diaba* begins with a group of men summoned to the drug-lord’s lair. These henchmen have drawn the attention of the police to Diaba’s drug network by selling marijuana to rich students. Diaba aims to set up a fall-guy who will throw the police off the scent. Diaba’s right hand man, Catitu, recruits the young *malandro*, Bereco, with the promise of a lucrative career as a drug dealer. He agrees to hold a large quantity of marijuana. The police find him – tipped off by one of the henchmen, Coisa Ruim – but Bereco manages to escape

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12 Born in 1900, dos Santos was a drag performer and capoeirista as infamous for his avowed homosexuality as for his associations with the underworld of Rio do Janeiro. Wilton Garcia describes João Francisco in the following terms ‘artista transformista, capoeirista, cozinheiro, malandro, presidiário, pai adotivo, negro, pobre e homossexual – um lendário da boêmia carioca’. See ‘A articulação do corpo e alteridade em Madame Satã’ in *Sociedade Brasileira de estudos de cinema: Ano 5*, ed. by Mariarosaria Fabris and others (São Paulo: Editora Panorama, 2004), p. 162.

arrest. He seeks out Catitu and together they plot to overthrow the cruel and unpredictable Diaba. Bereco sabotages Diaba’s criminal network by killing the drug dealers, stealing the marijuana, and selling it through his girlfriend Isa, a nightclub singer. Diaba turns to the bonecas – extravagant, effeminate homosexuals – for support. He follows a rumour that marijuana is being sold from Isa’s nightclub, tortures Isa and discovers Bereco’s hand behind the sabotage. Diaba invites Bereco to meet with him and unite their forces. Bereco plans to kill Diaba once inside his heavily-guarded house. Although Bereco is successful and slits Diaba’s throat, he is betrayed by Catitu and the other henchmen and shot. The henchmen then drink champagne to celebrate Diaba’s death. They are all killed, as one of the henchmen, Violeta, has poisoned their drinks. Violeta is then shot by a dying Diaba.

Moreno suggests that the chief homosexual characters of A rainha diaba, the bonecas, are prime examples of the reductive presentation of homosexuality in terms of social deviance and effeminacy – a trend he suggests is predominant in Brazilian cinema of the 1970s. Rafael de Luna Freire dismisses this criticism as symptomatic of ‘um primeiro momento dos estudos de gênero no Brasil’. Freire argues that Moreno’s call for positive images of homosexuals is both essentialist and ahistorical. He suggests first of all that A rainha diaba’s two-dimensional representation of homosexuality is actually characteristic of Marcos’s work. Marcos’s plays frequently figured the stereotype of the effeminate homosexual figure alongside many other ‘types’ – Richard Dyer uses the term to indicate characters that illustrate recurrent elements of the human universe but remain unchanged during the course of the

14 Moreno, A personagem homossexual, pp. 256-257.
narrative. In this sense, the presentation of homosexual characters in stereotypical or caricatured terms accords with the film’s use of other ‘typical’ characters – a streetwise *malandro* or a sexualized night-club singer, for example. And while Moreno might decry the presentation of the homosexual figure as an effeminate male, Freire suggests that the reversal of power relations in *A rainha diaba* makes clear that ‘é o exercício do poder que determina a norma a qual as pessoas são obrigadas a seguir’. In other words, *A rainha diaba* might be seen as containing a latent commentary on the constructed relationship between the denigration of certain forms of sexual identity and the dominance of the heterosexual subject. Freire gestures towards the implicit heterosexism within Moreno’s work, particularly his dismissal of effeminate homosexual figures – a comparable argument to the critique of Moreno’s work put forward in the Introduction.

In Moreno’s defence, it is arguable that he has a point with regard to *A rainha diaba*. It would seem unwise to deny that the representation of homosexuality in the film is a strikingly negative one, not because the *bonecas* are presented in terms of male effeminacy, but rather because they are shown to be sadistic monsters who demonstrate a pathological enjoyment of torture. They confirm the assumption that homosexuality is associated with criminal violence and mental illness – an artificial, deviant form of sexuality – a point which is clearly problematic for any attempts to review the *bonecas* as valuable for a politics of identity. The analysis will neither ignore this, nor dismiss the *bonecas* as irredeemable, and instead will aim to explore ways in which they might be seen as ambivalent figures – both as hugely violent and as containing the potential for an end or suspension of violence as well. The film

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17 Freire, ‘‘Na minha vida, mando eu’’, p. 127.
associates the *bonecas* with artifice, femininity and decoration to such a degree that it inadvertently creates the possibility of a space in which the binary logic that structures the social order might be suspended. Central to the detection of this space is the way in which the spectator is positioned by the reflexive components of the film. The first part of this chapter sets out a case for viewing the *bonecas* as more complicated than Moreno and others suggest, with the ultimate aim of demonstrating how a slight, but nonetheless important, potential for resisting the heterosexist social order might be drawn from within an ostensibly pejorative representation of homosexuality.

**Violent Subjects, Aggressive Uniqueness**

Floral decorations and lurid colours proliferate throughout the film’s title sequence, which would seem to imply that *A rainha diaba* has light-hearted, camp or frivolous subject matter. This, of course, belies the fact that *A rainha diaba* is an exceptionally violent film. To begin the discussion, it is important to address the presentation of the *bonecas* as violent characters within the context of the film. As mentioned above, the scene in which Isa is tortured is deeply unpleasant, not least because the majority of screen-time is dedicated to the act of torture itself. Not only do the *bonecas* seem to lack any empathy for their victim, they are shown to derive an intense enjoyment from her suffering. Their behaviour is clearly reprehensible; nevertheless, it might be argued that their infliction of violence – their disregard for the other – is not exceptional in *A rainha diaba*. The main intersubjective relations in the film involve violence (Diaba and Catitu, Diaba and Bereco, Catitu and Bereco, Bereco and Isa, Isa and Diaba, and so on). Heise suggests that the violence of the film can be categorized as sadistic and methodical or pragmatic and reactionary – the homosexual characters carry out the first kind, while those (heterosexual) characters trying to overthrow
Diaba employ the second.\(^{18}\) Such a distinction is debatable, as both groups employ reactionary violence and also premeditated violence.\(^{19}\) In fact the underlying similarities in the uses of violence are striking. All conflicts in the film are driven by the various individuals’ need to assert their identities and realize their desires, with no ideological motivation aside from the pursuit of individual interests; characters always employ violence in order to gain individual power from, and protect themselves against, a threatening other.\(^{20}\)

If every relationship in *A rainha diaba* involves violence, Isa’s torture can be read following the general logic that shapes intersubjective relations in the film. Diaba’s use of violence to extract clues to the identity of his assailants is the focus of the scene, but he also slashes Isa’s face to caution others ‘esta cara tão bonita… tem que servir de exemplo para as outras’.\(^{21}\) Not only does he seek to discover, and so exterminate, those who might threaten him; he also inscribes his warning on her flesh. This aligns with the general view of violence presented by the film – the other must be violently dominated and its threatening capacity neutralized in order to secure and protect the self. In this sense, the deplorable torture of Isa carried out by the *bonecas* actually complies with the status quo – exemplary of the film’s portrayal of violence, rather than being an exception to it. Indeed, the status quo is set up as a seemingly inescapable conflict between individuals; self and other are locked together in


\(^{19}\) The murder of Bereco at the hands of the henchmen is totally unnecessary, while Diaba slashes Robertinhas’s face out of rage, rather than as a premeditated attack. Indeed, it is Violeta’s calculated murder of her fellow henchmen that brings the film to a close.

\(^{20}\) This is clear in the way that the chief struggle of the narrative (the clash between Bereco and Diaba) is brought about. Firstly, Catitu recruits Bereco via flattery ‘tu merece outro trato, eu sei de tu’ and then, ‘tu não é fací, não’. *A rainha diaba*, 12.24. He appeals to Bereco’s difference and suggests that Bereco can prove himself as a man if he follows his orders. Catitu employs a version of this rhetoric when he attempts to unite the other henchmen against Diaba. He promises independence and self-determination, ‘cada um é rei no seu pedaço’, if they help him break free from Diaba’s authority. *A rainha diaba*, 51.29.

\(^{21}\) *A rainha diaba*, 1.22.39.
perpetual, hostile struggle. *A rainha diaba*’s final image illustrates the bleak and somewhat paradoxical result of such aggression: when all subjects relate violently to each other in order to assert themselves, the ultimate outcome is mutual annihilation of the participants involved. In the words of Stam, such self-assertion produces a ‘stylized holocaust’ by the end of the film, where each of the major characters makes a grab for power and finds him or herself killed as a consequence. In the violent world of *A rainha diaba*, it seems that the preservation of the individual is marked out as a fundamentally doomed enterprise.

It is worth pointing out that the *bonecas* do not participate in the final scene and are some of the few characters that actually survive the final showdown. Their absence could suggest that their behaviour is not entirely centred on dominating a threatening other in the same way as the other characters – even though the *bonecas* torture Isa, it might be suggested that they do not pursue power so relentlessly as the henchmen, Bereco, or Diaba. At least, their absence points towards their relative distance from the film’s central conflict between Bereco and Diaba – although their torture of Isa allows Diaba to discover Bereco’s role in the sabotage quickly, they are otherwise removed from Catitu’s machinations, Diaba’s attempts to frame Bereco and the actual rebellion of the henchmen. This hints at a certain ambivalence in the position of the *bonecas* relative to the violent status quo itself: they emblematize its logic (violent self/other relations) when they torture Isa, but they are also distanced from the conflict in which those relations are played out. At least, this tension indicates that the *bonecas* are more complicated than Moreno suggests.

The Aesthetic Subject

In *Forms of Being*, Bersani and Dutoit take up the discussion of the conflict between a self violently opposed to an other. They review the subject through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis and suggest that the psychoanalytic subject can be characterized by a fundamental failure to adapt to the external world. As is well known, psychoanalysis accounts for the subject as born into a lack in being, which it spends its subsequent history attempting in vain to overcome, in part by searching for a perfect, ‘true’ identity. It accrues a psychic repertoire of images, beginning with its reflection, which forms an idealized self-image. The search for one’s ‘true’ identity is a drive to become like (or to assume) this idealised self-image. The relation between the subject’s ego and these images constitutes the imaginary order. The subject makes an erroneous assumption that the objects of the imaginary are complete and total – this completeness is illusory. No image can ever suture the subject’s lack in being, as its identity will always be exterior to the subject in some way, and thus alienating. Bersani and Dutoit point out that the subject perceives the other to be standing in the way of the attainment of perfect self-identity – a misapprehension partly responsible for the subject’s antagonistic relation with the other. The search for ‘true’ identity or to attain ‘real being’ would entail a subject which views its own existence as something to be protected, maintained and defended with recourse to violence (against the other). In other words, from the point of view of psychoanalysis, the subject is itself responsible for its hostile relation with the world.

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Bersani and Dutoit turn to the inherent fluidity of art for an alternative to the psychological subject. They write ‘in art, events appear to one another, composing forms and structures only to play with the possibility of undoing forms and structures’. A revision of the subject might begin by viewing the self as a work of art. The subject would need to suspend the intrinsically alienating view of the world as containing some perfect identity which is imagined to cover up the lack in subjective being. Bersani suggests a different ontological position: the world conceived as ‘a vast network of near-sameness, a network characterized by relations of inaccurate replication’. The world is first of all a web of correspondences between similar subjects, between subjects and objects, and between objects, although those correspondences are never exact. Simply put, we are all almost alike before we are different. Bersani suggests that the subject’s futile struggle for perfect identity can be seen as an attempt to make up for and cover over the inaccuracy of these correspondences. Treating the self as a work of art would involve giving up psychic depth and fixity – this constitutes a ‘psychic loss’ of real being. But it is recompensed with a fluid mode of existence that takes place within the imaginary. The art-like subject would imagine its correspondence with versions of itself found in the external world, which implies an imaginary self-extension via a form of relationality between near-similar selves. The other – the world – is reconceived as a non-threatening supplement to this self-extension; this reconception would therefore inhibit a violent relations with the other (no longer a threat to the self) and liberate the subject from the

27 Bersani and Dutoit, *Forms of Being*, p. 67.
grip of an alienating and impossible hunt for self-identity.\textsuperscript{30} They term this form of being the ‘aesthetic’ subject.

\textbf{Spectatorship and the Repetition of Form}

In order to suggest the workings of something like ‘inaccurate replication’ or aesthetic subjectivity in relation to the bonecas, it is necessary to examine how the spectator is constructed in \textit{A rainha diaba}. It must be pointed out that the spectatorial positioning proposed here would appear to be accidental, rather than the deliberate intention of the director (a point also true of the aesthetic subject). This can be surmised by taking into account Fontoura’s comments on the film, indicating his principal aim in filming \textit{A rainha diaba} was to make a ‘thriller pop, gay, black’, as mentioned above. The express concern with creating a popular film would imply that it is less likely he explicitly set out to fashion a subversive form of homosexual identity.\textsuperscript{31} Rather, it is in the way the film accidentally or inadvertently trains the spectator to register the repetition of formal elements that the bonecas might be seen as offering something more than mere heterosexist stereotype.

To borrow Stam’s term, \textit{A rainha diaba} points out its own ‘factitiousness’ as a filmic construction on a variety of occasions.\textsuperscript{32} It is possible to suggest that, in \textit{A rainha diaba}, instances of reflexivity not only point to the film’s status as an construct but direct the spectator towards the repetition of form. The film’s various scenes of

\textsuperscript{30} Bersani, \textit{Homo}, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{31} In an interview given to \textit{Folha de São Paulo}, Fontoura states that he wanted to produce a film that explored ‘as batalhas nas “bocas”’, drawing from a variety of different genres that he enjoyed as a child, including police dramas, adventure films and musicals, further evidences the claim that the film was produced primarily for entertainment purposes. Name not given, ‘Uma aventura de bandido e de boneca’, \textit{Folha de São Paulo}, 2nd September 1974.
\textsuperscript{32} Stam, \textit{Reflexivity in Film and Literature}, p. xi.
violence employ paint-like blood – the shooting of the henchman Bigode soaks his shirt in orange blood, while the shooting of the drug-dealer at 56.00 sees garish red blood spilt across the pavement. A similar instance occurs at the very end of the film (1.36.30), where Diaba staggers towards Violeta, his throat having been cut by Bereco. The garish tones used in each case work to draw the spectator’s attention to the artifice of the film itself and can therefore be considered as a small instance of reflexivity. Occasionally, this reflexive effect appears to be unintentional, as the blood appears fake or unconvincing due to the low quality of the production itself. At other points, however, the film’s self-reference appears to be more deliberate: for example, the blood spilt during Bigode’s death is bright orange and markedly different in colour to the other examples of blood elsewhere in the film. All three examples draw the eye towards the similarity in colour between the blood and other elements of the mise-en-scène, as well as similar combinations of colour nearby in the shot. The bright orange blood is identical in tone to the bedspread onto which Bigode falls, while the drug-dealer’s red blood is teamed with the green of her dress in a way that matches up with the red roses and their green stems. In the third example, correspondences are evident between the blood on the tiles and the patterned wallpaper. All three examples demonstrate how the film (inadvertently) calls attention to its own formal components while encouraging the spectator to register correspondences of similarity between those formal elements and other elements nearby. In other words, the spectator is trained by often unintended reflexivity to trace the repetition of formal elements: showing the constructedness of the film then guides the viewer to make connections between the colours, colour combinations and patterns that repeat (in slightly different ways) throughout the mise-en-scène.
The function of reflexivity discussed above becomes significant for an analysis of homosexuality when it coincides with the presentation of the bonecas. This first becomes apparent when Diaba and the bonecas pass the time in a café. The café sequence gives the impression that the bonecas participate in what might be called a queen’s ‘court’ – they attend Diaba as his loyal subjects, enquiring after gossip and intrigue, vying for favour (a small picture of Queen Elizabeth II, pinned in the bottom left hand corner of a picture adorning Diaba’s main salon, can be taken as further evidence of Diaba’s status as a pretend monarch, alongside the obvious clue in the title). Arguably, Diaba and the bonecas present a camp parody of an actual royal court – it goes without saying that the ‘queen’ is not a woman but rather a homosexual man, nor is he a monarch but a drug-lord; the courtiers are not members of the aristocracy but from the lower or working classes, and the ‘court’ itself is not held in a palace but in a small street café. It is suggested here that the ‘court’ scenario – one character standing as an authority figure, attended by a group of subjects – actually occurs in different permutations throughout the film, a point evidenced shortly. Significantly, the use of reflexivity during the café sequence has the perhaps accidental consequence of highlighting the ‘court’ scenario as a formal component of the film, in much the same way as the fake blood, discussed above.

During the café sequence, Diaba complains of a bad mood but refuses to discuss its causes. Odete declares ‘eu sei o que é’ and claims to know the secret reason for Diaba’s distress. She pulls back out of the shot, making way for the intrigued bonecas to respond, only to have Diaba deny her claims. The bonecas shout ‘fala!’ in a chorus of voices directly after Odete makes her claim (fig. 19). Here, Odete arguably pretends that she knows Diaba’s secret in order to affirm a prominent position in the
hierarchy of the group. It might be suggested that she creates a temporary version of the ‘court’ scenario herself – with Odete as the authority figure, not Diaba – when she possesses the undivided attention of the bonecas, who surround and fawn over her much as they did to Diaba only moments before. Certainly, she holds the attention of the other bonecas, and might be seen to temporarily exercise a degree of power over the group. Moreover, the actors are staged in a contrived way, evident when Odete pulls back and allows the bonecas to fill the screen – this orchestration calls attention to the presence of the camera, to which the bonecas appear to direct their exclamation. In this respect, the film interrupts diegetic illusionism and signals itself as a construction. More importantly, it encourages the spectator to view the staging of the actors in the ‘court’ scenario as a formal component within that construction. This is to suggest that the structuring of an individual in a position of authority (Odete) over an attendant group (the bonecas) is signalled to be a formal component itself. By suggesting that the ‘court’ scenario counts as a formal feature of the film, each instance of such relations that occurs thereafter would logically require recognition as a repetition of a formal component. Aside from the original ‘court’ scenario (Diaba attended by the bonecas) the ‘court’ scenario has occurred before, when Diaba entertained his henchmen at the beginning of the film. The structuring of the relations between Diaba (the authority figure) and the henchmen (his attendees) is comparable to the ‘court’ scenario discussed above. Other versions of the scenario can be found later on – Diaba is attended by his henchmen again at 38.20 and 57.27, while Catitu holds his own ‘court’ in a bid to turn the henchmen against Diaba. The reflexivity exhibited when Odete makes her spurious claim not only points to the film’s formal elements, but also trains the spectator to recognize that these formal elements reoccur throughout the film itself. The recognition of formal repetition forges a relation of
correspondence between those forms. As was suggested in relation to the paint-like blood, the reflexivity of *A rainha diaba* inadvertently encourages the spectator to map a network of formal components linked by their near-similarity. This arguably unintended feature of the film is vital to the suggestion that the *bonecas* might be more ambivalent than they first appear, as it provides some grounds on which an argument for aesthetic subjectivity might be made.

The spectator is encouraged to trace the ways in which the ‘court’-like structure is repeated throughout the film. Although this spectatorial positioning is arguably accidental, it might nevertheless gesture towards the notion that the hierarchical relations of the ‘court’ itself are contained within networks of near-similar forms, akin to those suggested by Bersani and Dutoit. In other words, thanks to a trivial bit of theatricality during the café sequence (Odete’s claim is likely played for laughs), *A rainha diaba* would seem to illustrate the more profound point that relationships based on a strict, hierarchized difference between an authority figure and a subordinate group could be seen as subsumed within a greater web of near-similarity or a near-sameness of being. In turn, this might indicate a version of the aesthetic subject outlined above – although it would be extremely unwise at this point to suggest that the *bonecas* actually exhibit the subjectivity that Bersani and Dutoit discuss. It is useful to recapitulate that aesthetic subjectivity constitutes a non-violent form of relating because relations, reconceived as correspondences between near-similar formal components, do not involve a hostile relation to the other; otherness is reconceived as that which enables further correspondence with other versions of the art-like self – a ‘non-threatening supplement’ to self-extension.\(^{33}\) To be considered as

displaying aesthetic subjectivity, the *bonecas* would have to acknowledge themselves as merely elements of the performance of the ‘court’ (as art-like components), and then recognize that the ‘court’ repeats elsewhere – it is clearly not feasible to suggest that they do this. Nevertheless, their camp theatrics provide the spectator with a hint that the *bonecas* are located within networks of near-similar forms; even though they themselves remain oblivious to it, the presentation of the *bonecas* accidentally points the spectator towards a possible (unrealized) way of relating non-violently.

**The Aesthetic Subject in *A rainha diaba: Over the Rainbow, Again***

Clearer evidence that the film’s use of reflexivity unintentionally directs the spectator towards a consideration of non-violent aesthetic subjectivity can be found later at 1.06.11, when Diaba organizes a party at his house. During the party sequence, it is the camp style of the *bonecas* that becomes central to the suggestion of the aesthetic subject. ‘Camp’ here refers to a mode of cultural production that has been defined by Susan Sontag as a reflexive stylistic approach privileging artifice: ‘a vision of the world in terms of style – but a particular kind of style. It is the love of the exaggerated, the “off”, of things-being-what-they-are-not’.34 The party sequence commences with a focus on three *bonecas* arriving at Diaba’s house. The dark exterior setting emphasizes their garish outfits and make-up, particularly that of the two who walk behind the first (fig. 20). Their costumes and gestures are exaggerated and stylized, drawing the eye to their theatrical appearance. Here, the *bonecas* repeat the heterosexist conception of male homosexual identity as male femininity (the ‘traditional’ model). It might be more correct to say that their behaviour is a camp

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exaggeration of femininity overstated to the point that it reflexively signals itself to be a performance. Such reflexivity construes the bonecas as entirely artificial figures, devoid of interior depth. This would seem to be in line with Sontag’s comments on camp; she makes the point that if camp ‘is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon’ it also sees the self as an artificial construction. This would reject the notion of an interior ‘truth’ or core of being for a view of the self as pretended or performed. Not only is the world conceived of as art-like, but the self is treated as part of that phenomenon (a formal component) – the links with Bersanian aesthetic subjectivity are patent. It should be noted that this opens the bonecas up to a negative interpretation, as it suggests that they are fake subjects, inferior to ‘real’ heterosexual subjects. As discussed later on, this oppositional logic is troubled by the adherence of the bonecas to a heterosexist conception of homosexuality itself (and their exaggeration of it). Now, however, it is important to consider how the reflexive component of their camp behaviour directs the spectator to see the bonecas in terms of formal elements, in line with the previous discussion above.

At 1.06.11, the spectator is brought into the decorated milieu of the party. This sequence furnishes the film with its most extravagant mise-en-scène, and the same coupling of reflexivity and the recognition of correspondences discussed above takes place here. Again, the film uses the wild decoration of the set to call attention to its own artifice; the reflexivity of the scene is amplified by the use of the same three tones of red, blue and yellow throughout the party decoration and the costumes of the guests alike – this draws the spectator towards the film image as an art-work or formal composition and undercuts the illusionism of the diegetic world. The reflexive

component affords the spectator a central role in recognizing the ‘similitudes’ that Bersani and Dutoit speak of, which take the form of correspondences between similar combinations of colour and form presented to the viewer as the camera moves throughout the scene.36 For example, the juxtaposition of red and white occurs slightly differently throughout the sequence – between a shawl and a balloon, between a streamer and a dress, and so on – in this case, a correspondence would be drawn between each instance of red and white occurring together. The movement of similar colours (and similar colour-combinations) towards and away from each other constantly draws the spectator’s attention from individual figures to the formal composition of the shot (figs. 21 to 28). Certain items of jewellery are almost identical in texture and form to the metallic streamers; balloons and paper decorations correspond to elements of the clothing worn by the bonecas. The spectator is invited to trace a dizzying, kaleidoscopic web of repeated patterns and colours.

The possibility of aesthetic subjectivity is more immediately visible than in the previous discussion of the repetition of the ‘court’. As suggested above, the camp decoration of the self exhibited by the bonecas might indicate a view of the world as art, and of the self as an art-like component within that composition. If the bonecas conceive of themselves as formal components of an art-like world, at least in part, then the tracing of networks of similar formal correspondences would coincidentally trace potential correspondences that the bonecas might make between themselves and other ‘versions’ of themselves (other near-similar aesthetic elements). These correspondences would be imagined by the bonecas – by charting networks of correspondences, the spectator unwittingly maps out ways in which the bonecas might

36 Bersani and Dutoit, Forms of Being, p. 8.
imagine themselves as multiplied and repeated throughout the world in slightly different forms. The forging of an imaginary correspondence between the subject and what it takes as its non-identical replication reduces the subject to the status of a repeated form, but it also effectively doubles the subject at the same time, so the subject is dispersed and expanded at once. This would approximate what Bersani and Dutoit term ‘aesthetic subjectivity’: no longer opposed to a threatening other, the self is transformed into (and located within) an expansive composition of formal elements, participating in correspondences of near-similarity – a non-self/other, non-violent form of relationality. It is important to stress again that the film offers no evidence that the bonecas actually enter in to this aesthetic subjectivity. This is, arguably, beside a more important point: A rainha diaba inadvertently uses the presentation of the bonecas as effeminate, decorated and artificial subjects to aid the spectator in imagining one way in which non-violent relations might take shape. Reflexivity leads the spectator towards a space in which other kinds of sociality and conceptions of subjectivity might go on to be produced and explored without automatically reproducing the structure of a self violently opposed to an other. In other words, the spectator is directed via the bonecas to a form of being that could challenge the status quo without reproducing its (binary) logic.

The value of A rainha diaba for this project might not be immediately clear at first glance, given the extreme violence that Isa is subjected to at the hands of the bonecas. The chapter has aimed to show how attentiveness to cinematic form can complicate an otherwise pejorative representation of its homosexual characters. The bonecas are probably the most violent and sadistic figures in the film – upholding the status quo and confirming heterosexist ideology, including the assumption that homosexuals are
mentally ill. Somewhat ironically, it is thanks to the film’s heterosexism that the spectator is invited to map out one way in which aesthetic subjectivity might work. While the bonecas do not enter into it in any obvious way (remaining within violent self-other relations) they nonetheless unwittingly provide the spectator with a strategy through which violent relations with the other might be avoided. This suggests that the bonecas can be viewed as ambivalent, rather than merely pejorative, representations of homosexual men. Moreno’s criticisms of the film are justified, but he elides the way in which an ostensibly homophobic film such as A rainha diaba might contain the seeds of resistance to the status quo – in this case, a form of subjectivity that might be described as queer (insofar as it is not structured by binary logic) emerges via a figuration of the homosexual as deviant, effeminate other: precisely the figure that Moreno finds so troubling.

The Initiate of Same-ness: O menino e o vento

The possibilities within homosexual identity for queer resistance can be seen more straightforwardly in O menino e o vento, where the homosexual subject makes a more successful challenge to the relation between self and other. O menino e o vento commences on a train. José Roberto Nery is making his way towards a town in rural Minas Gerais. The film initially discloses little of his motives, other than a brief shot of a police summons. As the train pulls in and José receives a hostile reception, it is quickly revealed he is being brought to trial for the disappearance of an adolescent boy, Zeca da Curva. He is accused of the boy’s murder. It transpires that he has been to the town on a previous, month-long holiday, during which he spent most of his time in the company of Zeca. Various relationships are detailed during the narrative preceding the trial, including the intimation of a sexual dimension to the relationship
between José and Zeca, as well as a romantic tension between José and the proprietress of the hotel, Laura. The time arrives for the trial, attended by much of the town. José is not, in theory, summoned to court to give a general account of his desire – homosexual activity has not been illegal in Brazil since 1830, when a definitive new Penal Code neglected to include it as a crime. Nevertheless, it is clear that the prosecutor intends to suggest that a sexual relationship between José and Zeca was the motive for his murder – identification of homosexuality is, for all intents and purposes, identification of guilt. The witnesses are interrogated by the prosecutor only – José refuses a defence lawyer – and their testimonies are presented through flashback. The response of the court varies in degrees of outrage at the possibility of a sexual relationship between the older man and the boy. When José gives his statement he explains that his relationship with Zeca is predicated on their mutual fascination with the wind. Much of his testimony concerns their exploration of the wind in the countryside surrounding the town. At the end of his testimony the wind enters the courtroom, disrupting the proceedings and destroying the courtroom. José is left alone in a devastated courtroom holding – even caressing – Zeca’s shirt.


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will examine the adaptation of literary texts for the screen in detail, however, it is important to explain the way this analysis views the significant alterations made in Christensen’s adaptation of Machado’s original text. Robert Stam has criticized the moralistic approach of scholarship concerning film adaptations, which often ‘assumes that a novel “contains” an extractable “essence”’ that must be preserved and communicated in adaptation for cinema.39 This follows the post-structuralist assertion that authorial presence and intention is neither available nor relevant to a critic. Furthermore, the specificity of the medium precludes any notion of fidelity outright.40 He proposes Gérard Genette's models of ‘intertextuality’ in order to examine an adaptation – specifically the notion of a ‘hypertext’ and a ‘hypotext’.41 Genette writes ‘By hypertextuality I mean any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not of commentary’.42 So, a filmic adaptation is a hypertext derived from a pre-existing hypotext that has ‘been transformed by operations of selection, amplification, concretization, and actualisation’.43 Broadly, *O menino e o vento*, as hypertext, retains the principal characters, setting and plot structure of the hypotext, ‘O Iniciado do Vento’. However, Christensen’s adaptation subtly changes the relationships in the hypotext, facilitating the film’s tacit but nonetheless detectable homoerotic elements. The film follows the structure of the written story – in both film and story, the narrative’s first half concerns the return of the engineer/José to the town while the second half concerns the trial. In places *O menino e o vento* re-presents the

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41 Stam, ‘Beyond Fidelity,’ p. 65.
43 Stam, ‘Beyond Fidelity,’ p. 66.
text of ‘O Iniciado do Vento’ image for word – descriptive lists of objects are replicated with a series of shots – while significant character speech is taken directly from the written story, including Laura’s first words to José, and José’s testimony in court. ‘O Iniciado do Vento’ is a relatively short story and much of the adaptation is an expansion of the main narrative sequences. For example, in the written story the trial itself consists only of the testimony of Machado’s engineer – through the addition of the testimonies of Mário and Laura, Christensen’s film develops their respective relationships with José. The protagonist of ‘O Iniciado do Vento’ is also the narrator, while in O menino e o vento the camera serves as narrator; a shift from first person to third which produces a distance between José and the viewer in a very simple way by preventing direct access to his thoughts. As a result, while strong in Machado’s text, the sense of José’s innocence, and that his relationship with Zeca is nonsexual, is immediately less secure in Christensen’s film.

The most significant change made by Christensen is the increase of Zeca’s age from twelve to fifteen. In Machado’s text, Zeca is discussed in terms of his difference from Machado’s engineer, demonstrated in the final moments of the engineer’s testimony, as the pair reach the summit of a hill in order to experience the full force of the wind. Zeca excites in Machado’s engineer a desire to embrace the wind as completely as the boy does, but he bemoans ‘faltava-me a força e a pureza do menino’. He goes on to underline his difference from Zeca further:

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44 See 36.30, where the visual list of objects related to the court is described in the text ‘a campainha, o Cristo de Madeira, as idas e vindas do oficial de justiça e do advogado da véspera’ Machado, ‘O Iniciado do Vento’, p. 12. In this analysis the protagonist of Machado’s story is referred to as Machado’s engineer, and the protagonist of Christensen’s film is referred to as José, to minimise confusion.

As rajadas aumentavam empurrando-me para o espaço, como que me desafiando a imitar a proeza do pequeno companheiro. Não. Eu, não! Sou engenheiro, não sou criança. Construo pontes, tenho os pés fincados na terra... Loucura, querer emular-me com o garôto. Tratei de sair dali. Amanhã, pensei, amanhã saberei onde o largou a ventania.⁴⁶

In particular, he defines himself against the boy’s age, ‘êle tem doze anos!’ – the significant marker of difference between the boy and Machado’s engineer. By narrowing the age gap between José and the boy, the implied sexual dimension to their relationship can no longer be considered to be paedophilic and illegal, given the age of consent in Brazil was and remains fourteen. This allows Christensen to suggest a sexual dimension to their relationship and to discuss social attitudes towards homosexuality by equating legal homosexual behaviour with a criminal charge of murder. It will be argued below that the relationship between Zeca and José is troubling to the social order because their similarity enables a form of homosexual desire that is not expressed between binary opposites. As this is proposed in part through camerawork which stresses their visual resemblance, raising Zeca’s age lessens the physiological difference between Zeca and Jose and allows for instances in which their similarity is clearer.

The second alteration introduces an important minor character – Mário. Machado’s engineer is given no time to explore the town before his appearance in court and only the hotel proprietress is presented as a significant minor character. During the pre-trial sequence in Christensen’s film, José develops a fractious relationship with Zeca’s rich

bachelor cousin, Mário. As will be argued later, it seems clear that Christensen includes the character of Mário in order to posit complicity between the *entendido* and a homophobic social order. This is in part suggested through the use of severe lighting and heavy shade to depict Mário, where chiaroscuro can be read as a metaphor for collusion with the status quo thanks to the associations made between shadow and hierarchical binaries suggested above. The film makes two notable alterations to its hypotext, both of which raise the question of homosexuality to the fore. As such, they are in keeping with Christensen’s approach to homoerotic adaptation, as discussed above.

**Framing the Other from the Shadows**

Christensen’s film focuses above all on the mysterious relationship between José and Zeca. Arguably, the spectator’s interest is sustained by the promise that the specifics of this relationship will be revealed. Indeed, the press release indicates that the film uses the ‘strangeness’ of this relationship as its principal selling point. The short phrases provided as descriptions of the film emphasize the strangeness of José’s desire for Zeca, ‘um menino exerce uma estranha fascinação sobre um homem adulto’, ‘uma estranha e comentada amizade’, ‘Que estranha fascinação exercia aquele menino sobre um homem adulto?’.47 Although has not been possible to determine how this material actually influenced spectators, if at all, it seems accurate to suggest that the strange nature of that relationship was key to the promotion of the film. Indeed, the spectator is invited to speculate on their relationship early on in the film, as will be shown shortly. The first half of the film shapes the spectator as an investigator. José, and later, his sexual identity, are established as the object to which

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the spectator’s scrutiny is directed. This becomes evident from the first scene, where José sits in the dining carriage of a train crossing rural Minas Gerais. A young woman enters and sits opposite him, although they do not talk. She surreptitiously gazes at José. He cannot finish his food, he moves to another carriage and attempts to sleep. The camera focuses briefly on the unremarkable activities of his fellow passengers: a couple kiss, an elderly man sleeps and a woman knits – this subtly separates José from the implied normality in each shot, reinforced by a shot of a police summons in his hands. Then, as José sleeps, a rock is thrown through the window – it is assumed that it has been thrown specifically at him. The passengers’ shock is summarized in a single reaction shot: the face of the young woman who sat opposite José in the dining carriage. Many of the passengers leave. At the same time, the camera retreats from José to acknowledge the emptiness of the carriage. The thrown rock triggers the passengers’ recoil from José and exposes their anxiety. The emptying of the carriage, followed by a visual creation of space around him by the camera’s movement, dramatizes his segregation. The attack marks José as an outsider, and signals a certain complicity between the film’s positioning of the spectator and José’s social isolation.

The sequence that follows dramatizes the othering of José. As the train pulls in to the station, it becomes obvious that a crowd has formed, anticipating José’s arrival. The announcer requests that the crowd remain calm and patiently await the outcome of the trial, although no more information regarding José’s crime is revealed. The camera presents a sense of the scale of the public response – the densely packed crowd surges outside of the frame of the shot even before José has left the train. José is isolated from the mass of people and from the spectator in each shot that follows, barred from the foreground by the train window. The police arrive to escort him to a safe location.
As he leaves the train he is hidden from the camera’s gaze – separated first by the carriage from inside which the shot is taken and second by the watching crowd. José is the point around which the crowd unites – their fascination with him, and the violent pursuit that ensues, reasserts his otherness. Rather than presenting the experience from José’s point of view, the camera stresses his exteriority and his separation from the spectator.

Certain elements of Christensen’s mise-en-scène can be linked to aesthetic characteristics pertaining to a film genre from an earlier epoch, specifically, film noir, a category referring to popular North American films produced between the 1940s and 1950s and loosely distinguished in thematic terms by a concern for crime or the criminal underworld of a city. Janey Place and Lowell Peterson write ‘it is the constant opposition of areas of light and dark that characterizes film noir cinematography’ and it is this stylistic aspect (chiaroscuro) that is predominant in the first half of O menino e o vento. Usually, film noir is shot using ‘low-key’ lighting in order to express an atmosphere of paranoia, menace and violence. Such lighting could dramatize a struggle between oppositional forces, upsetting a sense of a stable system of moral or social values, while also isolating the hero. This is true for O menino e o vento, where Christensen’s use of low-key lighting and chiaroscuro expresses a contested, paranoid and even violent social order. As José is driven off, a series of shots depict the town. The mise-en-scène is visually stark, and connotes the

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50 Place and Peterson, ‘Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir’, p. 66.
51 Ray Pratt, Projecting Paranoia: Conspiratorial Visions in American Film (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), pp. 51-52. Of course, O Menino does not demonstrate the usual, familiar features of film noir - an urban setting, a ‘hard-boiled’ or tough, cynical protagonist drawn towards an irresistible femme fatale, a corrupt police force in league with a criminal syndicate.
film noir aesthetics expressive of a strict division between opposing forces (figs. 29 and 30). As the car drives away, the stark lighting continues to code the town as rigidly divided. Moments later, the film cements the sense of division and opposition by placing a physical and visual barrier between the baying public and José (fig. 31). The camerawork and lighting emphasize and amplify visual differences and establish the town as a fundamentally dichotomous space – that is to say, the social order is founded on hierarchically arranged binary oppositions. It signals that the repeated attempts to separate José off as a foreign element and cast him as other to the townspeople, and to the spectator, are manifestations of this binary logic.

José meets with his lawyer in the sequence that follows. Here, the film unites the attempt to other José with the question of his mysterious sexual identity. Although the lawyer is ostensibly working to defend José, the film underlines his disparaging attitude to his client. He does not hesitate to articulate his own antipathy when providing José with information regarding his supposed crime: ‘seu crime é bárbaro’.52 Here, the lawyer foregrounds a vital dimension to the allegation – the suggestion that Zeca da Curva and José had a sexual relationship. José’s purported crime is a sexually motivated murder. The lawyer attempts to provoke José into explaining the relationship the engineer had with the boy, saying that José should deny ever meeting Zeca. José refuses to answer his questions and swears to speak only honestly, and only in court. The lawyer circles José like a predatory investigator; this behaviour belies his professed cooperation. When the lawyer finally speaks openly about the sexual dimension to the crime, a sharp zoom shot of José’s face is shown (figs. 32 and 33). The zoom simulates the inspecting gaze of the lawyer by

52 *O menino e o vento*, dir. by Carlos Hugo Christensen, 13.14.
enlarging the image of José. It transforms José from a person to a face, which serves as an object of investigation that can be scrutinised for signs of guilt. The gaze of the spectator and the gaze of the lawyer are aligned here, which spells out the relation between the camerawork’s othering and a suspicion of homosexuality. The film suggests that José’s ambiguous desire is intolerable to a public sphere structured by binary logic. His identification as a homosexual – as dominated other to the dominant heterosexual regime – becomes the social order’s paramount concern. The process of continually framing and isolating José as other is therefore homophobic. But José remains silent; his refusal to offer an explanation for the ‘estranha’ relationship thwarts the homophobic expectations of the lawyer. Neither does it provide any answers for an investigating spectator. The question of Zeca’s disappearance – conflated with José’s sexuality – remains unanswered.

**Complicit Understandings: The entendido**

The spectator is encouraged to identify José as homosexual; nevertheless, this activity is shown to be bound-up with the homophobic social order. The social impetus to resolve sexual ambiguity becomes evident when Mário, an entendido, attempts to coax José into declaring his homosexuality. Mário meets José out of town, and reveals himself to be Zeca’s rich bachelor cousin. He implies that he is homosexual: he states that minority groups have to defend themselves from the ‘normais’, specifically mentioning Jews and communists and using ‘nós’ to refer to José and himself. He assumes that José is homosexual, and takes the sexual nature of his relationship with Zeca for granted, while suggesting that José is innocent ‘pelo menos da morte, e
Mário is presented as an exemplary *entendido* character. He is clearly bourgeois – later, Zeca describes him as ‘cheio de grana’. His behaviour is restrained, without obvious camp or effeminate characteristics. It is also furtive; he convenes with José out of town where their meeting will go unnoticed. Mário is concerned with the assertion of a public image that will not alert the ‘normais’ to his homosexuality. This image must be protected at all costs – in order to draw the suspicion of murder away from himself and Zeca’s mother, he chooses to attack José on the train – we presume that the town would be made aware of his part in the stone throwing. It emerges that Mário aims to ‘aid’ José – presumably by providing him with an alibi or a positive character witness – on the condition that José confirm a sexual dimension to his relationship with Zeca, much like the lawyer. José refuses the help of a *chantagista* such as Mário, partly, we suspect, because Mário reveals it was he who threw the rock at José at the beginning of the film, and partly because Mário behaves in a comparable manner to the lawyer by constantly seeking to elicit confirmation of José’s homosexuality.

During the trial, Mário denies meeting José and gives testimony that incriminates him; suggesting both his bitterness at José’s rejection of his offer for help as well as his ruthless self-interest. The film portrays Mário in a particularly negative light throughout. As will now be shown, the film uses Mário to illustrate the *entendido* identity as problematically complicit with the social order. This is evident in the play between similarity and difference developed through mise-en-scène. The first image of Mário’s face is heavily shaded and the bright sky behind exaggerates his silhouette (fig. 34). His movements around the engineer are as predatory as those of the lawyer.

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53 *O menino e o vento*, 23.33.
54 *O menino e o vento*, 1.18.08
The camerawork points to the similarity between Mário and José by positioning them close to each other. Their clothing codes them comparably in terms of class and they are both similar in terms of height and physical appearance. A series of close-up shot-reverse shots calls attention to these similarities, particularly when Mário touches José’s shoulder. But as the sequence closes, the shot-reverse shot begins to stress their distance, and difference, from each other. The dramatic light and dark that covers Mário, by now firmly established as a code for the social order’s strict maintenance of binary oppositions, locates him within its structure. On the other hand José remains remarkably evenly lit.

When Mário discusses José’s relationship with Zeca, he tacitly demands that the engineer accede to the *entendido* identity ‘bem, se você vai ficar de não entender o tempo todo…’. Arguably, Mário’s insistence that José ‘understand’ and become ‘one in the know’ works in the service of the social order. Referring to the rock thrown in the introductory sequence, Mário justifies his action by saying ‘Não quero que ninguém suspeite de nós’. Although his ‘nós’ here refers to Zeca’s family, the principal motivation behind his act is a desire to avoid persecution, and suggests that the assumption of a publicly heterosexual *entendido* identity requires the deflection of suspicion of homosexuality in order to maintain the illusion of normality. Moreover, as an *entendido*, Mário passes as a heterosexual man – his closeted behaviour reinforces the binary oppositions that constitute the social order, as the affirmation of a closeted but fixed sexual identity opposes the *entendido* to society (normais/nós).

The demand for a determinate sexual identity forms part of an attempt to reproduce binary social structure, and automatically locates heterosexuality in a position of

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55 *O menino e o vento*, 23.57.
56 *O menino e o vento*, 23.59.
power over homosexuality. In this way, the attempt of the entendido to reject or escape from the stigma of same-sex desire through concealment within the social order is not only self-serving but heterosexist – *O menino e o vento* problematizes the way the entendido must deflect suspicion of homosexuality onto others, and so redirects the homophobic investigation it logically precedes; it demonstrates that the entendido becomes a willing tool of social oppression when threatened with his own exposure. Both the lawyer’s accusing gaze and the underlying heterosexism of the entendido illustrate the point that a fixed homosexual identity itself is shaped by the binary logic that underpins the social order. Furthermore, by indicating the underlying similarity between the lawyer and Mário, the film redoubles the suggestion that an investigation into a subject’s sexuality becomes complicit with the oppressive social order when it aims to establish sexual identity as ‘true’, fixed or essential.

The film constructs spectating as a simulation of the heterosexist investigation of identity; in doing so, it aims to draw the attention of the spectator to their participation in its workings. This is most evident during the trial, where the complicity between an investigating spectator and the homophobia of the social order is at its peak. The first witness called to the stand is Zeca’s mother. As she is being questioned, the shot is taken from over the shoulder of the prosecutor. Her low position relative to the prosecutor magnifies his physical presence while diminishing hers. The declining angle of the zoom shot beginning at 39.58 compounds this effect by aligning the camera directly with the prosecutor’s point of view. Binary relations between an active, dominating subject and a passive, subordinated object are charged up – this camerawork can be seen as comparable to the chiaroscuro that previously coded the town. The camerawork also closely associates the spectator with the townspeople and
the prosecutor. Frequent shots position the spectator amongst the viewing public, particularly evident when the prosecutor interviews a farmhand who tells the court he saw José embrace a naked Zeca. Here, the spectator is aligned with the outraged crowd. The spectator is constructed in a double position: at once encouraged to seek out the ‘truth’ of José’s desire and reminded that the ascription of fixed sexual identity is oppressive. Christensen stages the spectator as an aggressive investigator so that they may be made aware of their own complicity with heterosexism. It is during José’s testimony that the film illustrates a mode of sexual identity that approximates aesthetic subjectivity, as outlined above. In order to describe this mode, it is necessary to turn to Bersani’s earlier work on homosexuality.

**Homo-ness: Desire for the Same in the Other**

In *Homos* (1995), Bersani foregrounds queer theory’s problematic erasure of gay specificity. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, queer theory, as the body of academic thought concerned with exposing prescriptive assumptions about gender and sexuality entrenched within institutions, dismantles naturalised identity, but in doing so it effaces the very basis of resistance to ‘hegemonic regimes of the normal’.57 Bersani follows Freud’s account of the heterosexual male psyche as having in its earliest development a traumatic encounter with the other, which then forms that psyche insofar as all subsequent encounters with the other are defensive or antagonistic. If the oppositional relation between self and other is also a hierarchy of a dominant and dominated term, relationality itself remains problematically hierarchized, thus producing what Bersani calls ‘heteroized society’ – a social order

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57 Bersani. *Homos*, p. 4.
based on binarized difference.\textsuperscript{58} Bersani revisits same-sex desire in order to investigate the ‘political productivity of the sexual’ and restore the specificity of homosexuality that is effaced by queer anti-identity politics.\textsuperscript{59} His proposition is a radical re-evaluation of the political possibilities afforded by a Freudian conception of male homosexual desire. Freud describes the origin of male homosexuality as a deviation from normal sexual development that takes place in childhood – the child identifies with the mother rather than with the father, leading to the child taking his own ego as love-object, which Freud calls a ‘narcissistic object-choice’.\textsuperscript{60} Male heterosexuality is formed by the child taking the mother as a love-object, which is subsequently repressed due to the threat of castration by the father – with whom the child must identify to successfully resolve the so-called Oedipus complex. Bersani views this as a ‘traumatic privileging of difference’ that leads to a conception of desire as the incorporation of the other – desire sustained by lack. In gay desire, the self is already othered to itself in its identification with the mother – this means that it is unthreatened or indifferent to the otherness of sexual difference, and desires similarity or sameness instead (a version of narcissism).

Bersani writes that ‘perhaps inherent in gay desire is a revolutionary inaptitude for heteroized sociality. This of course means sociality as we know it’.\textsuperscript{61} He examines work by André Gide, Marcel Proust and Jean Genet and suggests that each homosexual writer demonstrates how a radical ‘self-effacing narcissism’ or ‘homo-ness’ might manifest itself. For Bersani, homo-ness responds to the specificity of gay

\textsuperscript{58} Bersani, \textit{Homo}, p. 7 and p. 39.
\textsuperscript{59} Bersani, \textit{Homo}, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{61} Bersani, \textit{Homo}, p. 7.
desire as desire for the same in the other, and is a challenge to the necessity of subject-object relationality itself. It involves, broadly, the narcissistic investment of desire in the self which then becomes expanded to a point where it can no longer be recognised as a self as such – this is self-effacing narcissism and ultimately results in an impersonal, communal same-ness of being. Rather than a ‘trauma to overcome’, otherness is left unthreatened, unthreatening and supplementary.  

The analysis given here will draw primarily on the form of homo-ness he detects in Gide’s *The Immoralist*. The desire of the narrator Marcel for the adolescents surrounding him activates a ‘narcissistic expansion of a desiring skin’ as well as preventing or undoing the self-contained narcissism more commonly associated with a securely mapped ego. Of particular interest to this study is the manner in which Marcel’s pederasty causes an extension of his being into the natural world – he becomes a bodily ego connected with ‘the soil, the grass, and the air’ while simultaneously breaking down the boundaries that define his ego as such. It will be argued that both the protagonist and Zeca demonstrate a similar self-extensive self-loss that is produced by their desire for each other. The film gradually illustrates that homosexual desire leads to their treatment of the other (each other, and also the world) as the same, as will now be shown.

**Emergent Gidean Pederasty**

Like the previous witnesses, José’s testimony is given as a flashback, through which the film illustrates a version of Gidean pederasty. José’s attempt to account for his experience gradually elides the differences between himself, Zeca, and the wind.

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64 Bersani. *Homos*, p. 120.
José’s testimony begins with an introductory sequence that delivers some basic background information, followed by his arrival at the town for the first time. A difference in the mise-en-scène is evident from the moment he disembarks from the train: the town’s geometric division between dark and light is replaced by a muted and diffusely lit urban space. The station porter calls over a boy, Zeca, to take José’s bags to the station. As José and Zeca become acquainted, it emerges that they both share an unusual passion for the wind. In order to experience the wind at its strongest they must leave town, so they explore the countryside together on horseback. The film begins to point to similarities between Zeca and José: Zeca explains his nickname is Zeca da Curva, but that Zeca is a colloquial version of Zé, itself a contraction of José. Moments later, Zeca calls José by his own nickname as well. Zeca highlights their names as near-similar versions of each other and shows that their apparent difference belies a greater correspondence. This presages the cinematographic approach taken to the depiction of the pair, where interrogative or differentiating camerawork has made way for camerawork and shot composition that emphasizes similarity, blurring their boundaries with each other. Figure 17 clearly demonstrates their visual symmetry – the pair correspond to each other, even at the level of clothing (fig. 35).

This first sequence consists of a series of shots alternating between very wide shots and dutch tilts – both shot forms not used until this point (figs. 36 and 37). In each shot, but in the very wide shots in particular, both José and Zeca become visually indistinct from each other. Shadow is no longer a device that separates and emphasizes difference, but a homogenizing function that renders the identities of the two riders ambiguous. Furthermore, the camera diffuses their images within a greater

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65 Christensen, *O menino e o vento*, 1.11.13.
visual whole; so great is the loss of detail in two very wide shots that the pair become
difficult to distinguish from the vegetation. One dutch tilt shot is particularly startling
for its vacuity, as the riders crossing the frame occupy little more than a quarter of it
(fig. 38). The angle and audio track suggest this dutch tilt shot is seemingly concerned
with a representation of the wind. When José and Zeca canter from left to right across
the shot they mimic the wind’s movement. As they ride ‘like the wind’, the pair
experience the wind in a certain way: they seek to take part in it as if they were part of
it. Given the necessity of physical movement to represent the wind’s motion, they
‘are’ the wind – following its current and signifying its presence. The shot is
concerned with representing José and Zeca ‘being the wind’ insofar as their
movement across the screen stands in for the wind itself. Camerawork and shot
composition privileges a greater, mutual ‘being’ while sidelining their individual
bodies.

This echoes Bersani’s reading of homosexual desire as it operates in The Immoralist.
Bersani accounts for Marcel’s desire as an initial desire for health, which he sees in
Arab boys. Rather than reaching out to possess the boys as a self relating to an other,
he treats them as part of himself – as ‘a kind of sensualized ideal ego that beguiles
him back to health’. Homosexual desire manifests as the duplication of his own ego
outside his body. Later, his ego is transformed into a ‘desiring skin,’ whereby the
boundaries of his ego are simultaneously extended out to the world and broken down.
As Bersani writes, ‘his authentic being – his naked flesh – extends itself into the
world, abolishing the space between it and the soil, the grass, and the air. He is,

66 Bersani, Homos, p. 119.
briefly, the contact between himself and the world’. In Gide, a desire for the same triggers ego-loss simultaneously with ego-expansion. A comparable double operation begins to emerge in *O menino e o vento*. The film makes the visual difference between the figures of José and Zeca hard to establish. They chase the wind – they strive to replicate its movement as they ride along with it. This would suggest that riding through the wind is an activity that aims at self-loss or dissolution into the wind itself. The distinction between José, Zeca and the wind is troubled, and their dissolution into the world (landscape, wind) could serves as a visual metaphor for a kind of self-loss resembling Gidean pederasty as understood by Bersani. What is missing here, however, is evidence of the element of self-extension; furthermore, it is not obvious that this narcissistic experience arises through homosexual desire. The presence of both these components becomes clearer when the film gives the spectator access to his psychological experience through verbal narration. As will be shown, the film goes on to describe José’s desiring experience in terms of sameness shortly after their first ride together through the wind.

**Zeca as Ephebe: Eroticised Similarity**

In the shots that follow this sequence, camerawork mediates an eroticized sameness through a relegation of difference by emphasizing the corporeal similarity of José and Zeca (figs. 39 and 40). The first shot of the pair walking through scrubland (referred to here as the tracking shot) is followed by an image of a half-naked Zeca – this is one of the chief examples of homoeroticism in the film. In this latter shot (fig. 40), the bottom of the frame finishes just above his trouser-line; it allows an imaginative viewer to speculate on a naked Zeca, despite his being shown previously clothed. The

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67 Bersani, *Hosos*, p. 120.
lighting eroticises the boy by exaggerating the definition of his pectoral and abdominal muscles, contouring his body to emphasize its physicality. Zeca’s central position in the shot and the symmetry of the surrounding scenery evokes traditional homoerotic photography, specifically, the image of an ephebe.68

Thomas Waugh’s discussion of homoerotic ephebic imagery is relevant for this discussion. Waugh writes that the majority of such photography was produced for an assumed adult male viewer and takes the ephebe as its object.69 He suggests the two main symbolic codes with which the ephebe is represented in Victorian pictorialism, the classical and the exotic, be seen as manifestations, for the Victorian male homosexual, ‘of the structures of difference which […] underpin the Western erotic imaginary’.70 Waugh suggests a presentation of the ephebe must be mediated first through otherness in order to be presented for an assumed male viewer.71 Such photography orchestrates a tension between the mediating exotic or classical codes that other the adolescent, and Waugh suggests the erotic charge of these images lies in this tension – between ‘the otherness of desire and the symmetry of the same-sex variant’.72 Although the figure of the ephebe plays on binary oppositions – what Waugh calls the ‘structures of difference’ – in order to arouse, it ultimately validates these oppositions by confirming binary-differentiated social roles. The sameness of the males is overshadowed by the demands of social relationality for a recognition of the other. Maria Teresa Bandeira de Mello suggests that, while the nascent Brazilian pictorialist movement was clearly influenced by Western traditions, some

photographers chose to reject the classic subject of the ‘nú artístico’. Certainly, some evidence exists of an erotic strain within pictorialist photography. Examples by photographers such as João Nogueira Borges clearly demonstrate the ‘structures of difference’ pointed out by Waugh when they present female figures in vulnerable positions of deference. Moreover, literary critic João Silveiro Trevisan points to the photographic ethnography of anthropologist Guido Boggiani for Brazilian examples of ephebic figures that comply with certain pictorialist conventions, such as posture and full-frontal nudity. Christensen might have drawn from photographic traditions that developed in Brazil and in the West. However, his re-articulation of ephebic imagery seems to challenge the ‘structures of difference’ that can be detected in common to both Brazilian and Western pictorialist photography – Figure 40 seems to eroticize similarity and diminishes, rather than exacerbates, the difference between the viewer and the ephebe (fig. 40).

Figure 40 rearticulates the relation between the ephebic figure and the male viewer (José). During the tracking shot José provides meteorological information regarding the wind. It is possible to view this instance as coding José as the erastes and Zeca as the eromenos in the formation of pederastic love of classical antiquity. In Waugh’s terms, Zeca-as-pupil contrasts with José-as-teacher; both are therefore situated within a structure of difference. Figure 40 is aligned with José’s point of view and inscribes him as the adult (male) viewer of the ephebe. However, the erastes-eromenos relation

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74 Bandeira de Mello, M. T., *Arte e fotografia*, p. 185.
75 Trevisan, *Devassos no paraíso*, p. 69.
76 Within pederasty (from the Greek ‘love of youths’), the elder partner or erastes would take a younger male or eromenos as his lover-pupil. Although the erastes was depicted often with a beard – and José is not quite old enough to be counted as a standard erastes – Antonio Moreno notes that, as an engineer, José occupies a position normally held by one in his 40s. He is clearly older in spirit that his somewhat youthful appearance would suggest. Moreno, *A personagem homossexual*, p. 197.
is problematized. Firstly, in the visual similarity of the pair, since the tracking shot’s symmetrical composition mirrors Zeca’s half-naked torso with José’s. Second, the pederastic dimension is further disturbed through the manner in which the shot inverts certain conventions of pictorialist photography. Usually the *ephebe* would amplify the erotic dimension of his watched body by opening his thighs, raising his arms to bare his torso, or averting his eyes from the gaze of the viewer – functions of a ‘narrative pattern of imbalance, a narrative embodiment of the structure of difference’. In contradistinction, Zeca returns José’s gaze and rejects the deference – a marker of difference – demanded of the *ephebe* to sustain the pederastic paradigm. Rather than stand as the object to the subject’s gaze, Zeca looks at José reciprocally. As suggested before, his flesh is heavily contoured by the lighting; the use of this technique to eroticise his body has a consequential flattening effect on the background. The image composition lifts Zeca’s figure out of the shot, which is exaggerated by the cutting off of his torso at its base. His body, established in the tracking shot as ‘same’ to José, is detached from the background. The effective isolation of this eroticised bodily sameness from the rest of the image further suggests that same-sex desire is not mediated through a framework of difference, as in pictorialist photography, but is focused instead on Zeca’s similarity to the viewer (José). The erotic same is privileged while the difference between subject and object is bracketed as unimportant.

**Similar Selves: The Expansion of Sameness**

Through José’s testimony, the film eroticizes the similar while progressively eroding the differences between José, Zeca and the wind. Before continuing, it is worth

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77 Waugh, *Hard to Imagine*, p. 98.
pointing out that the initial account he gives of his relationship with the wind is itself somewhat ambiguous. José claims to be ‘apaixonado pelo vento’ at the beginning of his testimony, a passion that stems from his somewhat traumatic adolescence. He tells the court that he comes from a family of creative types:

Desde menino [...] encontrava um pintor, um ator, um escritor, um jornalista. Isso, que foi um encanto de toda minha infância, transformou-se em cada um terror na minha primeira juventude. Aos 15 anos já assistia a todas as amarguras, dramas e sofrimentos em que viviam toda aquelas pessoas que eu amava. [...] Assim, jurei que seria um homem prático.78

He embraces logic and reason to avoid the tragedies caused by human emotion that so afflicted his family. He goes on to recount that he cannot explain his fascination with the wind, but it seems to be an element of his character that has escaped his repression. It is possible to suggest that his fascination with the wind is really a fascination with a part of himself that he has previously refused: some unspecified emotional, creative or desiring tendencies that he avoids in order to protect himself from suffering. These repressed tendencies might be read as a coded reference to homosexual desire, though this is somewhat speculative. If it is suggested that the wind represents a buried aspect of José, it follows that when he refers to his desire for the wind he actually refers to a narcissistic desire for himself. In this case, José’s testimony begins with a blurred distinction between himself and the wind. At the very least, his own account gives his obsession with the wind an overtone of narcissism.

78 O menino e o vento, 1.05.12.
His account takes on a more homoerotic dimension when he recounts that, at one point during his stay, Zeca and the wind disappeared completely. Here, José openly admits he confuses the boy with the wind itself – ‘minha mente começou a confundir menino e vento. Não sabia se o vento vinha porque Zeca estava, ou se Zeca aparecia porque o vento ventava’.79 This inflects his fascination with Zeca with homosexual desire – to be ‘apaixonado pelo vento’ is to desire Zeca, if Zeca and the wind are the same. Furthermore, the wind can be read as representing José’s creative or irrational tendencies, as suggested above. This implies that José’s fascination with Zeca is also a fascination with his (repressed) self, and evidenced by the fact that Zeca is fifteen, the exact age at which José rejected his own creative or irrational tendencies. In a comparable fashion to the beautiful boys who encourage Gide’s narrator to return to health by serving as parts of his own ego, Zeca is treated by José as an extension of his own self which leads him to accept, rather than repress, his own irrational desires. In this way, José’s narrative gradually withdraws the possibility of making a clear distinction between himself, the wind and Zeca. Elements other to José (the wind and Zeca) are viewed as versions of himself that incite his (homosexual) desire – desire that the film has already underlined as a desire for the same.

This plays out as José narrates his final afternoon in the town. He runs to the summit of a hill to experience a particularly strong wind. His monologue begins with the declaration ‘eu estava sozinho perdido na corrente’ while his face expresses the pleasure received from his immersion.80 The camera’s circular movements suggest the physical sensations that José experiences, marking the wind as an experience both

79 O menino e o vento, 1.22.23.
80 O menino e o vento, 1.29.50.
erotic and haptic.\footnote{O menino e o vento, 1.29.55.} Concomitant with a tactile experience of pleasure is an experience in which José’s ‘Eu’, taken here as his ego, is both ‘alone’ and ‘lost.’ He is fundamentally alone – only as an ‘Eu’ and nothing else – which gives José’s activity a narcissistic character. At the same time, his ego is lost: the sequence alternates between two shots of José’s face, lit differently and at slightly different angles, which can be considered a cinematic representation of the ego’s external extension as José’s ‘Eu’ moves across the land. As was suggested previously, José’s experience of the wind is an experience of himself – narcissistically embracing the irrational tendencies that he previously repressed. Here, he takes the wind as an external version of himself – an extension of his awareness from his own body to the spaces touched by the wind: ‘campina’, ‘lagoa’. The limits of his ego become so expanded it becomes impossible to determine its boundaries. José becomes ‘the contact between himself and the world’ which is to suggest a mode of being as an impersonal same-necess produced when José’s ego becomes extended outside of his body, potentially coming into contact with everything, and losing the self-containment necessary to define it as an ego as such.\footnote{Bersani, Homos, p. 120.}

Zeca escapes from his home to find José on the hill, deep in a wind-induced ecstasy. The boy strips off and the two embrace – this shot is the most overt depiction of homosexuality in the film. It is also a moment in which the difference between José, Zeca, and the wind is made ambiguous. José’s expanded, indistinct ego is explicitly equated with the wind, even though Zeca has been proposed as a version of the wind earlier in the film. The camerawork that communicates their mutual pleasure is near-identical for both José and Zeca. They face into the wind as inaccurate replications of
each other. The film highlights Zeca, the wind and José as different versions of the same thing – a same-ness of being that can no longer be accurately named ‘José’, ‘the wind’ or ‘Zeca’. Homosexual desire – as desire for the same in the other – produces an erosion of individual identities. Bersani writes that interpersonal relations are founded on a conception of desire as lack, fulfilled in the assimilation of difference and unavoidably informed by power and domination. Homo-ness refashions relationality by side-stepping the notion of an antagonistic self faced with a threatening other that must be incorporated or overcome. By positing homo-ness as a network of sameness or being, the other is reduced to a ‘nonthreatening supplement’.83 The film illustrates an expansion of the ego into what can be called homo-ness; the distinction between José, the wind and Zeca are lost in their mutual, escalating contact with the world. Their intelligibility as separate entities is lost as they are transformed into an impersonal, mutual sameness of being. Aggressive, hierarchical self-other relations have been side-stepped; the social order is faced with a form of being, produced by homosexual desire, that it cannot reduce to binary categories.

**An Anti-Identitarian Utopia?**

*O menino e o vento* presents the trial as an explicit attempt to resolve the question of José’s sexuality as homosexuality and, by implication, convict him of Zeca’s murder. It is the apex of the social order’s investigation of the ambiguous relation between him and the boy. José’s testimony, as that which it is hoped will incriminate him, reveals nothing recognizable as ‘homosexuality’ – this is compliant with Gidean pederasty. The very testimony that would provide proof of his sexual identity delivers nothing like a sexual identity at all. In his final statement he declares ‘por que não

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admitir que ele tenha vindo com este vento e já esteja subindo pela escada?’ Although his words involve Zeca, it is the wind that is shown ascending from the street. José’s actions here echo previous scenes in which Zeca was shown to summon the wind – a feat José takes as evidence that Zeca and the wind were one and the same thing. In the case of the final scene, it is José who summons Zeca (as the wind) – as has been noted, both entities are treated by José as extensions of himself at various points in his testimony. His final words therefore redouble the ambiguous blurring between the three entities into homo-ness, while forcing the court to confront it at the same time. The wind suddenly forces open the doors to the courthouse and ascends the stairs to the courtroom, causing chaos and scattering the assembled public. The trial can be understood as serving the social order by attempting to fix José’s homosexual identity. The dénouement shows the effects of homo-ness as a ‘lawless pederasty’ on a trial intent on sexual identification – the total destruction of the proceedings demonstrates the full capacity of homo-ness to foil sexual categorization via an abolition or suspension of fixed subjects entirely. José stands alone, surrounded by the wind, caressing Zeca’s shirt. He has demolished the apparatus that sought to oppress him via an imposed homosexual identity (the trial). His fate following this remains uncertain.

The final scene indicates a problematic aspect of Bersani’s thesis, in that it suggests this break is potentially a terrifying one. Bersani points out that the desire of Gide’s narrator for the same in the other ‘risks his own boundaries, risks knowing where he ends and the other begins’, and admits his thesis is chiefly concerned with articulating a path out of heteroized (binary) social relations rather than offering a

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84 Bersani, *Homos*, p. 129.
complete vision of a community based on same-ness.\textsuperscript{86} It is therefore important to consider whether Bersani’s homo-ness is always a desirable state of being to enter into. Christensen’s film suggests that an abstention from self-other relations is particularly risky, leaving it unclear as to whether Zeca ever returns as ‘Zeca’ after his experiences of self-dissolution. It is also important to point out that homo-ness might not always be possible: a reading of Christensen’s film attentive to issues of class would point out that while José is a rich city-dweller, Zeca is clearly a poor ‘analfabeto’. It might be suggested that José is free to experience homo-ness because he can afford to – considering that he is ‘initiated’ into ego-extensive ego-loss during a holiday, it might even be viewed as a leisure activity. This jars with the mode of self-divesture suggested by Bersani, where the narrator’s self is stripped of both psychic and material value. On the other hand, the film leaves the material consequences of homo-ness for Zeca and his family (who might depend on him for income) less clear. This is a problem with Bersani’s thesis that has been pointed out by Posso, who suggests that although Gide’s narrator embraces a psychic and material self-divesture, the boys whom he paid only a trifle (in his view) were considerably poorer, and so homo-ness is, for them, an experience of economic remuneration.\textsuperscript{87} Christensen’s version of Gidean pederasty is no unproblematic utopian solution for social oppression; material inequalities remain uncontested in the film. Nevertheless, as Bersani says, ‘if a community were ever to exist in which it would no longer seem natural to define all relations as property relations [the view of the other as the property of the self – self-other relationality…] we would first have to imagine a new erotics’.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{86} Bersani, \textit{Homos}, p. 176.
\textsuperscript{87} Posso, \textit{Artful Seduction}, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{88} Bersani, \textit{Homos}, p. 128.
Christensen’s film can be seen as making a contribution to that re-imagining by comparing two forms of homosexuality – one complicit with the social order, and one that escapes the binaristic logic on which that order is founded. The spectator is exposed to the failings of the *entendido* identity via cinematographic techniques which simulate a complicity with oppression. Rather than provide a definitive alternative construction of identity, the film directs the spectator to a queer solution that is both ambiguous and risky (Zeca’s prolonged absence can be read as a warning of the dangers of self-extensive self-loss). Given the limitations of homo-ness for a political project, the film’s articulation of the political possibilities that lie within same-sex eroticism remains radical for its time. As suggested in the Introduction, the *entendido* identity was virtually replaced by a ‘gay’ identity in the 1970s, which, following the post-Stonewall Gay Power movement, began to make the strides towards the visibility of sexual minorities in Brazil that the *entendido* could never achieve (nor would necessarily want to). With this in mind, the film can be taken as a cautionary tale for an incipient movement of identitarian politics: any conceivable identity that does not at least recognize its complicity with a social order structured on an antagonistic relation to the other is doomed, like Mário, to remain in and repeat structures of oppression.

**Conclusions: A Queer Kind of Subject**

In *Os cafajestes* and *Barravento*, the spectator was actively engaged in the production of queer male identity, partly through Brechtian techniques that educated the spectator via a demystification of various ideologies. Such didacticism is absent from *A rainha diaba*, where a form of subjectivity useful for a politics of identity is more deeply

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buried. Still, reflexivity is central to the tacit challenge that *A rainha diaba* made to the status quo – it was argued that it inadvertently directs the spectator to a form of subjectivity that might resist the violent self/other relationality. *O menino e o vento* can be read as containing a didactic component: it uses spectatorial positionings to point out the complicity between fixed identity, practices of identification, and oppressive, hierarchical binary structure. Intentionally or not, both films use elements of film form to challenge heterosexism and present queer male subjects. As such, this chapter aimed to strengthen the argument set out in the Introduction – an attention to the subtleties of film form is essential in determining its value for identity politics. The chapter strove to remain aware of the limitations of re-reading certain films for a queer project; arguably, the suggestion that *A rainha diaba* presents a virulently homophobic vision of homosexuality is still justified. In the case of Fontoura’s film, close analysis of form can only help demonstrate how even extremely pejorative representations can be shown to produce strategies of resistance, and thus render them somewhat ambivalent.

Chapter 1 suggested that the tacit expression of same-sex desire was partly entwined with a reworking of a marginal male identity, the *malandro*, for the political project of the cinemanovistas. Similarly, marginalized male figures were central to the films discussed in Chapter 2, although their entanglement with same-sex desire and with homosexual identity is much more explicit. Both films would seem to imply that the social order’s requirement that homosexuals be codified as a fixed, identifiable other proves to be something of a weak spot. It is precisely the artifice of the *bonecas* (their status as other) that allows the film to illustrate a non-binary form of subjectivity to the spectator; in a different way, José deploys homo-ness in response to the demand
that he accede to fixed homosexual identity. In both cases, the seeds of a resistance to structures of oppression would seem to be contained within heterosexism itself. So, while the two films examined in this chapter might approach homosexuality from different angles, they converge on the notion that homosexuality has potential to be reworked into a form of being that resists identification. The queer men discussed here resist oppression by turning the system against itself in a far more open way than in Chapter 1. At the same time, it is unwise to argue that either film provides a utopian solution to the problems inherent in identity politics, given the provisos that come with Bersani’s models of reworked subjectivity.
Images for Chapter 2

Fig. 19

Fig. 20

Fig. 21

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

Fig. 24
Chapter 3

A Different Kind of Object

Queer Men and Same-Sex Desire in Pornochanchada

This chapter will examine popular Brazilian cinema of the 1970s to investigate how aspects of film form and narrative might be seen as producing queer male subjects. To do this, it will discuss four examples of pornochanchada, aiming to demonstrate how dominant notions of sexual identity might be disturbed by the cinematic presentation of same-sex desire in relation to an objectified male. The four examples considered here are Fauzi Mansur’s *Uma verdadeira história de amor* (1972), Antônio Calmon’s *Nos embalos de Ipanema* (1978), Alfredo Sternheim’s *Corpo devasso* (1980) and Levi Salgado’s *Os rapazes das calçadas* (1981). These four films share representations of homosexuality that do not always play into the *bicha* stereotype discussed in Chapter 2; at the same time, they often comment on the relationship between heterosexual men, masculinity, and homosexuality. A variety of theories surrounding sexuality and identity will be employed, including a model of eroticism developed by Georges Bataille, to explore the conflicts and ambivalences that afflict the heterosexual male subject when he comes into contact with same-sex desire, particularly when he figures as an object of that desire. Alongside this, and continuing the line of argument developed in Chapters 1 and 2, form will be shown to have a central role in the emergence of queer male identity – in particular, the use of reflexivity and the positioning of the spectator.
The Films in Context

In order to give a full context for the films discussed in this chapter, it is important to give some details of the shifts and changes in practices of film censorship in Brazil, as well as to offer more details on pornochanchada as a genre. Inimá Ferreira Simões charts a long history of the prohibition of cinema in Brazil, beginning in 1907, where a Catholic priest vetoed the showing of a film out of concern for its effect on the public. The first official body dedicated to film censorship was established in São Paulo during the 1920s; by the end of the 1930s a federal body had been established with a code detailing what should be prohibited. Simões points out that the code left a wide margin for interpretation up until 1964. More importantly, she suggests that the activity of censorship was mostly visible in singular cases where authorities felt that the image of the State was prejudiced or in cases where the films contained content perceived to be immoral or indecent.\(^1\) The 1964 military *coup d’etat* shifted the censors’ focus towards the threat of communism. Experts in cinema were brought in so as to detect traces of subversive ideology, perceived to be ‘oculto nas imagens aparentemente singelas de um simples documentário ou no diálogo de uma ficção voltada para o público adolescente’.\(^2\) The 1968 coup-within-a-coup, and the ascension of the extreme right-wing to power, brought with it a tightening of military rule and the imposition of the infamous AI-5 (Institutional Act No. 5), mandating the approval by a board of censors of all films destined for general release.\(^3\) The light-hearted pornochanchadas were not exempt from cuts – for example, the comedy *Os

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\(^3\) Carvalho, ‘Cinema Novo Brasileiro’, pp. 289-310 (305).
Bonecas had its title changed to Os Machões, and was only released after cuts were made to bring the film in line with Brazilian ‘morality’. As Nuno Cesar Abreu writes, censors would intervene ‘na questão dos “bons costumes”, execendo seu poder segundo critérios morais’. The strict censorship of the late 1960s and early 1970s began to show signs of weakening with the opening up of the military regime – the ‘abertura’ – from the middle of the 1970s onwards, and in 1978 President Geisel abolished the AI-5. This was not the end for Brazilian censorship, which became a key point in the discussion of how to gradually return democracy to Brazil. The Conselho Superior de Censura, was strengthened with the aim of mediating between cultural producers and the government – as a result, dozens of previously banned films were given general release. So, while the abertura meant a loosening of censorship, the State did not completely end censorship until 1985, when, as Simões writes, Fernando Lyra do Ministério da Justiça podia anunciar que a censura era um capítulo do passado.

Despite the restrictions on cinematic production outlined above, the 1970s brought massive growth for the Brazilian film industry in general, evidenced by swift increases both in filmgoers and in the number of Brazilian films shown during the period. Between 1974 and 1978, the total number of spectators doubled from 30 million to 60 million. Growth was partly fostered by state protectionism: the

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7 Simões suggests that ‘Desde que o general Figueiredo assumiu com a missão de conduzir a abertura a bom tempo, a questão da censura esteve no centro das atenções’. ‘A censura cinematográfica no Brasil’, p. 375.
dictatorship restricted the sale of foreign pornography and used compulsory screen quotas to force cinemas to exhibit a minimum number of Brazilian films per year.\textsuperscript{10} The mass production and consumption of *pornochanchada* at that time was perhaps predictable, given the fertile market conditions created by the State, and the low production cost of *pornochanchadas* themselves. The apparent complicity between the military government and the genre has caused critics to dismiss *pornochanchadas* as ‘grosseiras, vulgares e apelativas, fruto de um momento de forte repressão do poder à produção cultural’.\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, José Carlos Avellar suspects that the rise of *pornochanchadas* is bound inextricably with the intensification of censorship from 1968 onwards; he writes that they ‘surgiram de repente, como se saíssem do nada, no exato instante em que a censura começava a se tornar mais forte’, and understands that censorship ‘cria as condições propícias para o aparecimento desta linha de produtos mal acabados e grosseiros, a chanchada meio porno’.\textsuperscript{12}

It is important to remember that *pornochanchadas* were also subject to censorship themselves, as mentioned above. Sidney Ferreira Leite writes that during the most intense period of censorship, cuts were frequently demanded of ‘Seqüências que exibissem pêlos pubianos, relações sexuais, sugestões de homossexualismo’, alongside suggestive titles – a key part of the marketing strategies of the producers.\textsuperscript{13} The pressures of censorship have been pinpointed as responsible for the general presentation of sexuality in *pornochanchada* in conservative and sexist terms – for example, the films rehearse patriarchal views of women as fantasy objects always

\textsuperscript{10} Arthur Autran ‘O pensamento industrial cinematográfico Brasileiro: ontem e hoje’, in *Cinema e mercado*, org. by Alessandra Meleiro (Escrituras: Sao Paulo, 2010), pp. 21-22 (15-33)
\textsuperscript{11} Abreu, *O Olhar Pornô*, p. 76
available for sexual encounters, only to have them either punished or married off by the end of the film. Stephanie Dennison points out the tendency for *pornochanchada* towards self-censorship ‘in the form of a failure to deliver on the promise of sex and nudity, and the “strategic reactionary elements” such as the conservative morality seemingly expressed by the plot resolutions (many *pornochanchadas*, after plenty of debauchery, ended in marriage)’. Together with Lisa Shaw, she also acknowledges that *pornochanchada* challenged moral conservativism by bringing the discussion of sexuality to the public consciousness. Abreu echoes these comments, and suggests that while the genre often presented an unrealistic picture of Brazilian life, its obsession with cheeky innuendo and smut could also be seen as a response to the global sex revolution – ‘a *pornochanchada* respondia a uma ansiedade social […] no terreno da sexualidade, um fenômeno internacional’. Abreu argues that *pornochanchadas* reflected and commercialized the spirit of the 1970s, when ‘O sexo estava na cabeça de todo mundo’. Dennison and Shaw’s argument also resonates with comments made by Flávia Seligman, who suggests that the genre was situated in a far more awkward position in relation to the State than critics claim. Tempted by the possibility of vast profits, filmmakers set out to shock and scandalize audiences with ever more daring depictions of sexuality. At the same time, they were forced by the censors to moderate all such representations. This tension between transgression and conformity meant that *pornochanchada* was ‘odiada pela crítica […] foi desprezada

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16 Abreu, *O Olhar Pornô*, p. 76.
17 Abreu, *O Olhar Pornô*, p. 76.
tanto pela direita, por ser grosseira e libertina, como pela esquerda, por ser alienada e superficial’. 18

Although the four films are not wholly typical examples of pornochanchada, they do display many of the generic traits associated with the genre. 19 Uma verdadeira história de amor’s director, Fauzi Mansur, was a notably prolific producer of pornochanchada based in São Paulo’s famous ‘Boca do Lixo’ region, who went on to develop more extreme, explicit titles in the 1980s, including Incesto – Um desejo proibido (1980) and Sadismo – aberrações sexuais (1981), a progression also common with other directors of the period. 20 Although Uma verdadeira história de amor lacks the comic aspect provided by innuendo that characterized more famous contemporary productions such as Como é boa nossa empregada (1973), it nevertheless presents the spectator with a series of sequences of simulated sex, including an orgy. Nos embalos de Ipanema includes a humorous sexual encounter between the protagonist and a middle-aged woman, alongside titillating sequences of simulated sex. Like Mansur, both the director of Corpo devasso, Alfredo Sternheim, and its leading man, David Cardoso, were associated with the Boca do Lixo; Abreu suggests that the latter was a ‘legenda do cinema da Boca do Lixo, do qual foi ator, diretor, e […] produtor, de sucesso’. 21 Sternheim’s film arguably resembles contemporary output, notably Gisele (1980), as it features simulated homosexual sex, a somewhat comical scene of bestiality, alongside long sequences of simulated

19 Abreu points out that pornochanchada was less a discrete genre, than “um conjunto de filmes com temáticas diversas mas com formas de produção aparentadas”. Abreu, O olhar pornô, p. 74
20 Abreu, O olhar pornô, p. 77
heterosexual sex and copious amounts of male and female nudity. The popularity of earlier *porno chanchada* (little nudity, more innuendo) had begun to tail off when *Corpo devasso* was produced, and light-hearted erotic comedies were starting to give way to more explicit fare. Rapazes might be considered the predecessor to the flood of explicit pornography that soon came to dominate Brazilian cinematic production in the 1980s, and it is unlike the typical cheeky *porno chanchada* of the 1970s. It lacks a cohesive narrative structure, consisting largely of a series of vignettes which present scenes from the homosexual subculture of Rio de Janeiro. In common with many of the productions in the early 1980s, it features ‘sexo explícito entre homens e mulheres, grupos de tarados e pela primeira vez sexo explícito entre dois homens’, although its date of release (1981) suggests that its showings would have been restricted to specialist cinemas. While the films clearly differ in many respects – not least in whether they show explicit homosexual material, merely simulate it, or conceal it completely – they remain deeply influenced by the conventions of the *porno chanchada* genre, a point that will be explained in more detail during the analysis.

**Uma verdadeira história de amor: Ambiguous Objects of Desire**

Paulo is a successful engineer working at a race-car factory, engaged to the daughter of a rich industrial tycoon. Darci is an internal migrant who travels from Pernambuco to São Paulo in search of work. They first encounter each other at a petrol station outside São Paulo: Paulo takes a photograph of a lorry carrying workers, and one of his shots happens to focus on Darci. By chance, the latter encounters Paulo again.

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when he starts shining shoes at his factory – they instantly develop a rapport and, not long after, Paulo helps Darci secure both identification papers and a job. As Paulo develops stronger feelings for Darci, his fiancée becomes suspicious and calls off the engagement. Paulo seeks solace in the arms of his mistress, but eventually he admits his desire for the boy and seems to come to terms with his homosexuality. Meanwhile, in the final sequence, Paulo confesses his feelings to Darci, who reveals herself to be a woman (fig. 43). This final scene effectively absolves the film of its homosexual content because it suggests that Paulo was ‘really’ feeling heterosexual desire throughout – the consequences of this gender switch will be discussed in detail later.

To begin, it is important to point out that the film puts some considerable work into coding the relationship between Paulo and Darci as homosexual. In a simple way, it begins by suggesting that their similarity overrides their differences. Darci meets Paulo for a second time when the latter arrives in São Paulo to make a living by shining shoes. The short shot-counter shot sequence sets up the gaze of both Darci and Paulo to indicate the beginnings of their desire, which is mediated through a sense of their difference to each other in terms of age, social class and relative spatial position. The series of close-ups that follow undermine this difference, reframing the pair’s presentation in terms of similarity: their faces take up a near-identical position on the screen, suspending the sense of spatial difference between them and creating the illusion that they face each other on the same plane. This echoes the efforts made in O menino e o vento to stress the similarity between José and Zeca. The emphasis on similarity over difference suggests that the film is working with the object-choice model of sexual identity, rather than the ‘traditional’ model.
The film gradually makes same-sex desire its central issue. In part, this is communicated via the representation of Paulo’s thought processes using montage sequences, which become dominated by images of Darci as his desire for the boy grows stronger. An example of this strategy can be seen at 30.15, where Paulo contemplates his conflicting feelings towards Darci, shown through a long, fragmented sequence of memories. This sequence contrasts shots of Darci with Paulo’s other female lovers (his fiancée and his mistress) in order to accentuate the sense of his deviation from a heterosexual norm. The sequence is divided between memories of his fiancée and memories of Darci; the alternating images are underscored by Paulo’s lamentation at 32.25 ‘isso não é normal, não, não, não é normal’. The film underlines how Paulo’s struggle with his desire is determined by a same-sex object-choice. Paulo talks to his fiancée via telephone in a distracted manner that suggests a growing indifference to their relationship. Instead, Paulo is falling for an abnormal love-object.

In order to facilitate the film’s depiction of homosexuality in terms of object-choice, an actress, Verá Lucia, plays Darci. To pass as an adolescent male she conceals her breasts, and thickens her eyebrows with makeup; despite her disguise, Darci’s gender remains somewhat ambiguous to the viewer. The film uses narrative events to further code him as male. An example of this can be seen at 27.30, where Darci is unsuccessfully seduced by a secretary at Paulo’s place of work. This scenario positions Darci as a naïve adolescent male about to undergo his first erotic experience at the hands of an older woman. Darci wears classically masculine apparel – a suit and tie, while the woman wears revealing garments; this contrast in clothing plays on and exaggerates the gender difference between them (fig. 45). Bruna Bedcherucci
observes that this scene is ‘supérflua e absurda’ in relation to the love story as a whole. But its significance lies in its presentation of Darci as the male complement to a female, in order to then actualize Paulo’s homosexuality. The film also makes an effort to code Darci as an adolescent. When Darci applies for papers and registers with the city bureaucracy, Paulo estimates his age to be fourteen – the age of consent in Brazil. Paulo’s conjecture can be read as an attempt by the film to steer its discussion of transgressive desire away from paedophilia and towards homosexuality. As the former might possibly be suggested due to Lucia’s youthful, boy-like appearance, it is arguable that when Uma verdadeira história de amor explicitly confirms Darci’s age it recognizes the consequences of having an androgynous female play a male adolescent.

The sense of Paulo’s struggle with the possibility of homosexual desire becomes concrete in the sequence beginning at 35.00, which will now be analyzed in detail. After his day of work ends, Paulo attends a raucous party in order to distract himself from his thoughts of Darci. While the guests strip off and begin to have sex, Paulo remains seated and watches their revelry. He is fixated with the women and the shots that correlate to his gaze are primarily of female body parts. Darci’s face is cut into the sequence at a gradually increasing rate, alternating with shots of his tensed expression that indicate his failing struggle to keep thoughts of Darci at bay. The juxtaposition of an image of Darci with the female bodies frames the sequence explicitly in terms of object choice. As before, homosexual desire is established as central to Paulo’s distress. When he leaves the party to compose himself in the

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25 Further contributing to the character’s ambiguous gender is the name ‘Darci’, both a male and a female name in Portuguese.
bathroom, he sees Darci’s face imposed on his own in the mirror (figs. 46 and 47). The mirror is an object that normally displays one’s self-image and thereby confirms one’s identity. For Paulo, however, the mirror shows the face of Darci. Only moments before, Darci’s face stood as a symbol of a homosexual object choice that was compared with various heterosexual object choices. This implies that Darci’s face is cut over Paulo’s specular image to make an overt connection between object choice and identity. Paulo is faced with an image of his object choice as his reflection; his concern ultimately lies with the possibility of his own homosexual identity. It is possible to argue that the use of the mirror can be shown to complicate this notion. To demonstrate this, it is necessary to refer to the early work of Jacques Lacan concerning the formation of the human subject via the mirror stage.

**Homosexual Identity and the Mirror Stage**

As is well known, Lacan theorizes that the mirror stage is a process fundamental to the formation of the ego which takes place during the early development of the child’s psyche. The mirror stage is triggered by the child’s first encounter with its reflection. Lacan considers this to take place between the ages of 6 to 18 months. During this time the child is not fully in control of its own body. It is, however, able to perceive its specular image, which it believes to be whole and complete. This totalized or gestalt image stands ‘in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him’.

The child initially takes its reflection as its rival because the wholeness of the specular image exposes the child’s own fragmentation. This produces an aggressive tension between child and image. Only when the child identifies with the image is that tension resolved; this ‘primary identification’ made

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with its reflection forms the basis of the ego.\textsuperscript{27} The child’s joy that characterizes the moment it identifies with the image and believes it has mastered the body eventually gives way to an experience of tension between the new, totalized image and the body, which remains fragmentary and uncoordinated. Based on its momentary experience of mastery, the child then anticipates a future synthesis with its image. But this synthesis will never come. So, the ego is essentially founded on an external object that the child misrecognises or mistakes as himself. It is the product of a gap between child and image that can never be closed. Identification with the specular image is the first instance of the child’s alienation from itself in an illusory realm of total, complete images. Every secondary identification that follows on from the founding of the ego is equally a misrecognition. The search for identity is driven by the aim of reclaiming the lost sense of mastery brought about in the primary identification.\textsuperscript{28} But this search has a flawed premise: the gap between the subject and its specular image can never be closed and as such the pursuit of its suture is fruitless.

It is reasonable to suggest that Darci’s appearance in the mirror might be explained by the desire to show off a degree of technical expertise. At the same time, by invoking the mirror in this way the film inadvertently exposes the alienation inherent in an object-determined homosexual identity. Paulo takes his vision of Darci’s face as telling him something fundamental about himself; at the same time, it also demonstrates that his self-image is determined by an external object and so encapsulates the alienation inherent in sexual identity. This suggests that, although sexual identity (object-determined or otherwise) purports to inform Paulo about himself, it is shown to be founded on objects that exist outside the subject, a point that

\textsuperscript{27} Evans, \textit{An Introductory Dictionary}, p. 115.
clearly underlines the misrecognition characterizing all identity. Reading the sequence in such a way might seem to undermine what could be seen as a valuable representation of homosexuality – a struggle with homosexual identity that concludes with Paulo’s acceptance of his desires as part of himself he cannot escape. On the other hand, it must be remembered that any statement *Uma verdadeira história de amor* makes in this sequence regarding the value of accepting one’s sexual identity will always be undercut by the final scene. Paulo’s encounter with his specular image makes a more incisive critique of identity possible and so evades the film’s normalizing tactics to a degree.

**Imaging the ‘Erotic Object’**

Paulo flees the orgiastic party and returns to his fiancée – however, she has heard rumours of his affections for Darci and brands him a homosexual. Paulo leaves her and drives to the house of his lover – the woman seen at the start of the film. They promptly begin to have sex – arguably, an attempt on Paulo’s part to verify his heterosexuality. This sequence is centred on Paulo’s psychological experience of sex, and in particular his simultaneous fear of and desire for the fantasized figure of Darci – this ambiguity makes the sequence amenable to an interpretation using Bataille’s concept of eroticism. Bataille conceives of the individual subject as a bounded entity, a ‘discontinuous’ being that is separated off from the rest of the world by various social laws and norms.\(^{29}\) What he calls the ‘erotic’ refers to the transgression of these boundaries in such a way as to engender a momentary experience of being as undivided. The subject is temporarily dissolved within what Bataille calls ‘continuity’ of being. There are no oppositions, limits or boundaries in this undifferentiated state.

Bataille views sexual intercourse as erotic because it contains an element of violence – the lover strips the beloved of their sense of self by violating the boundaries of their being. Bataille reads the result of this violation – orgasm – as an instant in which divided consciousness gives way to an immersion in continuous, undivided being.\(^{30}\)

Bataille’s account of sexual eroticism is explicitly gendered – it is centred on a male lover who penetrates a female beloved in order to trigger his own self-loss in orgasm – as critics have pointed out.\(^{31}\) Bataille suggests that the lover cannot recognise the transgressiveness of his actions in himself, but needs another who registers this and represents it for him: ‘a man cannot usually feel that a law is violated in his own person and that is why he expects a woman to feel confused, even if she only pretends to do so; otherwise he would be unaware of any violation’.\(^{32}\) This situation is comparable to Bataille’s account of sacrifice, in which the assembled spectators vicariously experience self-loss by witnessing the killing of the victim and identifying with its transformation from life (or a state of discontinuous being) to death (union with the continuous being of the universe). Carolyn Dean writes ‘the [sacrificial] spectacle is a simulation of self-loss which feels real, a mimetic reproduction of an experience that can only be experienced through an imaginary identification with the victim’.

The erotic act works along the same lines: as the lover violates the self of the beloved, he identifies with her self-loss and experiences it as his own. The beloved has a representational role in Bataille’s version of eroticism. As Judith Surkis writes, ‘[the] image of the beloved is, paradoxically, transparent, a window onto a world of

limitless being […] Continuous being arises as a possibility only when seen through the transparency of the beloved; she renders limitlessness to the lover’. By registering the transgression of her own boundaries, the woman functions as what Bataille calls an ‘erotic object’ – a paradoxical object that represents for the lover a state in which the division of subject and object is no longer sustained.

The sequence presents Paulo’s psychological experience of heterosexual sex as dominated by fantasized sexual activity with a boy. An initial reading might suggest that the film reiterates its conception of sexual identity as object-choice: same-sex desire overrides his attempts at heterosexual (re)orientation. However, paying closer attention to the use of mise-en-scène and montage gestures towards a version of Bataillean eroticism, described above. The film achieves this by presenting the spectator with three different types of shot. Firstly, a series of shots show what might be understood as diegetic ‘reality’, where Paulo is alone with his lover. Secondly, Darci’s presence is suggested when the camera approaches the couple from behind the bedstead. Moments later, Darci is shown peering through the rails. Then, Darci is shown to have replaced the woman in the sexual act itself – Darci is an object imagined to be within the external world. These shots are frequently differentiated from the first kind of shot using translucent coverings over the lens, and lighting that is either noticeably greener, or diffuse. Thirdly, the film presents a series of shots of Darci’s face in close-up – his eyes, his lips, and on two occasions as a series of rapid shots displaying Darci’s face from different angles (figs. 48 to 53). Here, Darci’s face is shot against a dark background and seems abstracted from the film. These shots suggest that Darci dominates Paulo’s interior thoughts to the extent that he imagines

34 Surkis, ‘No Fun and Games Until Someone Loses an Eye’, p. 21.
the boy to have certain agency in his own right; arguably, Darci is fantasized as possessing Paulo, in the form of a controlling subject. These three shot-types are brought into contrast with each other as the film cuts back and forth between them, a process that speeds up as the sequence progresses. Here, the film relays a series of contradictory statements to the spectator through montage. On the one hand, Darci’s presence in the scene is contrasted with Darci’s presence in Paulo’s mind’s eye. This creates a contrast between a version of Darci as an object of desire (Darci as object) and a version of Darci that dominates Paulo’s interior thoughts, where Paulo imagines himself to be possessed or controlled by the boy (Darci as subject). On the other hand, shots of Darci as an imagined object external to Paulo are contrasted with shots of the diegetic ‘reality’ where Darci is entirely absent – this opposes diegetic ‘reality’ to an ‘imaginary’ scenario. Arguably, part of a subject’s existence as a subject is the capacity to differentiate between what is presumed to be reality, and what is imagined. So, the film presents the spectator with a series of oppositions that can be shown to determine different aspects of the subject’s existence: the opposition of subject to object, and the opposition of what is imagined to what is taken as reality.

These irreconcilable perspectives become problematic as the sequence progresses. By opposing what is ‘really’ there with what is only imagined, Darci is both (imagined) object of desire, and (imagined) controlling subject: this posits Darci as simultaneously subject and object. Distinguishing between an exterior object and an interior subject equates the imagined presence of Darci with reality – both are external events to Paulo – which collapses the difference between what is ‘real’ and what is

36 Although the use of ‘reality’ and ‘imagined’ here suggests the orthographically similar orders of the psyche that Lacan develops – the ‘Real’ and the ‘Imaginary’ – they are not commensurable. For a discussion of the Imaginary order, see Chapter 2. The Real can be understood as that which resists the attempts of the Imaginary to image the world, and the attempts of the Symbolic to symbolise it – aspects of experience which cannot be thought or imagined. Lapsley and Westlake, *Film Theory*, p. 69.
‘imagined’ (this holds true insofar as it seems Paulo has difficulty distinguishing what is really exterior to him from what he imagines to be exterior). Darci serves in the capacity of an erotic object in this sequence, as he illustrates to Paulo the transgression or collapse of the oppositional logic that sustains and informs the subject. The divisions that define the discontinuous subject are set up as a series of contradictions – if what is ‘real’ is distinguished from what is ‘imagined’, then Darci is paradoxically subject and object, conversely, by sustaining a difference between subject and object, the film collapses the difference between imaginary objects and reality. Arguably, the brief shot of Paulo’s climax suggests that Paulo himself reached orgasm (undifferentiated being) when faced with Darci’s multiplied and ambiguous appearance in the world.

The woman plays an important role in the erotic aspects of the sequence. She enhances the sense that Paulo is transgressing a socially-sanctioned heterosexual identity; furthermore, by causing Paulo to project his preferred (male) object onto her as an imagined presence, she effectively enables his momentary dissolution in continuous (non-binary) being. This scene suggests a view of sexual identity as something that is employed as part of the erotic experience (used to escalate the breakdown of the subject) – a notion that undermines the idea that sexual identity is fixed or static. Furthermore, Paulo seems to resist sexual categorization in binary terms. Who he ‘is’, in terms of sexual identity, cannot be reduced to the object with whom he has sex nor the object that he 'really' desires: neither heterosexual because he desires a boy, nor exclusively homosexual, because a woman plays an important part in intensifying the erotic dimension to his sexual experience and generating his
orgasm. By challenging the notion that sexual identity be understood purely within a binary hetero/homo model, Paulo can be considered a queer figure in this sense.

**Censorship and the Gender Switch**

Although *Uma verdadeira história de amor* ostensibly deals with Paulo’s desire for a young boy, the final scene attempts to efface all traces of homosexuality from the film by exposing Darci as a girl in disguise. Moreno suggests that despite the final scene, ‘a platéia já se envolveu, refletiu’ and would confront the uncomfortable questions evoked by the depiction of desire, whether oriented towards a homo- or heterosexual object, as a force that drives Paulo to leave his fiancée; he goes on to suggest that Darci’s revelation in fact allows the film to address homosexuality as a serious topic, given the censorial demands of the time. In other words, Paulo’s homosexuality must effectively be sacrificed in order for it to be addressed, as Darci’s concealed gender enables the film to deny that it ever really engages with the subject. The final scene also links homosexuality to the inauthenticity of Darci’s gender. It suggests that Darci’s disguise inculcated within Paulo a fraudulent sexuality: by revealing her ‘true’ gender the film concomitantly underlines the truth of Paulo’s ‘real’ heterosexual desire. Paulo’s identity as a heterosexual male is ostensibly reinforced, as he pursues his desired object when all outward signs indicate Darci to be a boy. The film gilds heterosexuality with authenticity and marks homosexuality out as heterosexuality’s counterfeit other – a somewhat flawed strategy to circumvent (heterosexist) censorship, as it enforces heterosexist ideology in the process.

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37 Ibid.
Two aspects trouble the reinscription of heterosexist values in the final scene. Firstly, the suggestion that Paulo is ‘really’ heterosexual cannot be squared with the inherent alienation of (homo)sexual identity as suggested via the mirror, nor is it true to suggest that Paulo had a homosexual identity that is then disproved or reversed in film’s final moments (the erotic play of taboo and transgression characterizing his sexual experience gestured towards his status as queer, as discussed above). More importantly, however, this final scene contains an element of reflexivity: Darci turns at the last minute to expose herself to the camera. The lynchpin of the film’s attempts to appease the censors – Darci’s ‘revelation’ as female – is marked out by the film as a performance explicitly directed at the viewer. This draws attention to the limits enforced by the censors while at the same time suggesting that those limits are artificial. This compromises the attempt to obscure the film’s homosexual content because it leaves a homosexual relationship as the prohibited but nevertheless desired narrative scenario. The film signals a (constructed) limit to what may be shown, which implicitly invokes the possibility of its transgression As Bataille says in another context, ‘the limit is only there to be overreached’. So, *Uma verdadeira história de amor*’s final scene reproduces heterosexist ideology but on uneasy foundations. Its reflexive component tacitly invites the spectator to read against the grain.

The mechanics of the final scene are also in keeping with the film’s general representation of Paulo’s sexual identity as queer: although he seems to come to terms with a series of ‘true’ sexual identities, these epiphanies always include an element which demystifies or destabilizes fixed sexual identity itself. In each case, the film uses elements of mise-en-scène and montage, alongside Darci as an ambiguously

gendered object of desire, to compromise the suggestion that Paulo is easily understood as hetero- or homosexual. To continue an investigation into how pornochanchada negotiates same-sex desire and male identity, the analysis will now move on to discuss two similar cases where the male protagonist himself is figured as a desired object: Nos embalos de Ipanema and Corpo devasso.

Objectification and Male Prostitution in Nos embalos de Ipanema and Corpo devasso

Both films devote their narrative to the subject of male prostitution; both protagonists are ostensibly heterosexual men who sell sex to both men and women. Some details on how male prostitution is treated in this chapter will be provided to frame the discussion. Lee Edelman draws on comments by Lacan to suggest that ‘the display of the male body as display, the inscription of the male body in the realm of representation, registers […] as intrinsically effeminizing […] in a culture that naturalizes maleness and situates femaleness in the place of representation’.³⁹ Edelman’s remarks imply that male identity is disturbed when maleness is presented as a performance, which resonates with similar comments made by Nestór Perlongher in his study of the male prostitute, or michê. Perlongher defines the michê in terms of ‘prostituição viril’ to differentiate him from the other kind of male prostitute common in Brazil, the travestí, who ‘cobra do macho por sua representação artificial da feminilidade’. Here, Perlongher underlines how the michê presents a masculine identity which he sells to homosexual men.⁴⁰ In the prostitution he discusses, the homosexual client usually pays to act out the fantasy that he is being penetrated by an

⁴⁰ Perlongher, O Negócio do ‘michê’, p. 18.
active macho. Michês may have had girlfriends – or they may have invented them in order to increase their marketability as a virile macho. As with gender identity, the michê raises the possibility that sexual identity is merely a performance that can be bought and sold – a simulation determined by the desire of the paying client. Again, this is not to suggest that michês do not have fixed sexual identities, or that they make immediately evident that sexual identity is a matter of social construction. Rather, their existence as commodities casts doubt over any professed identity, since it is sexual and gender identity on which the michê relies in order to attract clients. It will be argued that Nos embalos de Ipanema and Corpo devasso both work to shut off the possibility of a performed identity by setting up the male identity in terms of the ‘natural’; however, the limits of this become clear as both films try to preserve male identity with their recourse to reflexivity.

The narrative of Nos embalos de Ipanema is concerned with Toquinho’s forays into the world of male prostitution, and it details his dealings with two wealthy middle-aged clients – a man, André, and a woman, Dona Flora. Surfing at Ipanema Beach with his friend, Toquinho comes across a young woman, Patricia, who agrees to meet him later on for casual sex. Toquinho initially lacks the ‘grana’ to pay for a motel, but by chance he is approached by Das Bocas, a pimp who arranges for him to entertain André. Although this encounter forces Toquinho to miss his first date with Patricia, Toquinho manages to obtain funds for a motel and has sex with Patricia the following night. André’s finances are repeatedly exploited by Toquinho – part of the latter’s scheming includes obtaining money for Toquinho’s mother to undergo an appendectomy. André eventually realizes that Toquinho is only exploiting him for money, at which point he withdraws his financial support. Toquinho is then directed
by Das Bocas to Dona Flora, although various misunderstandings result in Toquinho becoming the subject of a bidding war between Dona Flora and another woman. At the end of the film, Toquinho returns to Ipanema Beach to reunite with his girlfriend, Verinha. Exemplified in the final shot, money – bound inextricably to romance and desire – motivates each character and determines each relationship within the film.

Toquinho is presented as heterosexual; he only embarks on a sexual relationship with another man in order to have sex with women. The film suggests that he is fairly secure in his sexual identity, as it is never really challenged or upset through his various sexual experiences. Although the film contains a series of sequences of simulated sex between Toquinho and various women, the only sequence of homosexual sex is not actually shown on-screen – this point will now be discussed in relation to sexual identity. Toquinho agrees to meet with André, who cooks him a lavish meal and promises to fund his participation in foreign surf-contests, only to suggest they spend the night together. Toquinho accepts, and at 27.30 André makes his intentions physical. When he moves in to kiss Toquinho, the surfer raises a copy of the American pornographic magazine *Hustler* to obscure André’s attentions from the camera (figs. 55 and 57). The magazine serves a diegetic purpose. It acts as a supplement which allows Toquinho to stimulate artificial sexual arousal for André while remaining ‘really’ heterosexual. It also justifies any homosexual desire he might actually experience as arising as a result of the magazine – literally concealing it behind a heterosexual screen. This sequence can be seen as an attempt to secure the notion that Toquinho’s heterosexual identity is fixed by coding desiring activity as ‘really’ heterosexual in nature. His gesture also seems to be in keeping with a tendency in *pornochanchada* to imply homosexual activity via innuendo. Dennison
and Shaw note that such films might often stage scenarios that appear to involve homosexual activity but are soon after revealed to be innocent – they suggest that these risqué situations were often incidental to the plot but nevertheless included for the sake of comedy, or to see if they could get past the censors. Unlike this implied (but ultimately absent) homosexuality, Toquinho’s action clearly conceals a homosexual kiss, which marks homosexuality as the unshowable other to heterosexuality. In this sense, Toquinho’s action (raising the magazine) might be considered a response to the threat of censorship. Antônio Calmon openly acknowledges that censorship was a determining factor for some of the film’s content – he states in one interview that ‘D. Flora é uma bicha. Virou mulher no filme porque seria difícil fazê-la passar pela censura enquanto homossexual’. In this respect, Toquinho’s gesture works to reaffirm his heterosexuality, while securing heterosexist ideology by obstructing the display of homosexual activity as per the demands of the censors.

The gesture also makes a direct address to the spectator. This has two consequences – firstly, by implicitly suggesting that the concealment of homosexual activity is necessary to placate the censors while at the same time highlighting this concealment as a performed or constructed action, the film signals the limits that have been imposed on it and codes them as artificial restrictions (in a comparable though far more obvious fashion to the final moments of Uma verdadeira história de amor). Secondly, Toquinho’s reflexive gesture illustrates the point that he affirms his heterosexual identity only by drawing the spectator’s attention to his performance itself. This suggests that the spectator is only assured of the authenticity (the ‘truth’)

41 Dennison and Shaw, Popular Cinema, p. 163.
of his heterosexual identity through an action performed for the sake of the viewer – in other words, the film shows ‘authenticity’ to be conferred by the avowedly inauthentic or performed. Of course, Toquinho’s sexual preference is never in doubt, as he only has sex with men for money. Nevertheless, his attempts to secure heterosexual identity expose that identity to be constructed. His actions undermine the idea that heterosexuality is the ‘natural’ form of sexual identity, which problematizes the heterosexist notion that sexual identity is fixed or immutable. It also troubles the figuration of homosexuality as the artificial or unnatural other to heterosexuality – a somewhat ironic consequence, given that the gesture seems to have been made necessary due to the (heterosexist) regulations of censorship.

The film does not show any of the actual sexual activity between the two men. Instead, it splices a short interview segment between André’s seduction of Toquinho and their post-coital conversation. These documentary-style interview segments intermittently puncture the film’s principal narrative and present the spectator with an investigation of Toquinho’s life by a journalist. They contrast with the main narrative, which works with the stylistic codes of pornochanchada (for example, fairly naturalistic acting and dialogue presented through shot/reverse shot), instead they present the characters of the film as ‘real’ interviewees. The segment in question is shot in an exterior public location; it shifts André momentarily into the public sphere.

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43 The interview footage brings with it the implication that the narrative events ‘really’ took place, which in turn allows the erotic comedy to offer something of a social commentary by pointing to the unseen emotional toll that the lifestyle of the ‘garotos de programa’ takes on friends and family members. As such, the interview segments might also be seen as evidence of his desire to produce a film ‘ligado à realidade das pessoas que vivem neste país’ – one that recognises that prostitution ‘é consequência da tragédia de um país que não tem ainda um projeto político próprio’. ‘Nos embalos de Ipanema’, untitled interview, Folha de São Paulo, Cinemateca Brasileira Archive, São Paulo. As Miriam Alencar recounts, after participating in the Cinema Novo project, Calmon ‘se transformou num maldito do próprio meio em que desenvolveu seu trabalho’ and rejected radical cinema for success at the box office. Nevertheless, short sequences such as the one discussed suggest that Calmon did not dispense wholesale with his political beliefs. Miriam Alencar, ‘Antônio Calmon não faz pornochanchadas. Faz comédias eróticas’, Jornal do Brasil, 26th June 1976.
and sets up a contrast with the homosexual activity going on in private (fig. 58). When André is asked about his relationship with Toquinho he denies all knowledge of the young man. Arguably, confirming some kind of relationship with Toquinho (excluding a familial tie) might attract a suspicion of homosexuality, given André’s circumstances as an older unmarried man. Here he affirms a heterosexual identity in public, but this is posited as false because of the ‘truth’ of the homosexual activity that has just been presented to the spectator. The film orchestrates the shot-types to suggest that what André does at home will determine his sexual identity as ‘really’ homosexual: his (private) sexual behaviour determines his (public) sexual identity. Not only does this segment therefore consolidate the notion of a fixed sexual identity, but the idea itself is naturalized when the film emphasizes that the sequence has a certain degree of ’authenticity’ to it as ‘realistic’ interview footage.

Again, reflexivity troubles the various heterosexist assumptions set out in this sequence – this time, the film inadvertently exposes its own constructedness by including a microphone within the shot to signal its status as interview footage. The segment undercuts its own pretensions for authenticity: it indicates its difference from the main narrative – the sense that it is ‘real’ – using a sign that immediately also points to its status as an artificial construction. This is comparable with Toquinho’s gesture above, insofar as the ‘reality’ of his heterosexual identity was produced via an acknowledgement of its artifice. Thanks to its unintentional self-reference, the film sets up the public sphere as an artificial space in which it is not possible to affirm or produce any kind of sexual identity as ‘authentic’, ‘real’ or ‘true’ at all: while André might claim for heterosexuality – a claim the viewer knows to be false – the suggestion that he is ‘really’ homosexual is also (accidentally) coded as artificial or
false. In this way, the unwitting reflexivity of the sequence suggests that sexual behaviour cannot correspond to a sexual identity (because the film suggests that all identities affirmed in the public sphere are artificial). Sexual desire and sexual activity might indicate a preference, but they cannot determine an identity as an immutable ‘truth’ of the subject. The film’s self-reference means that the articulation of heterosexist assumptions takes place on slippery ground: like Toquinho’s gesture, the interview segment would seem to denaturalize the heterosexist notion that individuals possess a fixed sexual identity which determines the scope of their sexual desires. In this sense, both Toquinho’s gesture and the interview segment are scenes in *Nos embalos de Ipanema* which appear to consolidate aspects of heterosexist ideology while eroding them in the same move.

It might be argued that *Nos embalos de Ipanema* exposes its protagonist to same-sex desire in order to prove that his identity is secure enough to stand up to any threatening desire, homosexual or otherwise (a kind of test of manliness). This is counterproductive: the film’s use of form actually demonstrates the constructedness of male sexual identity, while pointing to the limitations of heterosexist ideology itself. Like *Uma verdadeira história de amor*, the reflexive element opens the film up to the possibility of reading against the grain; it leads to a view of sexual identity that might be described as queer insofar as it suggests that sexual identity itself is a construction that inadequately describes the reality of the subject’s experience of desire. So far, this chapter has shown how male objectification complicates male sexual identity in two different ways – the first, where the supposedly heterosexual man took another (somewhat ambiguous) male as his object of desire (*Uma verdadeira história de amor*), the second, where the supposedly heterosexual man was an object of desire
himself (*Nos embalos de Ipanema*). The analysis will now turn to *Corpo devasso* in order to explore male objectification from a different angle, as the male protagonist of Sternheim’s film must actively negotiate threats made to his masculinity that arise from his status as an object of desire. This will continue the basic argument set out in this chapter – that *pornochanchada* presents a series of subjects who de-essentialize male identity when they circulate themselves on the sexual market. The chapter will turn to an analysis of Sternheim’s film presently – a narrative summary will now be offered.

**Deviant Objects in *Corpo devasso***

*Corpo devasso* deals with Beto, a rural labourer who prostitutes himself to men and women; like Toquinho, he is assumed to have a heterosexual identity throughout the film. Nevertheless, while Beto appears to be an idealized masculine figure of the *macho* type, aspects of the film’s narrative and form inadvertently suggest that he is actually a character shot through with ambivalence. The film begins with the departure of Beto from the rural interior to São Paulo. He is forced to seek a new life in the city after he is discovered in the bedroom of a wealthy farmer’s daughter, who accuses him of rape. With no qualifications or training to speak of, Beto is unable to find work until he comes to the attention of Lygia, a photographer and wife of a wealthy but perpetually absent husband, who employs him as a model. The two begin a passionate sexual relationship that sees Lygia install Beto in her social life and maintain him financially. This relationship soon ends, and Beto works as a *michê* with a fellow migrant. A young homosexual intellectual falls in love with Beto and provides him with accommodation and food, until Beto moves in with a woman, Mônica, who gives him lodgings and board, and finds him a job in a bookstore.
Mónica is then forced to travel to Europe; meanwhile, Beto offends an influential ex-client and loses his job. After he briefly returns to prostitution, Beto then is taken on as a manservant by a sadomasochistic (female) lawyer but ends up having sex with her daughter. The lawyer reports Beto to the police and he is sent to jail for the charge of rape made by the farmer’s daughter at the beginning of the film. A second female lawyer secures his release, only to procure his (sexual) services.

Throughout the film, Beto offers himself up to others as a sexual object. His activities consist almost entirely of making himself available to men and women in exchange for financial security; as a result, he is effectively dependent on his desirability to survive. Relying on his status as a sexual object arguably puts him in a position that deviates from the construction of heterosexual masculinity under patriarchy – where men must lead as active subjects and women must follow as the passive complement. In light of this sexual objectification, the film repeatedly attempts to preserve Beto’s identity as a heterosexual masculine subject – as will be shown, these efforts are arguably compromised due to specific elements of narrative and form. It is important to point out that the film’s presentation of Beto has similarities to the representation of men in a global context. In his famous study, ‘Masculinity as Spectacle’, Steve Neal responds to Mulvey's 1975 article (discussed in the Introduction) and describes how classic Hollywood narrative cinema spectacularized the male body just as much as the female, but employed a variety of techniques to ward off the possibility of its eroticisation. These included their participation in violent or ‘action’ scenes, as well as the mediation of the male body via the ‘look’ of other characters. In other words, the male’s status as an object of desire must be denied by the film itself in order to

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preserve the notion of the (heterosexual) male as an active subject. A question of the spectator’s ‘look’ returns in Richard Dyer’s comments on Western images of male bodies that had a clearer erotic component – the male pin-up. Writing, like Neal, in response to Mulvey, Dyer notes that static images of men, as ‘looked at’ objects, ‘[do] violence to the codes of who look and who is looked at (and how), and some attempt is instinctively made to counteract this violation’.45 In order to restore the dominance of the male subject, his ‘look’ would be directed above the camera, or ‘beyond’ it – ‘the female model’s gaze stops at [the camera], the male’s looks right through it’.46 In line with Euro-American trends of male representation, *Corpo devasso* also employs various tactics that aim to restore and stabilize Beto’s identity following his circulation on the sexual market.

The attempt to secure Beto’s identity occurs in an obvious way when Beto meets Lygia. Lygia compares Beto with her ex-lover: ‘o Renato tem todos as neuroses da cidade grande, da megalópolis. Você não – você é diferente, você é espontâneo, você tem a força da terra, da natureza’.47 This sets up Beto as a naïve ‘caipira’ (a country bumpkin) whose virility is matched somewhat incongruously with his purity. In this respect, Beto can be seen as a version of the countryside dweller that was a stock character of *pornochanchada*. As Dennison and Shaw point out, producers of *pornochanchada* frequently demonstrated a fascination with the rural interior of Brazil, particularly its association with sexual innocence and backwardness – ‘characters from the sticks are portrayed as gullible and naïve alongside their carioca and paulista counterparts, but by the end of the film, they have usually “come of age”

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47 *Corpo Devasso*, dir. by Alfredo Sternheim, 27.30.
through an (admittedly superficial) exploration of their repressed sexuality”. Importantly, Beto diverges from the stock ‘caipira’ character in the fact that he begins the film as a sexually experienced figure, and yet still maintains this ‘purity’ throughout his tribulations in the city – as one character later comments, ‘apesar da depravação’. This suggests that he can transcend the deviance of the city by virtue of his maleness and the sheer strength of his heterosexuality, even as he takes part in homosexual prostitution, group sex, sadomasochism, and so on.

Lygia’s occupation as an amateur photographer arguably affords the film an opportunity to present a sequence of mild or soft-core erotica as the couple take photographs, while celebrating and naturalizing traditional gender roles (particularly clear in several of the photographs, where Lygia’s submissive position with respect to Beto is evident). The use of montage in the sequence that begins at 24.05 also sets up a contrast between photographic representation and diegetic reality – particularly clear when the last shot of the sequence literally becomes a photograph that is then shown to the spectator. The film secures Beto as non-representational and ‘natural’ here via comparison with his photographic representation (figs. 59, 60 and 61). The film also produces an instance of reflexivity, as it includes the photographic camera within its presentation of the photography session. The spectator is shown shots of the camera taking photographs followed by shots from the perspective of the photographic camera itself. At points, then, the filming camera is aligned with the photographic camera; this means that when the film presents a shot of the camera taking a photograph, it effectively films itself filming. This unwittingly draws the spectator towards the production processes of *Corpo devasso* itself, and underscores the

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supposedly non-representational scenario as a representation. Much like the pin-ups discussed by Dyer, the film negotiates the contradictions surrounding Beto’s objectification with an appeal to Beto’s ‘real’ masculinity. However, by undermining the difference between Beto and his picture, the film points to Beto’s masculinity as representational and artificial, rather than a natural quality. In this sequence, it is arguable that reflexivity works in a similar capacity to its effects in *Nos embalos de Ipanema*: at the same time securing an idea of identity as fixed and ‘natural’, while undermining it.

**Homosexual Prostitution and Male Difference**

A second challenge to Beto’s identity arrives from his engagement in homosexual prostitution. *Corpo devasso* is similar to *Nos embalos de Ipanema* with respect to its presentation of homosexuality in relation to the male protagonist, as it emphasizes that Beto will only have sex with men for money. Beto’s experiences with male clients are largely contained within one extended sequence that runs from 32.47 to 40.00 – the repetition of shots of Beto receiving payment point to a series of homosexual encounters, while underscoring their transactional status. On the other hand, the film presents Beto’s experiences with heterosexual ‘prostitution’ as a series of sexual and romantic encounters that includes financial support on the side. While the film does not conceal the fact that Beto gains financially from every relationship he has with women, it seems less willing to call attention to the aspect of remuneration in its presentation of his heterosexual relationships. Arguably, the difference in presentation of homosexual and heterosexual prostitution aims to preserve Beto’s heterosexual identity by excusing his homosexual activity as merely the consequence of his financial circumstances. The immediate drawback of this approach is that Beto’s
identity, his body and his virility are clearly figured as commodities, particularly during sequences of homosexual prostitution – obvious when Beto’s *michê*-friend recommends he change his appearance or ‘layout’ to attract more (male) customers, when Beto stands in front of a shop window and is admired by passers-by, and when he grabs his crotch as part of a display for a potential client. In line with Edelman and Perlongher’s remarks on the display of the male body, this posturing seems to undercut his masculine identity: the element of performance or artifice intrinsic to Beto’s display – targeted at homosexual men – opens up questions of whether or not it is ‘real’ or just for the benefit of the client.

Further complications for his identity arise owing to the fact that *Corpo devasso* presents the spectator with actual (simulated) homosexual activity, unlike *Uma verdadeira história de amor* and *Nos embalos de Ipanema*. At 33.52, the spectator is shown a scene in which Beto penetrates another man. At least two-thirds of the screen remains in shadow throughout this sequence. Although it is reasonable to suppose that the dim lighting is a way of limiting the amount of homosexual sex actually presented on screen, it could also be suggested that the film uses this lighting to imply the interaction between the two men as reduced to the bare bones of a commercial transaction. The mise-en-scène is dominated by a stark difference between light and dark; suggestive of conflicting binary opposites (a similar use of chiaroscuro to that discussed in the analysis of *O menino e o vento*) which could reflect the nature of the relationship between Beto and his client as seller and buyer – Beto is reduced to his role as providing sexual services, and the client to his role as purchasing them. This would underscore the point that Beto’s involvement in homosexual prostitution is
purely commercial and nothing more, and thus it would serve as part of the film’s efforts to assure his heterosexual identity.

However, the use of shadow to foreground this dualism also has the effect of inadvertently emphasizing the two men as visually similar – David Cardoso and the actor playing the part of Beto’s client are particularly alike in physiology (hair, skin colour and build). On the one hand, this could indicate that both are effectively similar in the sense that they are both participants in a sexual and financial transaction. On the other, it underlines the perhaps obvious fact that Beto is desired by another man – the transaction itself involves the exchange of money for a sexual experience in which male same-sex desire is realized. As was explained in the Introduction, in order to maintain heterosexuality in a position of dominance, a heterosexist society promotes the assumption that desire ‘naturally’ passes between binary terms (man/woman, self/other, same/different) that are considered distinct.49 Same-sex desire causes a degree of instability in this system because it contradicts the idea that the ‘same’ (male) always desires ‘difference’ (female). Highlighting an internal difference within the category of ‘man’ compromises the purity or consistency of the category – ‘man’ cannot be held up as indicating a group that always desires its opposite (‘woman’) but is instead fractured. Arguably, representing homosexual prostitution as a purely commercial exchange leaves heterosexist ideology with the conceptual problem of two otherwise similar men who desire different objects. This could be seen as undermining the cohesiveness of ‘man’/‘woman’ as complementary binary terms, and so making a challenge to the assumption that desire ‘naturally’ flows between them. In other words, if it is accepted that the film (visually) equalizes the two men while

affirming the differences in their desired object-choice, then it follows that this sequence inadvertently suggests that heterosexual desire cannot be seen as the ‘natural’ (privileged) configuration of desire, but just one configuration among many. In this way, the attempt to reassure the viewer that Beto is heterosexual by reducing their relationship to a simple economic transaction would seem to accidentally put a key assumption of heterosexist ideology into question.

Heterosexist ideology works around the challenge presented by same-sex desire by coding homosexuality as a deviation or perversion from the norm – as other – as discussed in the Introduction. Strategies designed to secure Beto’s status as a masculine, heterosexual subject converge with the othering of homosexuality when he returns to prostituting himself to men after he loses his job. He picks up a client in a park - an effeminate *bicha* – but, unusually for Beto, he cannot sustain an erection. His client complains that Beto is unable to perform, ‘olha aqui, meu amor - eu tô te pagando, sabia? E o mínimo que eu posso querer é um pouco de vibração’. In an outburst of rage, Beto hits the client and throws him across the room. He shouts, ‘pensa que a gente é maquina, eh?’ Beto rails against his objectification – his reduction to a machine – by the men who pay him for sex, rejecting his circulation within the sexual market. His outburst asserts his subjecthood while attributing all the problems that are raised by male prostitution to the sexual interactions he has with men. Here, homosexual prostitution is created as fundamentally different from Beto’s relationships with women: he claims that only men treat him as a machine-like object, only men make him do things that he would rather not, only men use him without concern for his status as a person. Beto implies that homosexuals deviate from

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50 *Corpo Devasso*, 1.05.00.
51 *Corpo Devasso*, 1.05.32.
‘conventional’ behaviour because they reduce the men they desire to objects or ‘machines’ for sexual pleasure. This implies that same-sex desire leads to unethical or dehumanizing behaviour (it is coded as an inherently perverse or erroneous form of desire). In turn, this sets homosexual men up as a mere deviation from heterosexuality (other), and so restores ‘man’ as a category that ‘normally’ or ‘naturally’ desires its opposite. Same-sex desire is effectively marked as pathological and its troubling capacity concealed or obscured. In this way, Beto’s outburst saves himself from the taint of passivity that comes with objectification while reinforcing previously troubled elements of heterosexist ideology at the same time.

His actions are also contradictory. Firstly, by affirming heterosexual identity in such a violent way, he implies that his own identity is dependent on the gender of his clients for its stability – having sex with men threatens it, having sex with women affirms it. This indicates that Beto’s identity is in part determined externally by an other, rather than existing as a purely internal quality. Arguably, this returns him to the problem that male prostitution originally raised – identity as unfixed, socially constructed and artificial. Dyer and Neale suggest that objectification problematizes dominant forms of male identity due to the implication of passivity; it is clear that their remarks resonate with Beto’s attempt to assert himself via a rejection of male objectification. His refusal is further undermined by the glaring fact that Beto is financially supported by women throughout the remainder of the film – remaining a sexual object – which troubles his claim that only homosexuals treat men like machines (objects) by suggesting that women do, too. Furthermore, it is true that the majority of the women who support Beto treat him with compassion and care, but so does Raul, who falls madly in love with him. Distinguishing between ‘good’ heterosexual prostitution and
‘bad’ homosexual prostitution cannot be sustained on grounds of objectification nor on the treatment that Beto receives. Every instance where Beto is viewed or used as a sexual object by women would seem to trouble the distinction he himself makes between heterosexuality and homosexuality, which would arguably lessen the sense that homosexuality is a pathological deviation from the heterosexual norm: this would suggest that, by prostituting himself to women, Beto inadvertently wears away at homosexuality’s coding as other. This could be argued as restoring the problem of homosexual difference – the return of an internal fracture to the category of ‘man’ – that was suggested as emerging during his experiences with male clients.

Beto does not demonstrate the kind of queerness that Paulo was shown to possess, nor does he lead to a troubling of the notion of sexual identity in the same way as Toquinho. Nevertheless, a queer critique can still be seen within Corpo devasso, where the film’s attempts to stabilize heterosexist ideas around identity and desire seem to come unstuck in their execution. At least, Beto’s identity is riddled with contradictions: he affirms himself as a masculine, heterosexual subject, which only leads to a continued existence as a sexual object, further exposing him to the possibility that his identity is a fabrication. Like Toquinho, his need to strongly reassert his heterosexuality arguably causes more problems than it solves – after all, if he had not assaulted his effeminate client, an audience might have assumed that he was, in fact, man enough to have sex with men without experiencing an identity crisis. In this sense, Corpo devasso would appear to illustrate how a heterosexist response to same-sex desire can often be more damaging to heterosexist ideology than the desire itself.
Same-Sex Desire and Queer Identities in *Os rapazes das calçadas*

The chapter will now explore several queer elements in *Os rapazes das calçadas*, a film that is distinct from the previous titles discussed in this chapter for the openness with which it explores homosexual subjects, homosexual prostitution, and the ‘homosexual underworld’. Furthermore, as indicated above, the film’s press release claims that it presents homosexual sex on-screen for the first time. Such uncensored representation of homosexual activity might have been a considerable source of visual pleasure for homosexual spectators; furthermore it is also arguable that a queer capacity is when the film combines representations of same-sex desire with reflexive form. Again, although this queer capacity is perhaps accidental, *Os rapazes das calçadas* suggests more clearly same-sex desire generates circumstances in which heterosexist assumptions around identity are problematized. The film consists of a series of vignettes that sketch out various relationships between loosely related characters. The majority of these relationships are centred on (sexual) desire – characters meet for sex, attempt to initiate sex, establish and break off romantic relations, and so on. There are a few exceptions to this – occasionally, *michês* actually mug their clients, rather than provide sexual services they promise. Fragments of pornography are interspersed between these vignettes: heterosexual and homosexual, simulated and explicit. The film’s narrative concerns Luis, an *entendido* who takes to the streets at night in order to find a boyfriend. He eventually romances a young

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53 This would be in common with the behaviour of the *michê* as mapped by Perlongher, who devotes a chapter to the relationship between violence and male prostitution. See Perlongher, *O negócio do michê*, p. 218.
54 Although some of the actors in the simulated pornography appear in the narrative segments (usually playing bit-parts as *michês*), it is reasonable to speculate that other pornographic films were spliced into *Os rapazes das calçadas* – one example could be the sequence in which a woman has sex with five men, as it is entirely unrelated to the narrative vignettes.
man, Marcus, although the relationship ends when Marcus’s parents find out about Luis. It is worth pointing out that the film does not clearly develop one single narrative thread to any great extent, and seems to relegate Luis’s struggles to the background. The film is able to present a wide variety of interactions between different individuals; this represents the ‘homosexual underworld’ as a network of shifting relations, pointing towards its status as a liminal, transient space within urban society.

The brief encounters of Os rapazes das calçadas provide an indication of how same-sex desire could challenge certain assumptions around identity. One example of this takes place when a client purchases the services of a young michê. During their sexual activity the client demands that the michê ‘vira!’ and take the passive role. The michê seems to resist penetration initially, but as he remains in the throes of passion throughout his struggle, it appears to be somewhat ambiguous or half-hearted; he eventually relents to the client’s demands. After they have had sex, the michê complains that he has been underpaid, ‘cara, eu fiz contigo o que eu não faço com ninguém’. The client replies ‘qual é garoto? Isso aí nunca foi zero kilômetros’ – as 'zero kilômetro' is a colloquial expression for virginity, his statement indicates that the michê has been penetrated before. The resistance put up by the michê can be read as a ruse employed to intensify sexual experience, but ultimately with a view to demanding a higher price. This affirms Perlongher’s comments that ‘quem acaba sendo sexualmente passivo se mostra inicialmente como ativo mais ou menos "virginal", para dobrar seu preço na hora da "viração"’.55 Here, same-sex desire generates a scenario in which male difference is shown to be socially constructed

55 Perlongher, O negócio do michê, p. 216.
rather than a natural fact – the michê employs signs of ‘active’ maleness (resistance to penetration) to imply a capacity for sexual passivity, and to ultimately bring about his adopting the role of the penetrated partner. The indeterminate status of the michê as ‘active’ or ‘passive’ man (whether or not his masculine identity is ‘real’), and the movement from one position or identity to the other, are both central to the commercial and libidinal transaction itself. In this way, the film presents the production of male difference via penetration as a commodity. It also suggests that the michê demonstrates a fluid form of male identity – a performance of both virility and submission – the constructedness of which is implicitly registered by the client due to the circulation of the michê on the sexual market.

The presentation of Luis also makes a similar correspondence between same-sex desire and (reworked) identity. Luis might be described as an entendido – he has a girlfriend and presents a masculine appearance, but spends much of the film hunting for romantic and sexual encounters with other men. Luis is played by a woman, Lady Francisco, who simulates maleness by strapping down her breasts and by sporting a moustache and wig; her lines are dubbed by André Filho. It is reasonable to suggest that Francisco was chosen in order to produce a sense of Luis’s difference from other men, as a homosexual. This carries an implicit assumption that women can imitate male homosexuals because male homosexuals are ‘really’ woman-like men. As discussed in Chapter 2, an entendido like Luis might seem to sidestep the stigma attached to homosexuality by concealing his same-sex desire behind a masculine public persona. Using a woman to interpret the role of an entendido would undermine

56 Unlike Uma Verdadeira História de Amor, it is not in any way plausible to suggest that the director uses a woman to play the part of Luis in order to conceal homosexuality or thwart censorship, given that the film features a panoply of other homosexual characters (not to mention a considerable amount of homosexual pornography).
this, as it points towards the traditional model’s equation of homosexuality with male femininity. To give the film some credit, the use of a male dubbing artist suggests that an attempt has been made to present a convincing illusion of masculinity. However, Francisco’s costuming often draws attention to its artificiality – for example, in one scene her chest straps are clearly visible, while in another Luis’s state of undress makes it obvious that his body is that of a woman, (fig. 64). So, not only does the choice of an actress imply that male homosexuality is inevitably feminizing, but it also gives rise to the implication that male homosexuals assert a second-rate masculine identity. Francisco’s performance presents the homosexual man as the feminized, artificial other to the non-performing, ‘natural’ heterosexual male by virtue of her own gender.

It is possible to suggest that Luis’s status as other is implicitly compromised when, thanks to same-sex desire, he is driven to make connections with other men. Luis cruises the streets for sexual encounters during the first few scenes of the film (figs. 62, 63 and 65). When he attempts to pick up a michê in the toilet of an arcade, the film draws the spectator’s awareness to the contrast between Luis’s fabricated appearance (whose false moustache is particularly noticeable) and the michê’s biological maleness (his penis). Here, the film’s reflexive commentary on his poor costuming draws the attention of the spectator to the fact that he is a man-played-by-a-woman, emphasizing his coding as an ‘artificial’ man, a failure of manliness, and so securing him as a homosexual other. However, juxtaposing Luis with the michê in order to affirm one set of values (michê is ‘real’/Luis is ‘fake’) also brings with it the possibility of interpreting them inversely. The michê, whose masculine identity might be a performance for the benefit of his clients, is brought into comparison with Luis,
who is taken to be a heterosexual man within the diegetic world. In this sense, Luis is ‘real’ and the michê is potentially ‘fake’. The film’s reflexive component, generated by the obviousness of Francisco’s drag, means that two interpretations of Luis’s identity emerge simultaneously. The juxtaposition codes Luis as ‘real’ and ‘fake’ at the same time – the ‘truth’ status of his manliness is ambivalent – he cannot therefore be figured coherently as the ‘false’ other to a ‘real’ heterosexual man in any clear sense. In a similar fashion to the sequence examined above, same-sex desire draws these two men together; film form then works to undermine heterosexist assumptions about male homosexuality by undermining homosexuality’s status as other, thereby producing figures who might arguably be described as queer.

**Conclusion: Manly Commodities, Accidental Queerness**

This chapter has examined how the intricate relations between same-sex desire, sexual identity and cinematic form play out in four examples of *pornochanchada*. The four films were shown to demonstrate inconsistencies in the dominant paradigms of sexual identity, discrepancies that could be linked to the attempt to evade censorship (*Uma verdadeira história de amor* and *Nos embalos de Ipanema*), to the need to affirm macho identity (*Corpo devasso*), and to the reinforcement of heterosexist ideas of homosexuality (*Os rapazes das calçadas*). In this sense, the queer aspects of each film are related to the ways in which the film secures the status quo, whether in making concessions to the censors (*Uma verdadeira história de amor*) or more unconsciously preserving a heterosexist view of sexuality (casting a woman as an entendido in *Os rapazes das calçadas*). As mentioned previously, Abreu suggests that ‘O sexo estava na cabeça de todo mundo nos anos 70 e [pornochanchadas] refletiam e comercializavam esse “clima” excitante’, a point also echoed by Dennison and Shaw.
-- these films sold sex to Brazilian audiences in a tame, commodified and even conservative form.\textsuperscript{57} True to this ethos, the first three films appear to sell audiences a reaffirmation of the virility, naturalness and security of the \textit{macho} identity via a daring glimpse at homosexuality. The queer elements discussed above would suggest that this reaffirmation is always compromised or undercut, to some extent. Following the comments by Abreu, Dennison and Shaw, it might be argued that the first three examples of \textit{pornochanchada} both resolve and bring about disturbances to dominant forms of male identity: they capitalize on the anxieties of heterosexual male spectators, perpetuating the need for the consumption of \textit{pornochanchada} as much as they claim to soothe the concerns of the spectators. Clearly, this is not the case for \textit{Os rapazes das calçadas}, which, as suggested earlier, is likely to have only been shown in specialist cinemas (it is possible to speculate that its audiences consisted largely of homosexual men, given the content and the explicit references homoeroticism in the promotional material).

Whereas Chapter 1 and 2 looked at films that explored ways in which the heterosexist social order might be challenged by queer subjects, Chapter 3 has examined films that seem far more complicit with the status quo. All four films considered in this chapter feature men who are marginalized by their interactions with same-sex desire yet affirm what appears at first glance to be a secure, fixed sexual identity: it is this engagement with the dominant model of sexual identity that provides them with a perhaps unintended subversive potential. In a comparable fashion with the films discussed so far, the queer elements in question arose chiefly through the use of reflexive form to represent same-sex desire, whether images of homosexual activity,

\textsuperscript{57} Abreu, \textit{O olhar pornô}, p. 76, Dennison and Shaw, \textit{Popular Cinema in Brazil}, p. 161
or images of men desiring other men. An appeal to the spectator is used to negotiate censorship in the first two films discussed; both *Uma verdadeira história de amor* and *Nos embalos de Ipanema* use reflexive elements in order to make viewers aware of what was not allowed to be shown on-screen. This is consonant with the positioning of the spectator in *pornochanchada* generally – Dennison and Shaw argue that watching *pornochanchadas* was often seen as an experience of transgressing the norms of daily life, in a fashion analogous to participation in carnival.58 The queer elements in *Corpo devasso* result in part from an attempt to assure the spectator that the protagonist is a ‘real’ man via reflexivity; this is similar to *Os rapazes das calçadas*: the film relies on the spectator picking up on Lady Francisco’s poor male drag as a visual gag suggesting the effeminacy of the *entendido* protagonist. It might be argued that, in different ways, each film incites the spectator to collude with the affirmation of conventional views on sexual identity. It is this ultimately ambiguous invitation – an invitation that allows an alternate reading or interpretation to be made of the film itself – that accidentally undercuts the films’ heterosexist assumptions and leaves their protagonists problematically queer.

58 They suggest that spectatorial enjoyment of *pornochanchada*’s ‘bad mannered, sluttish, utterly stupid’ vision of society might be thought of as a quiet rebellion against the dictatorship’s patriotic vision of Brazil as a modern, industrialized country founded on Catholic morality. Dennison and Shaw, *Popular Cinema*, p. 164.
Images for Chapter 3

Fig. 43  Fig. 44

Fig. 45  Fig. 46

Fig. 47  Fig. 48
Chapter 4

Bad Copies: Unfaithful Adaptation and Filial

Insubordination in *O beijo no asfalto*, *A casa assassinada* and *O casamento*

The final chapter of this thesis will extend the project’s investigation into same-sex desire and male identity by examining the representation of homosexuality in relation to the adaptation of literary texts for the screen. It will analyse a series of films from the 1970s and early 1980s: Bruno Barreto’s *O beijo no asfalto* (1981), Paulo César Saraceni’s *A casa assassinada* (1974) and Arnaldo Jabor’s *O casamento* (1973). The first and the third films are both adaptations of pieces with the same name by the infamous playwright Nelson Rodrigues, written in 1960 and 1966 respectively; the second film is based on Lúcio Cardoso’s *Crônica da casa assassinada* (1959). Each film features characters that experience same-sex desire or claim some form of homosexual identity. They are also united in addressing, to a certain extent, the relationship between homosexuality and the social order, often presenting homosexuality as a symbol of the decay of paternal authority. Finally, each film might be described as a ‘faithful’ adaptation of the source text – the use of this term will be discussed shortly. Current scholarship on the films in question tends to suggest that they take a conservative stance on issues of sexuality.¹ This chapter will argue that the adaptation of homosexuality works in a comparable fashion in each case to undermine

heterosexist ideology. It is argued that, in the case of *A casa assassinada* and *O casamento*, the subversive capacity of the queer characters is tied to an undermining of the primacy of the original over the copy. This allows new forms of queer male subjectivity to emerge, comparable to the non-hierarchical modes of relation discussed in Chapter 2.

**The Films**

Ismail Xavier notes that a shift in the representation of the family in Brazilian cinema occurred in the late 1960s. A slew of films were produced that took the decline of the nuclear family as their subject matter – among others, he lists *A casa assassinada* and *O casamento*. These families were usually middle-class, and their demise was often, though not exclusively, brought about through the conflict between the rebellious younger generation and their conservative parents. This is a theme shared by all of the films discussed in this chapter, although it is more correct to say that *O beijo no asfalto* is concerned with the effects of homophobic persecution on the family itself. In each case, same-sex desire is shown to have a corrosive effect on traditional norms and values. Xavier goes on to point out that several of these films were produced by cinemanovistas who abandoned overt political commentary to make covert criticisms of the patriarchal ethos of the military government, as mentioned in the Introduction. He asserts that the implicit opposition of same-sex desire to the family unit affords these directors a chance to question the status quo. In this sense, same-sex desire

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arguably camouflages political critique – a reversal of the discussion elaborated in Chapter 1, where political critique tacitly sustained strong bonds of same-sex desire. This is not to say that the films in question are necessarily positive in their view of homosexuality. Indeed, as this chapter will argue, all three films walk a fine line between critiquing bourgeois ideology and affirming heterosexist values.

Certainly, Paulo César Saraceni and Arnaldo Jabor were important figures within the Cinema Novo movement. The former was responsible for Porto de caixas (1962), a significant film in the movement’s first phase, as well as O desafio (1966), an account of political apathy in response to the coup d’etat.5 In a similar vein, Jabor’s early output included A opinião pública (1967) which presented a critique of the conservativism of the middle-classes. Bruno Barreto was one of several young assistant directors, photographers and editors trained by Cinema Novo directors who then went on to produce his own films.6 But Barreto focused on mass-appeal over political critique.7 He was widely known for directing the smash hit Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos, which as of 2004 holds the record for the highest audience numbers for a Brazilian film.8 The differences between the filmmakers is clear: A Casa and O casamento demonstrate nonlinear narrative form and elements designed to estrange the spectator. Cardoso’s novel and Jabor’s novel both feature a complex, achronological narrative structure, which might have appealed to the sensibilities of directors who wished to uphold some of the tenets of the avant-garde – at least, a dislike of Hollywood stylistics, if not the overt political message or the concern with impoverishment that characterized much of Cinema Novo production. In contrast,

5 Johnson and Stam, Brazilian Cinema, pp. 33-35.
6 Johnson and Stam, Brazilian Cinema, p. 42.
7 He is similar in this respect to the less well-known Antônio Calmon – commencing his career in the production of political cinema then going on to direct popular fare himself.
8 Dennison and Shaw, Popular Cinema in Brazil, p. 174.
Barreto’s film is formally uncomplicated and arguably aimed at a popular audience. Before offering the analysis, it is vital to lay out how this chapter treats the question of adaptation.

**Fidelity: Problematic or Useful?**

The question of fidelity in relation to adaptation is of primary importance for this analysis because the homosexual characters gain their subversive, queer capacity partly due to the changes that they undergo when they are translated onto the screen: the adaptation process reconfigures them in ways that illustrate the contradictions in heterosexist ideology and point to new, non-hierarchical ways of relating. However, using the term ‘fidelity’ to assess an adaptation remains somewhat controversial. Criticism of adaptations often centres on assessing how ‘well’ a novel or play has been translated to the screen, using a judgement of fidelity to qualify whether the copy preserves or loses the meaning, complexity, or the ‘spirit’ of the original. Indeed, J. Dudley Andrew writes ‘unquestionably the most frequent and tiresome discussion of adaptation… concerns fidelity and transformation’. This so-called ‘fidelity criticism’ has been criticised by a considerable body of scholarship that rejects ‘fidelity’ as a useful term for a discussion of adaptation. Thomas Leitch suggests that discussions of adaptations that are centred on the film’s fidelity usually accord higher ‘prestige value’ to the source literature. In Leitch’s view, such criticism inevitably concludes with the idea that ‘the book was better’ because the term fidelity ‘makes sense as a criterion of value only when we can be certain that the model is more

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valuable than the copy’. Leitch argues that ‘fidelity criticism’ unwittingly repeats a
hierarchical relation between a source text, figured as a model or original, and the
adaptation, seen as a secondary derivative. According to this reasoning, a judgment of
fidelity would implicitly affirm the superiority of literature over film, regardless of
whether the adaptation is deemed faithful or not. In a similar vein, Robert Stam
questions whether fidelity is even possible, given the change in medium from novel to
film – his main argument was outlined in Chapter 2, and is centred on the notion that
each reader produces their own reading of a novel; conversely, no one adaptation can
possibly reproduce the plethora of possible readings that inhabit a single text.
According to Stam, fidelity should be viewed as a largely useless concept. Likewise,
Donald Whaley points out that a frequent challenge to the notion of fidelity arises
from the recognition that the ‘originals’ are often based on previous texts
themselves. As Stam comments, neither the adaptation nor the source are isolated,
self-contained entities but rather are informed by a multitude of other texts, as was
mentioned in Chapter 2.

It is arguable that a wholesale rejection of fidelity might be premature. The concerns
of Leitch and Whaley might be alleviated somewhat if the term fidelity was used with
the understanding that positing an ‘original’ source did not exclude the possibility that
the source itself is a text derived from other texts, but merely recognised
chronological priority. Furthermore, it seems apparent that Stam’s complaint (it is

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14 It will be remembered that, in Stam’s view, film adaptations would be ‘a kind of multileveled negotiation of intertexts’ that would respond in part to the source, conceived of as one of many other texts which are explicitly or implicitly cited, ‘adapted’, alluded to, repeated, and so on, by the film.
impossible to transpose all the possible meanings within a novel to the screen) would be less justified when fidelity is assessed in the context of theatre. For a start, drama is written with performance in mind. Just as each actor interprets their role, a piece of drama will be interpreted every time it is performed. In this sense, drama already contains within it the notion that it will be adapted, and in different ways. Phyllis Zatlin seeks to rehabilitate the term ‘fidelity’ in the context of stage plays. In her review of the scholarship on adaptation, she discerns two general approaches, ‘borrowing’ and ‘transposition’, which she places on a continuum of fidelity. In borrowing, elements of the source play would be patent in the adaptation but there is no sense that fidelity is of serious concern, and it might retain only skeletal elements of its source text, be it a play’s themes, dialogue or characters. On the other hand, transposition would indicate the highest form of fidelity to a play, and would involve a film incorporating the original structure, characters and dialogue word for word, or as close as is possible. Zatlin’s practical use of fidelity is valuable for this analysis, as it can give an indication of the degree to which the play’s script has been followed (and so it is relevant for a discussion of *O beijo no asfalto*). It can also be used in relation to the discussion of films adapted from literary texts, in order to point out the degree to which basic elements of the source – dialogue, narrative structure, plot, characters – are (or are not) reproduced by the film. This practical sense of fidelity (and infidelity) will be used throughout the analysis to indicate basic, but nonetheless significant, points of correspondence and difference between the source and the adaptation.

**Heterosexism in *O beijo no asfalto***

Nelson Rodrigues’s play *O beijo no asfalto* was published in 1961, and deals explicitly with homosexuality, society and media complicity with homophobia. Thematically, the play falls in line with Rodrigues’s oeuvre, in which he largely aimed to criticize the hypocrisy of middle-class society via an exploration of its relationship with sex and sexuality. As Foster writes, ‘Rodrigues’s interest in sexual issues concerns principally the intersection between the hegemonic criterion for bourgeois decency [...] and the contradictory realities of lived human experience, where such a hegemonic criterion is [...] essentially impossible to enforce’.17 The play is tacitly heterosexist; this analysis will demonstrate how Barreto’s highly faithful adherence to the original text avoids repeating this ideology thanks to certain elements of film form. This continues the argument made by this thesis for the importance of an attention to form in the assessment of the representation of queer subjects on-screen.

The play begins when a man is knocked down and killed by a bus. Arandir, the protagonist, is the first person to come to his side. He kisses the dying man – apparently this was his last request. A journalist, Amado Ribeiro, witnesses the event and plots to create a media furore around the ‘beijo no asfalto’ in order to sell vast quantities of newspapers. They accuse Arandir of homosexuality and suggest that ‘não foi o primeiro beijo… nem foi a primeira vez!’18 Arandir, however, maintains his innocence in the face of the accusation, which quickly spreads throughout the city. His wife Selminha and his sister-in-law Dália initially stand by him and his claim that the kiss was an act of mercy, although later his wife is swayed by the media pressure and doubts his account. Not only does Amado Ribeiro fabricate a sexual relationship

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between the two men but makes a further claim that Arandir intentionally pushed the man under the bus. The police come to question Arandir about the new accusations and so he flees to a hotel. In his place, Selminha is subjected to a humiliating interrogation at the hands of the police. Arandir’s father-in-law, Aprígio, confronts Arandir. In a shocking final twist, Aprígio reveals that he has been in love with Arandir all along, at which point he pulls out a gun and kills him.

It will first be necessary to expand on the various issues relating to sexuality that are raised by Rodrigues’s text, in order to demonstrate how they are affected by the process of adaptation. Both the source and the film focus on the societal anxieties surrounding homosexuality and the effects of such panic on a lower-middle-class family. Certainly, all the characters maintain traditional gender roles throughout the narrative – Arandir and Aprígio are both shown to be dedicated husbands and fathers, Selminha is a dedicated wife. The homosexual panic that drives the plot is produced by an instance in which homosexuality escapes demarcation by the usual signs of feminization. The audience is confronted with the threatening possibility that society’s mechanism for inscribing homosexuality as a compromised masculinity has failed. Although the final moments of Rodrigues’s text suggest Arandir’s murder will be re-read by society in terms of patriarchal justice, the audience is well aware of Aprígio’s homosexuality. His celebration by the social order as a model father therefore underlines patriarchy’s fictitious nature.19

Clearly, a critique of paternal authority can be extracted from the play. Thanks to Barreto’s meticulous adherence to his source, O beijo no asfalto makes an assault on

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the ideological position of the father that is comparable with the other adaptations discussed later on in this chapter. However, Rodrigues is not as subversive of the status quo as he might appear, and Karl Posso suggests that the play tacitly repeats heterosexism even as it undermines patriarchal values.20 For this reason, the analysis of *O beijo no asfalto* will largely focus on how heterosexist values are reproduced and undermined by the adaptation process; the discussion of *A Casa* and *O casamento* will examine the undermining of paternal authority in more detail. Posso demonstrates how a homophobic social order construes Arandir’s homosexual identity from an innocuous kiss, which has the double effect of uniting a heterosexist majority against the supposed homosexual while conveniently fuelling a lucrative media frenzy.21 In this sense, the play presents a stinging critique of homophobia at work within capitalist society. However, as Posso points out, the play is tacitly homophobic itself. The single homosexual character, the father-in-law Aprigio, is presented as a malevolent manipulator and a murderer. He is opposed to the noble Arandir, who suffers throughout for his refusal of the wild narratives spun by the press. He does not compromise his claim that he kissed the dying man as an act of mercy, becoming something of a tragic hero in his refusal to give in to society. The play essentially lauds his refusal to compromise his heterosexuality. Posso underlines the contradictory impulses at work in the play: it is critical of bourgeois hypocrisy in matters of sexual morality, and at the same time implicitly socially conservative. Heterosexist ideology is confirmed: while heterosexuality is lauded, homosexuality is condemned.

As Stephanie Dennison argues, Barreto’s adaptation seems to preserve heterosexist values when it translates the play to the screen. Dennison points out that the play has been adapted twice for the cinema, and argues that Barreto’s adaptation is highly faithful to the play itself – this will be discussed in more detail in the analysis below. Dennison notes that Barreto changes very little in terms of narrative organization and theme. She points out certain additions in Barreto’s production that comment on the contemporary cultural context of Brazil during the abertura period. For example, the film presents the interrogation of Selminha in terms of voyeurism by underlining spectatorial complicity through camera angles that mirror the gazes of her torturers. Dennison suggests that this invokes the tropes of pornochanchada, only to show them bound up with the cruelties of the dictatorship. As pornochanchada seemed to anaesthetize film-goers to their political circumstances under the military regime, Barreto’s film can be seen as pointing to the audience’s ‘[shared] responsibility for both sexual and political oppression, for refusing to believe what is going on around us […] for seeing purely what we want to see’. Dennison suggests that although Barreto’s film attempts to rethink the problems of voyeurism, its fidelity to the original text means that it falls into the same ideological trap as Rodrigues’s play – the depiction of the murderous father-in-law reaffirms the contention that homosexuality is inherently deceptive and amoral. Conversely, Arandir’s heroism arises from the suffering he undergoes in the name of an innocent kiss. The purity of this kiss is

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23 Flávio Tambellini’s 1966 version, O beijo, is less faithful and, in her view, more conservative. Amado Ribeiro is given a traumatic past which apparently fuels his desire to investigate Arandir, and Dennison argues that the effect of this is to equate homosexuality with an unspeakably dark secret. Even worse, ‘by suggesting that fate led Arandir to the roadside at the precise moment that the road victim was knocked over, Tambellini manages to condone the ritual victimization that takes place in the film, therefore stripping the film of its power to reflect on the socio-political status quo’. See Dennison, ‘Nelson Rodrigues into Film’, p. 129.
25 For a further reading of the film through a similar lens as that used by Dennison, see Foster, Gender & Society, pp. 129-138.
essentially equated with heterosexuality, as is pointed out in Posso’s study.\textsuperscript{26} It would appear that the heterosexist ideology present in Rodrigues’s original text is merely reproduced in the film: the adaptation rehearses the play’s binaristic opposition between heroic heterosexuality and murderous, amoral homosexuality. As will be shown, the method by which Barreto can faithfully transport the play to the screen also seems to undermine its heterosexist values.

It will be remembered that Zatlin uses the term ‘transposition’ to indicate an adaptation of a stage play wherein the dialogue and structure is left virtually untouched. She notes that a transposition runs the risk of appearing as ‘canned theatre’, often derided by academics and critics alike because it uses only a bare minimum of cinematic technique in order to adapt the play.\textsuperscript{27} ‘Canned theatre’ would seem to make little effort to convince a spectator of the illusion of the film’s diegetic world. At points, Barreto’s adaptation verges on demonstrating what Zatlin calls the ‘talky quality’ of the original text; this staginess is evident at 17.56, when Selminha and Dália discuss possible motivations Aprígio might have for disliking Arandir.\textsuperscript{28} Arguably, Barreto must rely on material that is not present in Rodrigues’s play in order to diminish the spectator’s awareness of the film’s theatrical heritage. Specifically, he uses material located between scenes – a strategy that, according to Zatlin, is typical of films that are otherwise highly faithful to the plays they adapt.\textsuperscript{29} When shot in exterior locations these sequences contrast with the claustrophobic interior scenes – the natural light is often vivid and luminous in comparison with the

\textsuperscript{26} Posso, \textit{Artful Seduction}, pp. 192.
\textsuperscript{27} Zatlin notes the basic cinematic techniques used in the filming of theatre for television: ‘Adequate lighting and camera work – medium or panning shots alternating with close-ups… ideally, the production will use three cameras, thereby facilitating not only variations in distance but also a shifting point of view’. Zatlin, \textit{Theatrical Translation}, p.169.
\textsuperscript{29} Zatlin, \textit{Theatrical Translation}, p.175.
harsh lighting used indoors and the heavy shadows of the night-time sequences (figs. 66 and 67). These inserted sections aid the film’s illusionism, that is, its presentation of the ‘characters as real people, its sequence of words or images as real time, and its representations as substantiated fact’. The interstitial material is used to promote the sense of a realistic diegetic world, and it is arguable that Barreto’s strict adherence to his source would result in ‘canned theatre’ without it. A certain irony is manifest in Barreto’s approach to adaptation, as his transposition or highly faithful adaptation of the play requires extra material to function as a film (and not appear to be merely ‘canned theatre’). This, it will be argued, results in a degree of ‘infidelity’ to the source – it is primarily within the short interstitial sequences that the play’s heterosexism is undercut.

**Interstitial Material and Illusionism**

Heterosexist ideology is first of all weakened when the interstitial material alters the way the spectator reads Arandir. It muddies the purity of the kiss by relaying to the spectator his anxiety, which might be interpreted as paranoia or guilt. Dennison points out that the actor playing Arandir, Ney Latorraca, would have raised initial doubt over the ‘purity’ of the unfortunate protagonist’s sexuality – the actor was known at the time for his homosexuality. This is extended by interstitial material. For example, at 23.25, Arandir relates the narrative of the kiss to Selminha and Dália over dinner. Just as he finishes his story: ‘Eu corri. Cheguei primeiro que os outros. Me abaixei, peguei a cabeça do rapaz. E… peguei a cabeça dele e’ – he is interrupted by Selminha, who

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31 Dennison, ‘Nelson Rodrigues into Film’, p. 129.
completes his sentence with: ‘beijou’.\textsuperscript{32} In response, his face expresses an ambiguous emotion that could be interpreted as guilt – a possible reading compounded by mocking extradiegetic laughter that plays on the soundtrack (fig. 68). Later, at 39.26, Arandir drives home from work (where he was humiliated by his co-workers). As he parks his car he is panicked by a man wearing mirrored sunglasses who seems to be waiting for him. The man is actually insignificant and plays no further role in the film; Arandir’s reaction points to a certain paranoid mental state. At 40.48, Arandir walks from his car to his house and panics again when he hears an unusual noise. The noise is revealed to be merely a street key-maker – meaningless and insignificant. But the film implies Arandir’s paranoid belief that the world is suddenly threatening and hostile. Of course, Arandir’s belief in a hostile world is neither surprising nor can it be described as particularly delusional, given the media furore surrounding the kiss. At the same time, his perception of threats in strange sounds and in random strangers seems overcautious, at the least. Furthermore, Arandir’s paranoia is also communicated in the interstitial sequence previous to the kiss being made public (19.49).

His presentation in terms of paranoia recalls the psychoanalytic account of paranoia as a defence against unwanted homosexual desire.\textsuperscript{33} It points to a reading of the kiss that is not mooted in the original text: the kiss may have been intended as an act of mercy but it has since stirred feelings that Arandir himself did not anticipate – latent

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{O Beijo no Asfalto}, dir. by Bruno Baretto, 23.32.

\textsuperscript{33} In Freudian psychoanalysis, paranoia supposedly operates as an unconscious defence against homosexual desire. Freud argues that paranoia – the subject’s delusional belief that they are the victim of persecution – arises from the subject’s unconscious attempts to mount a defence against a problematic homosexual wish. The subject rejects this desire by transforming it into hate, and then explains his hate as a response to the imagined persecution that the subject believes they suffer. See Sigmund Freud, ‘Notes on a Case of Paranoia’ in \textit{The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. XII}, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), pp. 59-79.
homosexual desire. The interstitial material introduces and expands the possible interpretations of the narrative by actively promoting the idea that Arandir is hiding something. One consequence of this paranoia is to weaken the way in which Arandir is raised up as a hero for defending the kiss as a noble or merciful gesture. As suggested above, the affirmation of Arandir’s supposed innocence in the play can be interpreted as a tacit celebration of heterosexuality. Unlike the original, the film never presents Arandir as completely innocent, even though it faithfully transposes Rodrigues’s dialogue for the screen. It suggests a real possibility that Arandir is not just a misrecognised heterosexual — that the kiss meant something beyond his protestations to the contrary. The valorisation of heterosexuality is not so easily accomplished. As mentioned above, the interstitial material is required to produce a successful film and avoid ‘canned theatre’ — this formal component stalls the heterosexist assumptions underlying the play by complicating clear-cut readings of the social order and of Arandir’s behaviour, leading the spectator towards another possible explanation for the kiss that the play arguably tries to close off.

The adaptation process subtly complicates the reproduction of the play’s heterosexism by multiplying the possibilities for narrative interpretation. This becomes more obvious during a second instance of interstitial material, where the film shows a television programme on which various members of the public are asked to give their opinion of the titular kiss. Again, heterosexist values of the play are weakened in the material Barreto uses to sustain a credible diegetic reality. The most prominent section of the television programme features a woman whom Dennison describes as a ‘textbook feminist/psychoanalyst/left-wing intellectual’.34 This character claims the

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34 Dennison, ‘Nelson Rodrigues into Film’, p. 130.
kiss ‘foi uma manifestação de carinho, de amor, de solidariadade’ that has been misread by an alienated society; more tellingly, she says the media response demonstrates how society manipulates a humanitarian gesture ‘para catarse de suas fantasias’. The fragmented and contradictory series of opinions that follow effectively rewrites the presentation of society as a homophobic majority united by a single media narrative. Outright condemnation of homosexuality is co-present with expressions of solidarity, while individuals engaged in social critique speak alongside individuals who completely refuse to involve themselves in the scandal. And while the media’s voice is shown to determine the opinions of certain individuals (Selminha, for example), the sequence demonstrates that even an extensive media campaign will lead to a diverse array of opinions. The claim that the print media speak for and reflect the interests of a (heterosexist) majority is therefore undermined. The spectator is led towards a multitude of possible explanations for the narrative events, and the kiss. So, the interstitial scenes quietly but effectively weaken the heterosexism of the play by stressing the plurality of its possible interpretations. In this sense, the interstitial material is both enlisted to support a faithful adaptation (fending off a charge of ‘canned theatre’) and leads to the film’s (ideological) infidelity.

The final scene of the film further demonstrates that the play’s heterosexism has been undercut in Barreto’s adaptation. Heterosexual values are openly affirmed in the final scene of Rodrigues’s play: Aprígio is revealed to be the ‘true’ homosexual while the misidentified heterosexual is murdered. Not only does the revelation demonstrate the hypocrisy of the father figure, and expose patriarchy as constructed and fictional rather than a ‘natural fact’; it also vindicates the social order’s witch-hunt by

35 O Beijo no Asfalto, 44.29.
suggesting that there is, in fact, a homosexual to be discovered – they were just looking in the wrong place – and that this homosexual is also a killer. Regarding the final scene of the film, Foster writes that ‘the film cannot escape an ideological trap… [homosexuality] as a negative social marker is deftly and suddenly shifted in a definitive manner from Arangir [sic] and placed on the shoulders of someone else, who, as a murderer, remains negatively marked’.36 He ultimately dismisses the adaptation wholesale because it appears to fall prey to the same heterosexism that characterises Rodrigues’s original text. His comments regarding the final moments of the film ring true (although Foster overlooks the instances wherein the film tacitly complicates heterosexism). After Aprígio shoots Arandir, Dália runs out of the hotel and stands by her father in shock. Alongside the melancholic saxophone solo, Dália’s unmoving presence lends the scenario a particularly strong sense of pathos. It might seem that this pathos serves to conceal certain ideological tensions that are otherwise exposed (Aprígio is both a murderer and a dutiful patriarch, a homosexual who upholds heterosexist attitudes towards homosexuality).

But it is important to point out that the final scene is also exceptionally stagey – Dália stands and watches the embrace for just under two minutes before the credits finally roll. Rather than diminish the scene’s pathos, it is arguable that this staginess lends the final moments a camp quality which allows the spectator to experience some catharsis from the tragedy of Arandir’s death.37 Alternatively, it is possible to suggest that the artifice of this final scene serves as an intertextual nod to the source text. Either way, the staginess underlines the film’s status as a construction. This is magnified by the

36 Foster, Gender & Society in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema, p. 136.
37 Here, camp would work in the vein suggested by Denilson Lopes. For him, camp offers ‘uma nova educação sentimental… pela via da teatralidade’ that embraces sentimental cultural production while acknowledging its artifice. See Denilson Lopes, O Homem que Amava Rapazes e Outros Ensaios (Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano Editora, 2002), p. 113.
fact that the final scene is put into contrast with the rest of the film. Although the play would also be ‘stagey’ itself (insofar as it is a piece of theatre), the film had arguably managed to present a convincing illusion of a diegetic world up to this point, thanks to the interstitial material. In this sense, the comparison between stagey final scene and previous narrative exacerbates the theatricality of the former; furthermore, it means that the spectator is directed towards the theatricality of a heterosexist ideological position, which could be seen as going some way to weakening it. As has been shown, the transposition of Rodrigues’s text directly to the screen is bound up with the reproduction of heterosexist values. Securing the film’s illusion of reality in order to transpose the source not only complicates the play’s heterosexism (thus ‘unfaithful’), but it also means that when the film more closely approximates the play’s original staginess, as it does in the final scene, certain heterosexist assumptions are exposed as constructed. While efforts are clearly made to preserve the original text in adaptation, the film nevertheless works to quietly undermine the troubling values contained within the source.

The Depths of Infidelity: Adapting *Crônica da casa assassinada*

This chapter will now turn to Saraceni’s version of Lúcio Cardoso’s *Crônica da casa assassinada* in order to examine how the adaptation process might queer aspects of Cardoso’s novel. Although the third adaptation that this chapter discusses, *O casamento*, is based on another text by Nelson Rodrigues, it was considered useful to provide the analysis of *A casa assassinada* first, given that the insights gained in relation to Saraceni’s film are developed in the study of Jabor’s adaptation. The analysis will suggest that Saraceni’s infidelity to his source reworks the heterosexist assumptions within the original via an implication that the stability of the status quo
might be threatened by impeding the production of the homosexual figure as other. Furthermore, changes made to the end of the narrative leave the spectator with a queer figure who challenges heterosexism on a number of levels, as will be made clear shortly.

Mario Carelli notes that Saraceni and Cardoso were friends, and that the writer personally recommended the filmmaker adapt *Crônica da casa assassinada*. This might explain the high level of fidelity evident in Saraceni’s film to the plot of the source text. The film’s narrative is centred on the Menezes – a family of landowners that consists of three brothers, two of whom strive to maintain and repair the Menezes’ faded glory (Valdo and Demétrio). A third brother, Timóteo, seeks only to destroy the Menezes name, but is permanently exiled to his room because of his transvestitism. Valdo’s new wife Nina is a glamorous carioca socialite who discovers her husband’s bankruptcy when she visits his aging manor in the countryside of Minas Gerais. In revenge she allies herself with Timóteo in order to pursue the Menezes’ destruction. Crucially, Timóteo tells Nina that the local priest professed a view that the smallest grain of sin can destroy a pure soul – a notion that forms the basis of her strategy to ruin the family. Nina is accused of having an affair with the gardener, Alberto, and these rumours eventually cause her to leave the manor for Rio. Surprisingly, the gardener kills himself when she leaves. Nina returns to the manor seventeen years later. A voice-over reveals that she was pregnant at the time of the gardener’s suicide. André, Nina’s son (supposedly with Valdo), is now grown up and looks unmistakably like Alberto – in the film, Alberto and André are played by the

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38 Carelli also points out that Cardoso was actively involved in the production of several films, including Leo Marten’s *Almas adversas* (1948), collaborating with Saraceni on *Porto das caixas* in 1961 and directing his own production, *A mulher de longe*, in 1949. Mario Carelli, *Corcel de fogo: vida e obra de Lúcio Cardoso (1912-1968)* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Guanabara, 1988), pp. 84-87.
same actor. It is made clear that Nina intends to seduce André, thus planting the speck of sin in the heart of the Menezes in order to ruin the family totally. Nina has sex with André – and a short while later reveals that she has cancer. Her health progressively worsens over the second half of the film. Ana, Valdo’s wife, confesses that she was also pregnant when Nina was – it is implied that André is actually her son, not Nina’s, and the result of Ana’s liaison with Alberto. Nina eventually dies. The funeral marks the complete collapse of the Menezes: Demétrio and Valdo fight, and it is implied that Demétrio was in love with Nina. Finally, the grotesque figure Timóteo enters the funeral carried in a hammock by three servants. Demétrio collapses at the scandalous sight of his brother dressed in his mother’s clothing. As Timóteo sprinkles violets on Nina’s corpse, André enters the room. A surreal montage shot literally transorms André into the gardener, and Timóteo collapses dramatically on the floor in shock.

Before examining points where the film might be said to be ‘unfaithful’ to the source, it is prudent to detail certain thematic elements of the novel, and how they relate to its presentation of homosexuality. *Crónica da casa assassinada* insists on the underlying insincerity of traditional values, particularly with regards to gender roles and sexual identity. On the surface, the Menezes promote conventional behaviour – men control financial matters; women dress modestly and defer authority to their husbands. But the family are secretly bankrupt, and Valdo effectively tricks Nina into marriage with the promise of wealth; and both brothers appear to be cuckolded by their wives. The novel arguably presents a powerful critique of the use of tradition as a means to conceal inner corruption. As will become clearer in the discussion of *O

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“casamento”, there is considerable thematic overlap with Rodrigues’s work. Both writers seek to expose the family as hypocritical and dishonest: on the one hand its members espouse the virtues of patriarchy, convention, and so on, while at the same time contradicting and transgressing the standards they proclaim. Like Rodrigues, Cardoso uses various allegories to convey the slow but inexorable implosion of the Menezes family, including disease (cancer) and the transgression of sexual laws (including incest); homosexuality is one of a number of afflictions that is put forward as a symbol of the family’s internal corruption. This effectively fixes it as inherently distorted and deviant – a conception that is challenged by the adaptation, as will be demonstrated later.

While adapting O beijo no asfalto for the screen was a relatively uncomplicated task for Barreto, Saraceni’s undertaking seems a difficult one by contrast. Certainly, it is arguable that fidelity was of a high concern for the director, insofar as he leaves the plot intact, including the achronological order of events, while retaining the principal characters and frequently borrowing their dialogue from the text itself. But several aspects of the novel impede an easy translation to the screen. Firstly, the novel has an epistolary form, composed entirely of a multitude of diary fragments, letters and confessions.40 In the novel, letters largely provide information via first-person perspective, and are filled with detailed psychological and philosophical musings, although some contain long descriptions of activity reported by other characters. In contrast to third-person and omniscient narration, it is not immediately obvious how a letter might be translated for the screen. Voice-overs might be used for an occasional letter, but not for the entire adaptation of an epistolary novel, for obvious reasons.

40 According to Carelli, this fragmentation forces the reader to actively participate in assembling the narrative itself. Carelli, Corcel de fogo, pp. 184-188.
Usually, the camera presents an ‘objective’ view of events; even if that view is always motivated, it is extremely rare that the camera films from first-person perspective. Furthermore, while *Crônica da casa assassinada* only provides indirect access to character psychology (which is always reported through written material) the profusion of sensory and emotional descriptions lends the characters psychological richness and depth. Without direct access to the characters’ thought-processes, a large part of their depth is lost when they are translated to the screen. As will be examined presently, Saraceni’s solutions to the problems of adaptation demonstrably inform the way in which the homosexual character is presented on screen.

Saraceni shifts the narrative into third-person perspective for the majority of the film. As a consequence, he reinforces a model of the psyche based on interior psychology. In order to counter the loss in psychological detail, he directly reproduces letters and confessions in the film. These are delivered through voice-over – for example, at 23.15 Nina narrates a letter over shots of the actress (Norma Benguell) who relays her shifting moods to the spectator. These provide direct insights into the subtleties of the mental and emotional conflicts that run throughout the film in ways that dialogue or facial expressions would be unable to achieve. Firstly, these fragments position the spectator as a kind of detective or investigator. Given only fragments of desire, motivation and opinion, the spectator is spurred on to piece together a coherent psychological picture of the characters. This duplicates the demand placed on the reader of the novel to deduce the events of the narrative. At the same time, by cutting these expression short (Nina’s narrated letter, for example) or by leaving them inconclusive (Ana’s hysterical laughter, at 30.49), the film indicates that the characters possess complex opinions, motivations and desires, but only a limited
number of these are revealed on-screen. The spectator is largely excluded from the characters’ psychology; nevertheless, the spectator is also directed to view these partially accessible depths as holding the ‘real’ explanation for the characters’ often unexpected behaviour (Ana’s attempted seduction of André, for example). Arguably, the positioning of the spectator in this way implies a model of the psyche based around an opposition of the surface to the depths, where the surface or the immediately obvious is coded as deceiving while ‘truth’ is figured as hidden within the psychic interior. Cleto points out that the conception of the psyche as ‘inner depths’, and the associated notion that the ‘truth’ of the subject is concealed within its interior, implicitly supports an idea of the subject as having a fixed identity or essence and shores up a ‘dominant, bourgeois [model of] subjectivity’.\(^{41}\) The idea of a subject as having a ‘true’ identity somehow located within its interior might be seen as lending itself to oppressive (fixed) models of sexual identity. As will be demonstrated shortly, the figure of Timóteo undergoes certain changes when adapted for the screen that might be said to undermine the depth-model of the psyche, demonstrating instead a form of subjectivity that could arguably be seen as queer.

**Homosexual Corruption: Timóteo in Crônica da casa assassinada**

As mentioned above, the Menezes are generally shown to be hypocritical in the novel. Cardoso’s Timóteo rejects the inauthenticity of his siblings’ behaviour, and transgresses traditional male gender roles by dressing in his mother’s clothing. He then affirms his transgressions as an expression of his authentic self. He explains that he follows the path of Maria Sinhá, his deceased great-aunt, exiled from the family for

exhibiting masculine behaviour in order to adhere to her own inner ‘verdade’.\textsuperscript{42} In a similar fashion to his aunt, Cardoso’s Timóteo acknowledges his authentic self at the price of marginalisation. The claims made by this version of Timóteo as regards personal truth are somewhat problematic in terms of the representation of sexual identity. Firstly, his homosexuality is confirmed by his desire for the gardener, and appears to be the original cause of his isolation. When Cardoso’s Timóteo claims that his feminine attire is an expression of his authentic self, he implies that homosexuality and male femininity are equivalent. This complies with the ‘traditional’ model of sexual identity; as discussed in the introduction, his essentialism also implicitly subordinates homosexuality to heterosexuality. The novel also figures homosexuality as monstrous. Timóteo’s characterization is largely conveyed through the thoughts of others: the majority of individuals that interact with Cardoso’s Timóteo describe him in terms of his disturbing obesity and point out that his predilection for dressing in his mother’s beautiful, extravagant clothing conceals his grotesque body.\textsuperscript{43} This sets Cardoso’s Timóteo up as an allegory for the Menezes family itself. The surface conceals the depths; his ‘beauty’ covers over disintegration and deformation just as the Menezes’ adherence to social norms works to cloak their own corruption, echoed in Timóteo’s belief that ‘tudo o que desprezam em mim é sangue dos Menezes!’\textsuperscript{44} Ultimately, Cardoso’s Timóteo admits that his behaviour is deviant, which tacitly posits a standard of moral behaviour that no character actually manages to uphold – a


\textsuperscript{43} Cardoso, \textit{Crônica}, pp. 67-68. Alongside these characterizations, Guy Besançon points out that most of the characters do not think him immoral, so much as mentally ill, while Maria Teresinha Martins suggests that the other characters take his transvestitism to be a manifestation of his madness. See Guy Besançon, ‘Notas Clínicas e Psicopatológicas’, in Lúcio Cardoso, \textit{Crônica da casa assassinada: Edição Crítica} ed. by Mario Carelli (Madrid: CSIC, 1991) p. 692. Maria Teresinha Martins turns this on its head, and reads Timóteo’s appearance as an authentic manifestation of his unconscious. See Maria Teresinha Martins, \textit{Luz e Sombra em Lúcio Cardoso} (Goiâna: Editora UFG, 1997), p. 174.

\textsuperscript{44} Cardoso, \textit{Crônica}, p. 42.
norm that is implicitly heterosexist. In turn, this codes homosexuality as moral degradation.

There are two principal changes made in the adaptation of Timóteo: in the first place, homosexuality is less clearly associated with interior corruption or obesity. Then, by virtue of the reduced emphasis on the body, Timóteo’s defence of personal truth becomes an affirmation of a paradoxical (in)authenticity – this will be explained in due course. To begin, it is important to point out that the film subtly alters the ideological norms against which Timóteo is positioned. The film introduces the Menezes family at 8.45, showing Ana and Demétrio together beneath their respective portraits (fig. 69). The shot establishes Ana and Demétrio as the governing couple in the household. This image might be read as a statement of heterosexist ideology, as it centres on the dominance of the heterosexual couple while invoking the division of male and female as complementary opposites and so relaying a suggestion that desiring relations ‘naturally’ take place between men and women. Nevertheless, the heterosexist implications in the shot could be seen as stemming from the fact that the couple is put into contrast with their portraits: the dominant position of Ana and Demétrio is coded as ‘natural’ and thus legitimate because they are arguably provided with a sense of presence, ‘naturalness’ or ‘authenticity’ through a contrast with their pictures, which are ‘inauthentic’ or representational versions of the couple (as other). Of course, the fact that their ‘naturalness’ here is dependent on the artifice of the portraits gestures towards the idea that it is a constructed or artificial quality itself. The shot of the couple helps illustrate the relationship between the two Menezes brothers and Timóteo: he is figured as sexually deviant – as the ‘abnormal’,
‘unnatural’ other – which afford Demétrio and Valdo a certain legitimacy in their domination of the family’s affairs.45

Saraceni’s infidelity to the source text transforms Timóteo’s presentation, and challenges his figuration as homosexual other. Firstly, the alignment between physical corruption and homosexuality in Cardoso’s novel is diminished in the shift from novel to film. The constant references to his obesity made via internal monologue are absent; the access to the thoughts and opinions of other characters is immediately lost in translation to the screen, while no character gives any descriptions of Timóteo through voice-over. This is not to argue that the adaptation suggests that he is anything other than overweight, as Carlos Krober’s physical build clearly communicates his character’s obesity. However, portraying Timóteo with visual signs only means that the potency of Cardoso’s description – the suggestion that Timóteo’s body constantly strains against his clothes, or that his body collapses into an inhuman ‘massa amorfa’ – is missing.46 It is arguable that homosexuality comes to be strongly associated with adornment and artifice instead. The viewer is shown an abundance of decoration from the first shot of Timóteo, who is swathed in embroidered silk and draped in jewellery (fig. 70). The set is strewn with ornate furniture, mirrors and candelabras, while the wallpaper and curtains are richly textured – each shot in the sequence is crowded with detailed fabric and patterned surfaces.47 The camerawork

45 An example of this kind of structure can be seen at 26.15, when Valdo states that Timóteo stains the family name and is to be rejected. Here, the authority of Valdo and Demétrio is authenticated or naturalized because they work to uphold and preserve the family name – a metonym for the status quo – while viewing Timóteo as fundamentally different, as a deviant homosexual other, which therefore consolidates their rule.

46 Cardoso, Crônica, p. 68.

47 The excess of decoration resonates with a stylistic feature of US-produced melodrama, a genre that occasionally contained moments in which ‘a breaking-down of reality appears… [wherein] the mise-en-scène has a tendency to become explicitly symbolic or coded’ thanks to highly emotional content. See Mercer and Shingler, Melodrama, p. 13. Timóteo’s room is represented as a space in which the
continually draws attention to the similarity between Timóteo’s appearance and his surroundings, comparing his own decoration with the decoration of the room. For example, he reclines on his bed with his leg bent slightly at the knee – the angles produced by this pose are repeated by the outline of cushion, just as the embroidery on his dress is comparable to the cushion’s upholstery (fig. 71 and 72). His bulky form appears subsumed by the decoration. Instead of an image of Timóteo by way of access to other character’s interior thoughts, there is ample visual evidence of excess. Yet it is pattern, not concealed flesh, which multiplies and swells across the screen. The eye is drawn to the details and undulations that crowd the surface. His physical monstrosity or deformity is traded for an illusion of depth created by the rippling folds of the material.

Timóteo’s homosexual identity is linked with the superficial more directly when he stands in front of a mirror (figs. 73 and 74). Nearly half of the screen is taken up by Timóteo’s pink silk shawl, which is draped over his back. The shot also shows his reflection, which provides a front view of Timóteo – the shawl primarily covers his back and so the reflected image is taken up by his peach silk gown. Timóteo’s dialogue during this sequence points towards an identity that is located in the depths of his interior being – in the ‘puras vozes do sangue’.

Arguably, the low angle of the shot prevents the camera from being reflected in the mirror. At the same time, the shot composition stalls the mirror’s normal function as securing the identity of the reflected subject by providing them with a virtual double against which they are contrasted. Here, the mirror continues the profusion of decoration and pattern that characterised the mise-en-scène previously. Timóteo’s dialogue praises the virtues of restrained norms and standards of the social order give way; the excess of detail and patterning would therefore indicate the release of otherwise repressed desires.

maintaining the authentic self in the face of hostility. But as he does this, the film suggests that the identity he affirms as ‘true’ is one located not in the inner depths but on the surface: an ambiguous ‘authentic superficiality’.

One way of reading Timóteo’s blurring of authenticity and superficiality might be as a strategy that aims to expose the logic of othering which sustains the Menezes as ‘naturally’ dominant, described above in relation to the portraits. In this sense, affirming the surface as the ‘truth’ of who he is could suggest that personal ‘truth’ is itself a construction – one not located in the depths of the subject but founded in appearance, and therefore implicitly constructed or artificial.49 This would imply that personal ‘truth’, along with ‘naturalness’ and ‘authenticity’, are constructed notions that derive their particular meanings from their opposites (artifice, the ‘unnatural’ and the ‘inauthentic’). In turn, this serves to expose the fictional or constructed status of the Menezes’ presentation as ‘natural’, and their reliance on an other for their identity. A second, related, way of reading Timóteo’s ‘authentic superficiality’ suggests that it plays with the boundaries between binary categories themselves. His invocation of the artificiality of appearance alongside the authenticity of personal ‘truth’ could be seen as affirming the values dispensed to the other while simultaneously claiming the values of the oppressor as his own. In this way, Timóteo becomes ambiguous: both ‘true’ and ‘false’, both similar and different to his brothers, both Menezes and not-Menezes, both oppressor and oppressed. By affirming the opposing sets of values at the same time in ‘authentic superficiality’, his location as a fixed other is compromised and the ability of the Menezes to satisfactorily define themselves

49 If the notion of depthless ‘appearance’ included theatrical performance it would align Timóteo’s claims with a camp notion of subjectivity set out by Sontag: ‘To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theatre’. Sontag, ‘Notes on “Camp”’, p. 280.
against him is impeded. In this sense, homosexuality is no longer monstrous nor figured as an inescapable sign of moral corruption, as it was in the source. The adaptation rescues homosexuality from the heterosexism implicit in Cardoso’s novel through its ‘infidelity’: through specific changes to the text (the elision of characters’ thoughts) and through specific elements of the film medium (the emphasis on decoration). This produces a figure that is arguably describable as queer in his resistance to the dominant paradigms through which sexual identity is understood.

Timóteo’s ‘authentic superficiality’ also has the effect of subverting an ideologically problematic conception of the self as the repository of truth by undermining the depth-model of the psyche. Suggesting that the interior of the subject is an illusion clearly has consequences for the way the film positions the spectator – it will be remembered that the spectator has been invited to see the psychic interior as holding the answers to the confusing chronology and narrative events. This positioning is undermined when faced with Timóteo, a figure whose suggestion that psychic interiority is effectively pretended would deny the possibility of ascertaining the ‘real’ feelings, thoughts and desires of the characters from the fragments of psychology offered by the film, as discussed above. In this sense, he would serve to rebuff the spectator’s attempts to comprehend the narrative. But on the other hand, the spectator is encouraged to view the subject in terms of the depth-model – a model arguably complicit with bourgeois notions of fixed subjectivity, as suggested above – only to be shown a figure who undoes the model of subjectivity in question. This could be viewed as a more elaborate version of the spectatorial positioning seen in O menino e o vento: Saraceni’s approach to adaptation means that the spectator is directed towards an ideologically problematic practice (in this case, understanding subjects through the
lens of the depth-model) and then shown how to undermine that practice (by recognizing that the surface produces an impression of depth). This points to an underlying ambivalence to Saraceni’s method of adaptation, as his film introduces new ideologically-problematic features, while queering or undermining them at the same time.

**The Return of the Beautiful Boy**

The ambivalence of *A casa assassinada* with respect to heterosexism becomes a central feature of the final scene. Here, Saraceni demonstrates a further instance of ‘infidelity’ in the adaptation which both reconfirms and undermines heterosexist conceptions of sexual identity. Timóteo’s appearance causes Demétrio to have some sort of emotional breakdown; the presence of the assembled guests means that Timóteo effectively ruins the Menezes’ social standing. But it also brings Timóteo face-to-face with André, who transforms into the gardener in a particularly startling montage effect. Timóteo then collapses at the sight of him returning from the dead. In the novel, these events do not prove fatal for Timóteo, who survives the experience to go on to write about it. An audience would presume that Timóteo dies in the film. It might be suggested that his death serves in a wholly conservative or reactionary capacity. This would be evidenced by the implication that same-sex desire, not incest, is the ‘parcela de pecado’ that brings about the Menezes’ destruction.⁵⁰ In effect, this refigures the narrative as one massive operation of heterosexism: its concluding moments essentialize homosexual identity as inescapably fatal and tragic, while positing same-sex desire as a destructive force that eventually ruins even the homosexual subject himself. This codes homosexuality in terms of an error or failure

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⁵⁰ *A casa assassinada*, dir. by Paulo César Saraceni, 29.18.
of sexuality; it sets up heterosexuality in a position of dominance and naturalizes it as the model from which homosexuality is derived.

At the core of the heterosexist assumption affirmed by Timóteo’s death is the understanding that heterosexuality is the ‘origin’ from which homosexuality departs. In this sense, ‘origin’ is understood as ‘the ground of [a copy], but which is itself a copy of nothing’.\(^{51}\) In her essay ‘Imitation and Gender Subordination’, Butler writes that the ‘notion of an “origin” is suspect […]it requires its derivations in order to affirm itself as an origin’.\(^{52}\) This idea of a pure, uncopied origin is challenged by Timóteo’s vision, which appears to make Alberto rise from the dead (figs. 75 and 76). His resurrection is arguably more than just a hallucination, as Alberto persists after Timóteo’s collapse and appears to literally enter the funeral as a ghost-like figure. Timóteo’s vision is centred on the revelation that André is Alberto’s son. Nevertheless, it is André’s entrance into the funeral that engenders Alberto’s supernatural return – in this sense, the film states that the son is paradoxically prior to (or ‘origin’ of) the resurrected father. Just as the idea of an origin presupposes the idea of a derivative, the notion that André is the origin requires the resurrected Alberto to come into being as a copy for it to have any meaning as such. The conceptual ‘priority’ of the resurrected Alberto in this sense is suggested by their filial relation; however, this brings us back to the initial point that Alberto is prior to (or ‘origin’ of) André because he is his father, which begins the cycle again. It seems impossible to fix one or other as origin without eventually suggesting his status as copy, and vice versa; the two terms would appear to be endlessly shifting and unsettled. In this sense, the film can be read as gesturing towards the dependence of copy and origin on each

\(^{51}\) Butler, ‘Imitation and Gender Insobordination’, p. 313.

\(^{52}\) Butler, ‘Imitation and Gender Insobordination’, p. 313.
other for their respective meanings, as well as suggesting that this relationship is inherently unstable. By problematizing the idea of a pure origin – ‘a copy of nothing’ – in this way, Timóteo’s vision seems to undermine the basic heterosexist assumption that heterosexuality is the origin, and homosexuality the perverse deviation or derivative.

Again, the adaptation appears to affirm heterosexism and undercut it in the same move. It is possible to argue that the film further disturbs the status quo in its final moments by producing a queer figure who undermines hierarchical self/other relations. Although Timóteo’s vision is centred on the uncovering of a secret filial relation between André and Alberto, as suggested above, the way in which Alberto appears nevertheless renders that relation problematic. André is replaced by another, near-identical version of himself when he facilitates the ‘return’ of his father – this doubles him, but it also erases him as well. This also occurs in the case of Alberto, who finds himself copied or repeated in the form of his son yet only appears as a kind of phantasm or ghostly image. Both individuals repeat themselves and vanish at the same time. This simultaneous self-multiplying self-loss dissolves the difference between the two figures – they blur into an ambiguous sameness of being, a figure that is both André and Alberto and neither. Timóteo’s ascription of a filial relation to the figures of André and Alberto is dissolved in the moment it is revealed: as neither André nor Alberto exist as discrete individuals, they cannot be comprehensibly understood as a father in opposition to a son.53 Timóteo’s vision can be read as a realisation of his same-sex desire which produces a figure that does not relate – and cannot be related to – in terms of self and other: the queer figure of André/Alberto

53 This might be seen as akin to Bersani’s concept of homo-ness discussed in Chapter 2, although it lacks the element of same-sex desire operating between the two men.
side-steps conflictual father/son, self/other relationality for a non-hierarchical relation between near-similar selves.

Like *O beijo no asfalto*, *A casa assassinada* implicitly undermines the heterosexism of the original through the director’s ‘infidelity’ to the source. Perhaps the most valuable element of this ‘infidelity’ is the subtle demonstration of the dependence of heterosexist ideology on a coherent homosexual other for its conceptual stability. A further similarity between the two films lies in the fact that *A casa assassinada* also ends on a somewhat ambivalent note, as Timóteo’s death would appear to play to the cinematic convention whereby the homosexual character is killed off by the end of the film. The film’s critique of heterosexism is not, therefore, entirely convincing, but neither is it wholly compromised – his death does not close off the effects of same-sex desire, quite the contrary, it leaves the spectator with a subject that challenges the status quo at a fundamental level by queering conventional notions of relating. With this limitation in mind, the film might be cautiously considered as demonstrating a queer potential. Saraceni’s use of montage becomes fundamental to the emergence of the queer subject, as it is through the surreal cut from André to Alberto that both figures are replicated and dissipated at the same time. This would corroborate the arguments set forth in this thesis – representations of same-sex desire (in this case, an object of same-sex desire) can queer ideas around sexual identity when combined with aspects of film form.

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The Erosion of the Family in *O casamento*

The last adaptation to be examined, Arnaldo Jabor’s *O casamento*, offers a similar account of homosexuality to that offered by *A casa assassinada*, but elaborates more clearly on the relationship between the homosexual (figured as a deviant son), the declining authority of the father, and the decay of the bourgeois nuclear family. Unlike *A casa assassinada*, the film largely centres on the paterfamilias, Sabino. It begins as Sabino is preparing for the wedding of his daughter, Glorinha, to Teofilo. From the first moments of the film, Sabino’s obsession with acting as a ‘homem de bem’ or ‘man of honour’, is made obvious – the ‘homem de bem’ being an idealised form of masculinity set as a standard of behaviour for Sabino by his dying father. The family doctor, Camarinha, approaches him and tells him he caught Teofilo kissing his (male) assistant, Zé Honório. Camarinha advises him to call off the wedding, but Sabino cannot do so without suffering social embarrassment. As Glorinha is preparing for the wedding, she recalls her first meeting with Camarinha’s son, Antônio Carlos – a man with whom she has fallen in love even though he killed himself a year ago. She recalls the only day they spent together, when she went with him to the house of Zé Honório. There, Zé recounts his own traumatic past, before promising to have sex with his boyfriend in front of his paraplegic father in revenge for the abuse he received as a child. Zé’s father dies as a result of the threat (although no homosexual activity actually occurs in the film). When Glorinha returns home she tells Antônio Carlos that she does not want to see him again – he promptly kills himself. The film then returns to the present. Sabino is shown engaging in an affair with Noêmia, his secretary. She breaks off her relationship with her boyfriend, Xavier, out of love for Sabino. A love-sick Xavier finds Noêmia working late in her office and kills her, then
returns home and kills himself. Meanwhile, Glorinha and Sabino go for a car ride together during which Glorinha reveals that she is in love with someone she should not be (Antônio Carlos). Sabino interprets her words to mean she is in love with him, and kisses her – she flees, horrified. Finally, the day of the wedding arrives. Sabino, his mental state rapidly unravelling, is told about the murder of Noêmia. As the ceremony commences, Sabino leaves the gathering and confesses to the waiting press that he killed Noêmia, at which point the film ends.

**Distancing Strategies in the Adaptation of *O casamento***

Randal Johnson notes that the adaptations of Rodrigues’s work by Arnaldo Jabor are considered highly by critics. The playwright himself dismissed the cinematic incarnations of his work until he saw Jabor’s version of his play *Toda Nudez Castigada* (1965), of which he approved. Johnson suggests that Jabor deftly conceals the literary origins of his source, and that there is little in *O casamento* that appears to be ‘canned theatre’ thanks to the director’s skill. In general terms, the adaptation follows both the plot and the dialogue of the novel closely. The novel itself consists primarily of dialogue and internal monologue. For that reason, its transformation onto the screen is similar to a stage play and made relatively straightforward. But there are several notable differences in terms of content – the changes surrounding Zé Honório are vital to the film’s presentation of homosexuality and will be discussed in detail below. Characters are missing – Eudoxia, Sabino’s wife, plays a much reduced role in the film. Johnson comments that ‘despite appearances, most of them have been

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attenuated or softened by Jabor’s interpretation’. The most significant changes are made to the way in which the ideological critique is carried over onto the screen. In order to describe this, it is necessary to detail the assessment of bourgeois society that is articulated in the source text.

In the novel, the characters stray far from the strict standards of sexual behaviour that they ostensibly espouse: Sabino lusts after his daughter and has an affair with his secretary, while Glorinha lusts after a dead man and loses her virginity before her wedding day. Moreover, Rodrigues sets up a striking contrast between public behaviour and the thought processes of characters in order to illustrate the insincerity of bourgeois sexual decency. Through interior monologue, he suggests the characters’ public condemnation of sexual ‘deviance’ is matched by their secret fascination with it. This is largely communicated by way of an obsession with bodily fluids. Characters constantly think about and discuss bodily waste, including urine, vomit and sweat. For his neurotic characters, bodily fluids signify the transgressive sexual behaviour that secretly permeates respectable society. So, commentary on bodily fluids via interior monologue plays a central part in Rodrigues’s critique of the bourgeoisie – a critique that is altered in the process of adaptation. Jabor chooses not to relay the characters’ thoughts through voice-over. The adaptation process has a similar effect to Saraceni’s transformation of A Crônica da casa assassinada – significant details are lost when the text is translated onto the screen. The spectator no longer has direct access to character psychology. As a consequence, the majority of the spoken references to bodily fluids are omitted – in particular, the description of the sexual act as ‘uma mijada’ and the various discussions of urine, smell and sweat. So this immediately

57 Johnson, ‘Nelson Rodrigues as Filmed by Arnaldo Jabor’, p. 27.
reduces the sense of sexual deviance lurking beneath the façade of bourgeois respectability. Several instances present the bodily abject: Sabino vomits when he confesses to the priest, Xavier’s leprotic wife is covered in bloodstained bandages, and Noêmia’s death is particularly gory. It is true to say that these aspects inflect the film with a sense of the sordid and the unclean; to a certain extent, the adaptation preserves the sense that the standards of bourgeois society fail to successfully regulate the body. But it cannot sustain the novel’s contrast between public behaviour and private thoughts that makes the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie clear. Like A Casa, the adaptation process of O casamento would seem to diminish a vital thematic component to the novel and reduce its critical capacity. Jabor relies on other strategies to return this critique to the film; as will now be explained, the most significant of these techniques is the distancing of the spectator from the narrative itself.

According to Johnson,

O casamento [is] close enough to realism to make the spectator feel uncomfortable, and yet [is] exaggerated to such a degree as to create a critical consciousness in the spectator, causing him or her to question not only the ‘story’ transmitted, but also the form in which it is transmitted.58

Ismail Xavier would seem to agree, suggesting that the film aims to stall the spectator’s identification with the protagonist in order to present Sabino as neither hero nor villain but a victim of his own system of values.59 Arguably, Jabor estranges the spectator at points in the film that rehearse bourgeois narratives surrounding

58 Johnson, ‘Nelson Rodrigues as Filmed by Arnaldo Jabor’, p. 27.
sexuality, the most obvious example of which is the wedding sequence. It is presented as a totally bizarre event. The priest’s sermon is a vitriolic tirade against sin, which is clearly inappropriate subject matter for a wedding. This is coupled with shots of the smiling congregation, who seem to accept his words without question. The realism of the film is suspended and its theatrical dimensions come to the fore. This highlights the hypocrisy of the wedding – Glorinha, after all, knows that her husband is homosexual. It is held up as an essentially hollow and staged affair put on for the benefit of the public onlookers – for the security of Sabino’s reputation as ‘homem de bem’ – which gestures towards the insincerity of the institutions safeguarding bourgeois sexual morality in more general terms. This echoes the use of distanciation to denaturalize ideology prevalent in the films discussed in Chapter 1, and is arguably evidence of Jabor’s background in the Cinema Novo movement. In this sense, Jabor’s attitude to adaptation is ultimately comparable with the approach taken by Saraceni: the estrangement of the spectator works to strengthen the critique lost when the source is adapted for the screen.

**From Transgression to Identity: Adapting Homosexuality in *O casamento***

The treatment of homosexuality in the novel is figured alongside the litany of other sexual transgressions as yet more evidence of the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie. This is made particularly evident when Sabino offers his son-in-law a cheque as a wedding present, which Teofilo goes on to reject in order to demonstrate his honour. While both parties uphold bourgeois standards of behaviour, Sabino secretly attempts to smell Teofilo’s breath for traces of sperm; his inner thoughts show an obsessive hunt
for evidence of homosexuality in corporeal signs. By connecting same-sex desire to bodily fluids in the same way that incest and adultery are linked to vomit and urination, homosexuality is coded as another sexual wrong-doing, a transgression hidden behind pretended decorum. In this sense, homosexuality is conflated with the ‘lepra’ that the priest commands his congregation to confess to during the film’s final scene.

The central commentary on homosexuality takes place during Glorinha’s recollection of the time she spent with Antônio Carlos. In both Rodrigues’s text and in Jabor’s interpretation, the principal homosexual character is a relatively minor figure who serves as an emblem of the depravity that bourgeois society conceals, in much the same way that Timóteo did in Crônica da casa assassinada. Rodrigues’s version of Zé continues the associations between homosexuality and concealed transgressions. During Glorinha’s flashback, Antônio Carlos invites her and his girlfriend, Maria Inês, to visit Zé, apparently for the sheer fun of it. After delivering a disturbing speech, Zé declares his intent to have sex with his boyfriend in front of his father. Glorinha, Maria Inês and Antônio Carlos leave to have passionate, sadomasochistic sex in another room. Zé later tells the trio that his father has died. Antônio Carlos accuses Zé of killing his father, stating openly that he died as a result of seeing his son have sex with another man. By proposing homosexual activity as a cause of death, the novel stages the affront that homosexuality poses to heterosexist society. The scene constructs homosexuality as the ‘dark secret’ that must at all costs be concealed, the sight of which is so abhorrent to the father that it kills him. In a comparable fashion to Crônica da casa assassinada, the novel sustains the connection between

60 Rodrigues, O casamento, pp. 179-184.
homosexuality and physical and psychological corruption, decay and death throughout.

Homosexuality benefits from translation to the screen in a similar way to the adaptation of Timóteo: there is no direct evidence of character psychology in _O casamento_, so the associations between homosexuality and the bodily abject are simply not made in the film. This diminishes the sense that same-sex desire is merely another form of sexual wrongdoing and returns to it some of its lost specificity. Furthermore, the witnessing of homosexual sex no longer proves fatal for Zé’s father. Zé makes the same threat in the film as he does in the novel, but his boyfriend departs before he ever has the chance to carry it out. Although the father dies, the trauma which causes his death can be said to arise from his confrontation with his son (this point will be discussed later). This shift weakens a pejorative conception of homosexuality to some degree, at least, it is no longer so horrifying that the very sight of is potentially fatal. The first scene in which Zé appears sets up certain ideological structures in a comparable fashion to the shot of the Menezes’ portraits in _A casa assassinada_. In this case, however, the film focuses more explicitly on the relationship between the father and the homosexual son. The actor playing Zé, André Valli, interprets him as a caricature of an effeminate homosexual. As the scene begins, Zé dances to music in an effete manner; he gesticulates in an exaggerated fashion while his voice fluctuates in pitch between a low masculine tone and a high feminine one (fig. 77). Zé only speaks of his father in the novel; in the film Zé also relates a disturbing, hysterical monologue about his (deceased) house-proud mother, a departure from the source that generates a discussion of homosexuality in terms of identity, rather than as merely a sexual transgression. When he recounts his mother’s
views on their home he repeats her dialogue with the same exaggerated gestures, tone of voice and expressions as he uses in the rest of his monologue, blurring the distinction between his mother’s views and his own. Zé embodies the popular image of homosexuality as male effeminacy, and implies that homosexuality itself is really centred on an obsession with the mother – the son cannot successfully establish the distinctiveness of his identity from that of his mother. Zé also recounts how his father used violence in an attempt to remove all traces of same-sex desire from his son and return him to heterosexual normality. The film implicitly contrasts Zé with Antonio Carlos; it also draws a correspondence between the father and Antonio Carlos when he physically threatens Zé and impels him to deliver his monologue. Homosexuality serves as the degraded other – the male failure – against which both the father and Antonio Carlos position themselves. It is the supposed ‘failure’ of maleness that secures heterosexuality, masculinity, and father-identification as ‘success’, while also providing them with a target at which they can legitimately direct aggression.

While the film establishes a fairly conventional account of heterosexism here, it is important to recognise that the strong theatrical aspect of the scene overpowers the illusion of a realistic diegetic world and estranges the spectator. Not only does André Valli seem to play his character directly to the camera, but the set itself is configured as a stage, which works reflexively to call attention to the film’s status as a construction. Zé’s monologue might present homosexuality as an overpowering (fixed) identification with the mother, yet the form of its delivery is also reflexive – it holds itself up to be merely a performance of identity. Zé signals his performance of

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62 This might be disputed to the extent that the film itself is hardly a ‘realistic’ narrative; rather, the events are melodramatic and exaggerated, even preposterous. Nonetheless, this sequence is an instance in which the attempt to present a realistic setting for the outrageous and over-the-top events seems to have been suspended by Jabor; like the wedding itself, it appears particularly stagey.
the expected stereotype to be merely appearance, a display that aims to placate the aggression of Antonio Carlos. The overt staginess of the sequence also theatricalizes Antonio Carlos’s heterosexist behaviour – implying that his violence is driven by ideological notions of male identity that are constructed, not fixed, and thus amenable to modification or change. This reflexive component also exposes the dependence of heterosexual masculinity on homosexual effeminacy for its meaning – Antonio Carlos’s masculinity is itself only a performance that derives its ‘realness’ from its juxtaposition with the avowedly artificial Zé. In this sequence, O casamento goes some way to undermining the father’s authority by exposing the oppositional structures securing heterosexual masculinity as constructed (the notion that Zé’s identity is really only the performance of identity also paves the way for a kind of subject based on the recognition of inaccurate replication, akin to that discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the bonecas – this point will be discussed shortly).

**The Wayward Son, the Father and the Mirror**

The film presents what is arguably its most powerful image of the paterfamilias’s decrepitude in the scene that follows Zé’s introduction: his confrontation with his paraplegic father. This scene can first of all be seen as commentary on the decay of paternal authority. It exemplifies Xavier’s remarks that the film sets up ‘bad taste, hysteria, and family problems as historical symptoms of the decline of patriarchy in Brazil’.63 The scene delivers a striking image of the father as a weak, enfeebled figure: he is unable to fend off Antonio Carlos’s aggression, nor prevent his son from having homosexual sex in front of him. The pathos of the scene results from the conflict between a homophobic father and a son unable to live up to the ideals of masculine

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identity. This theme is arguably central to the film as a whole: Sabino’s struggles are focused on his continued failure to live up to the standards set by his father – he can never embody the ideal of the ‘homem de bem’ that he nonetheless ceaselessly pursues. In both cases, a continuity of identity between father and son is socially prescribed but impossible to actualize, resulting in tragedy for both Zé and Sabino. For this reason, Zé makes blatant what implicitly defines Sabino (that non-identity between father and son is part of human existence).

The final image of the sequence demonstrates that their conflict is centred on identity, as the shot is taken up with a large mirror showing Zé with his father (figs. 78, 79 and 80). As mentioned in the discussion of A Casa, the mirror provides the subject with a virtual copy of him or herself against which he or she would be compared, enabling him or her to hypostatize their own self-presence. The film brings the father into contrast with the mirror, which would seem to confirm his identity as ‘real’ and present in itself. At the same time, Zé is also faced with the mirror – it follows that the capacity of the mirror to ensure the self-presence of the father would extend to Zé, and ensures his self-presence at the same time. While the father’s identity depends on his difference from his homosexual son, to suggest that Zé is not self-present or natural but unnatural – a ‘pretend’ or ‘false’ man – would imply that the mirror has no capacity to assure identity, and that any self-presence it did affirm is illusory. In this sense, the film orchestrates a situation in which homosexual difference cannot be maintained without putting into doubt the security of the father’s identity. Furthermore, it suggests that paternal identity is grounded in an illusion of self-presence, and so ultimately just as representational as the filial copy.
The tragedy of Zé’s confrontation with his father persists up until the very last moments, when suddenly he makes a series of bizarre poses in the mirror. If it is accepted that Zé recognises the artifice of his own identity in this posing, then the mirror would present him with another version of his already artificial self. His narcissistic fascination with his reflection could be read as his acknowledging a relationship of correspondence between himself and another, equally representational self – a kind of inaccurate replication of the self, as discussed in relation to A rainha diaba. The doubling of a self that has been reduced to mere performance also follows the same kind of logic as André/Alberto in A casa assassinada: self-repetition that is also self-loss. Further correspondences made between repeated selves emerge during Zé’s monologue, where his reflexive performance of homosexual identity brings him into correspondence with other representations of identity – other similar versions of what he has effectively fashioned himself to be. This could include the mother’s portraits that crowd the walls, as well as a dress kept on a motorized stand: its disturbing motion temporarily generates a sense of her continued presence in Zé’s life while underlining that presence to be illusory in a similar fashion to Zé’s monologue itself.

Zé’s bizarre behaviour in both scenes can be seen as an aspect of Saraceni’s infidelity to the source that generates the possibility of reading him as a queer character. Zé does not challenge the threat of violence brought against him, nor presents homosexual identity as something positive (as really just as equal to heterosexual identity). Zé is acceding to the demands of Antonio Carlos when he performs his own identity as an exaggerated obsession with his mother: this self-abasement or self-

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64 The notion of correspondence here follows Bersani’s use of the term as indicating a non-hierarchical relation between similar formal components. See Bersani and Dutoit, Forms of Being, pp. 1-10. This is explained in more detail during the analysis of A rainha diaba.
abnegation dismisses the psychological depth of his psyche, rendering him mere performance, but also enables connections to be traced with other near-similar versions of himself, thus multiplying his selfhood. So, his assumption of a homosexual stereotype can be shown to (accidentally) lead to the possibility of self-extensive self-loss – a queer form of subjectivity that rejects conventional (self/other) sociality, which therefore also stalls the ability to be understood or related to (oppressed) in terms of self and other as well.\textsuperscript{65} Zé illustrates a method of escaping oppression by repeating and amplifying a stereotypical obsession with the mother: by acceding his position as homosexual other yet demonstrating an alternative to hierarchical father/son, self/other relationality, he thus undercuts paternal authority in a comparable manner to Timóteo. Of course, like Timóteo, Zé’s fate is hardly positive – his last moments in the film show him to be desperately unhappy. In this sense, Zé seems to be an ambivalent, subversively queer figure, but one that remains somewhat problematic for a politics of identity.

\textbf{Conclusions: Ambivalence Through Adaptation?}

This chapter examined how adaptation transforms ideas of homosexuality in three literary texts, paying attention to the ways in which the translation of homosexual characters to the screen can lead to critiques of certain aspects of heterosexist ideology. It has been noted above that all three films are in certain respects ambivalent in their ultimate attitude to homosexuality, clear from the fact that \textit{O beijo no asfalto}, \textit{A casa assassinada} and \textit{O casamento} all present homosexuality as bound up with tragedy, madness and death. The narrative of each film was implicitly centred on an

\textsuperscript{65} As Bersani says, without a radical reimagining of relationality, ‘all revolutionary activity will return, as we have seen it return over and over, to relations of ownership and dominance’. Bersani, \textit{Hemos}, p.128.
expression of same-sex desire – the drama of *O beijo no asfalto* arises after a questionable kiss between two men, Timóteo’s love for Alberto stimulates his hatred of his brothers, and Zé Honório kisses Glorinha’s husband-to-be Teofilo, so precipitating Sabino’s eventual collapse into madness. Same-sex desire is shown to pose a threat for the social order, either because it raises the possibility that the homosexual might pass unmarked, or because it is evidence of corruption that might expose the hidden transgressions of so-called ‘respectable’ society. By formulating same-sex desire as a threat to the status quo, but then presenting the homosexual figure as a miserable, criminal or insane figure, it is arguable that each film constitutes an operation of othering whereby the threat of same-sex desire is ultimately contained by fixing homosexuality as a form of sexual perversion. For this reason, even though each film worked to problematize the notion of a homosexual other, it is sensible to suggest that their usefulness for a queer politics of identity has to be proposed with a degree of caution. It is worth reiterating the fact that the original texts were shown to be less ambivalent in their espoused heterosexism, whether implicitly or explicitly, and that no film reproduces the heterosexism of the original without qualifying it, tempering the more oppressive ideas around sexual identity, and demonstrating ways in which it might be contested. It is arguable that the adaptation process has had the most noticeable (and positive) effects on the figure of Zé in this respect. Like Arandir and Timóteo, Zé generates his own ‘parcela de pecado’ by kissing Teofilo (he appears to recover from his father’s traumatic death a year earlier). This ultimately brings the nuclear family crashing down and exposes the patriarch to his own hypocrisy.

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66 Not only does Zé kiss Glorinha’s husband-to-be, so precipitating Sabino’s collapse into madness, but he effectively facilitates Glorinha’s obsession with Antonio Carlos by providing the intense emotional circumstances in which they have sex, for the first and only time. Her passion turns necrophilic when Antonio Carlos dies, and this eventually excites Sabino’s incestuous desire when she claims that she nurses forbidden love. This, in turn, causes him to confess his love for his daughter – the act that triggers his confession to the murder of Noêmia at the conclusion of the film. Zé essentially generates the entire narrative of *O casamento*, despite only participating in two short scenes in the film itself.
Unlike Arandir and Timóteo, however, Zé survives the film and escapes relatively unharmed. In this sense he makes a more successful challenge to the status quo, if in somewhat unintended fashion.

In a comparable fashion to Chapter 3, this analysis focuses on ways in with the stability of the social order is disturbed when homosexual figures are presented on-screen, often accidentally. Like the other films examined in this thesis so far, queer instances were often seen to result from the use of reflexivity, either as a deliberate strategy to show up social behaviours as constructed or hypocritical (O casamento), or as a way of pointing to the film’s status as an adaptation (O beijo no asfalto). In all three cases, the methods by which the directors negotiated the differences in medium and executed the adaptation process were central to problematizing the representation of homosexuality. Barreto’s decision to maintain an exceedingly high level of fidelity to the source text meant that extra material was needed in order to produce a film, rather than so-called ‘canned theatre’; heterosexism was therefore complicated by the way in which he manoeuvred O beijo no asfalto through the formal conventions of cinematic production while changing as little as possible of the original play. The directors of A casa assassinada and O casamento were similar in their approach to the adaptation process – while they largely retained the plot, characters and general themes of their source, both Saraceni and Jabor strove to replicate certain aspects of their original texts that would not translate directly to screen (the complex psychological experiences of the characters in the first case, the critique of the bourgeoisie in the second). The differing formal strategies they employed to do this (spectatorial positioning and distancing strategies) were also shown to be useful in undermining heterosexist ideas around fixed identity. Although assessing directorial
intent here is speculative, anti-heterosexual intentions are clearer in some cases (the inclusion of a diverse array of opinions on homosexuality in *O beijo no asfalto*) than others (Timóteo’s queer ‘authentic superficiality’ in *A casa assassinada* would likely be the fortuitous result of the use of visual signs in his depiction). In this sense, the value of these films lies less in their provision of subversive (but problematic) queer figures, and more, perhaps, in the ways in which they show how a form of cultural refashioning, film adaptation, might unwittingly undo and disturb heterosexism and generate queer perspectives on sexual identity.
Images for Chapter 4

Fig. 66

Fig. 67

Fig. 68

Fig. 69

Fig. 70

Fig. 71
Conclusion

The thesis has set out an argument for reassessing eleven Brazilian films produced during the 1960s and 1970s in terms of their potential value for queer identity politics. The films examined dealt with male characters who were marginalized by their experiences of same-sex desire, and could also be considered queer – that is, as challenging conventional ways of understanding homosexuality and sexual identity.

One reason for the reassessment centres on the fact that the films were often seen to comment on the dependence of dominant heterosexual subjects on a fixed homosexual other to secure their identity – usually, this dependency was implied rather than stated outright (Nos embalos de Ipanema, Corpo devasso, A casa assassinada, O casamento) but in one case it formed an important part of the narrative (O menino e o vento). The twenty-year period was marked by an increase in the number of films that presented homosexuality in terms of effeminacy – scholars have already suggested that pornochanchadas often sought to soothe the anxieties of (heterosexual) male spectators with the stock ‘homo-palhaço’ character, implying that a heterosexual male audience required, or at least appreciated, this denigrated homosexual other, as was mentioned in the Introduction.\(^1\) It was shown in Chapter 3 that this is also true for several pornochanchadas which, while they chose not to represent homosexuals in terms of effeminacy, still approached the topic of homosexuality from the angle of securing heterosexual identity (Nos embalos de Ipanema and Corpo devasso). In a comparable though distinct fashion, the films discussed in Chapter 4 used a homosexual ‘other’ to indicate the hypocrisy of traditional values regarding sexuality

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and to comment on failure of the paterfamilias (A casa assassinada, O casamento and O beijo no asfalto) – here, homosexuality stood for a general disenchantment with the ideological dominance of the patriarchal family itself.

The prevalence of processes of homosexual othering in the films selected from the production of 1970s not only strengthens the argument that popular filmmakers often pandered to heterosexual male audience members, but could perhaps even indicate a (perceived) weakening of the ideologies maintaining the status quo.\(^2\) In this sense, the films could be used to diagnose shifts in the belief-systems that shaped ideas around homosexual identity (and perhaps, in broader terms, even sexual identity) over the period.\(^3\)

The thesis has suggested that a general dismissal of the cinematic representation of homosexuality in the 1970s and 1970s on the grounds of homophobia is premature, as it does not take into account the ways in which heterosexism was negotiated by the individual films. The thesis has shown that even films that Moreno considers to be particularly homophobic – for example, A rainha diaba, A casa assassinada, O casamento – were actually somewhat ambivalent in their presentation of heterosexist ideology.\(^4\) On one hand, it would be unwise to completely ignore the fact that the films’ final word on homosexuality is often a harsh one: homosexual figures end dead, mad, revealed to be killers, or shown as desperately unhappy in five of the eleven films examined (A rainha diaba, A casa assassinada, O casamento, Corpo

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\(^3\) Moreno, A personagem homosexual, pp. 19 – 37.

\(^4\) Moreno, A personagem homosexual, p. 93, p. 97 and p. 107
devasso and O beijo no asfalto). This is perhaps unsurprising, given that the eventual punishment of the homosexual for his sexual transgressions – the trope of the ‘dead queer’ – is common to both Latin American and North American cinematic production of the time.\(^5\) On the other hand, it was suggested that no film presents heterosexist ideology without exposing its fundamental structures and sketching out its contradictions to some extent. Indeed, the convention of meting out punishment to homosexuals is never carried out in an entirely straightforward manner: the miserable Zé Honório survives to have his revenge on the patriarchal family, Timóteo’s death brings his beloved Alberto to life (which challenges self/other relations); even the pathologically sadistic bonecas could be shown to illustrate a way out of social hierarchies. In this sense, these films resist clear-cut condemnation of homosexuality, and even the most homophobic example considered hints at ways of resisting heterosexist oppression. It is also important to remember that homosexuality goes unpunished and oppressive notions of sexual identity are more successfully questioned in five of the films discussed, which suggests that one should not over-emphasize the role, albeit contradictory, of heterosexist ideology in the production of the period (*Barravento*, *Uma verdadeira história de amor*, *O menino e o vento*, *Nos embalos de Ipanema*, *Os rapazes das calçadas*). At worst, the films were ambivalently heterosexist; at best, they posed deeply problematic questions about the status quo, heterosexist ideology, and conventional social relations.

The role played by film form was shown to be central in problematizing heterosexist and patriarchal ideologies in all the films discussed. The film’s self-reference was

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\(^5\) In regard to US production, Vito Russo writes ‘In a kill ’em or cure ’em climate, violence by and towards homosexuals on-screen escalated at the end of the 1960s and became the keynote of the 1970s. Sissies were now cured, killed off or rendered impotent in suitably nasty ways.’ Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*, p. 162. On Latin American ‘dead queers’, see Waugh, *The Fruit Machine*, p.172-186.
often found to be the key aspect in enabling a queer reading to be made: signalling the constructedness of the film was shown to denaturalize the artificial binary of hetero/homosexual identity, but it could also lead to a notion of subjectivity as an experience of aesthetic self-replication, or allow same-sex desire to be indirectly represented on-screen. In the films discussed, reflexivity incites the spectator to read against the grain – it complicates the spectator’s view of the given diegetic world by suggesting that a second interpretation or perspective on that world exists. This meant that heterosexist assumptions could be presented while also being undercut, as the films were shown to tacitly gesture towards the queer ‘possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning [wherein] the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made […] to signify monolithically’ via self-reference.6 Often, the film’s reflexivity was shown to emerge in response to the pressures exerted on the filmmakers to represent homosexuality in a certain way: this is clear in the discussion of Uma verdadeira história de amor and Nos embalos de Ipanema, where reflexive components signal a desire to evade censorship by denying or concealing the presence of same-sex desire. In other cases, filmmakers commented on the positioning of the spectator itself (O menino e o vento, A casa assassinada) – here, the film’s use of reflexive form is directly tied to a critique of certain spectating practices which were implicitly or explicitly heterosexist. Reflexivity was also shown to be a formal component central to the stylistic approach taken by directors who had been affiliated with the Cinema Novo movement: the same distancing techniques used to demystify bourgeois ideology and expose underlying political, economic and social conditions could also expose patriarchal and heterosexist structures as constructed (Os cafajestes, O casamento, O beijo no

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asfalto). Occasionally, reflexive form was shown to relate less specifically to homosexuality and more to the exposure of oppressive belief-systems in general. In other cases, however, the film deliberately employed reflexivity to denaturalize processes of homosexual othering. In all cases, reflexivity rescued the film from merely reiterating oppressive belief-systems by indicating that homosexual content can be interpreted differently, thus allowing queer aspects to be suggested.

It was noted throughout the thesis that the films discussed might not have deliberately included reflexive elements, nor did they necessarily anticipate the queer elements that could be produced by their moments of self-reference. In the case of O menino e o vento, Uma verdadeira história de amor and O beijo no asfalto, it is possible to argue that their directors purposefully attempted to challenge conventional views on sexuality; this is less tenable in the case of the other films, where it is more apparent that the queer elements are unintended or accidental (especially in A rainha diaba). Many of the queer readings suggested in the analysis appear to have been made possible in the way the film follows the conventions of a particular genre, or ascribes to a stylistic approach of a particular cinematic movement – in this sense, it seems clear that the films’ cinematic heritage plays an important part in contesting certain aspects of dominant or conventional views around sexual identity. The films could therefore lead to the suggestion that other films not assessed in this project might be similarly ambivalent in terms of heterosexism, given the tendency of the dominant trends and movements of the 1960s and 1970s to include moments of self-reference (of course, this is not to suggest that all Brazilian films that touch on the subject of homosexuality while demonstrating reflexive elements would automatically count as queer – this would obviously have to be assessed on a film-by-film basis). In other
words, other films which exhibit the same generic and stylistic qualities of those examined here could also contain similar queer components without necessarily intending to contest conventional views on sexual identity. At least, the films’ accidental queering of sexual identity hints at the idea that the generalizing assumptions about heterosexism in Brazilian cinema are not necessarily accurate. This indicates that further investigation into Brazilian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s is needed; it also suggests that such investigation should remain attentive to the ways in which the affirmation of heterosexism is sometimes subtly stalled by aspects of the medium itself.

It has been argued that the films can be legitimately reclaimed for a politics of identity on a number of grounds: while the representation of same-sex desire in the cinema of the 1960s and 1970s remains ambivalently related to heterosexism – neither fully confirming it nor fully subverting it – these films still suggest sexual identity is a complex phenomenon, not ‘monolithic’ or stable but ambiguous, unfixed and contested. They affirm and negotiate heterosexism while tacitly or accidentally implying ways in which it might be subverted. This ambivalence is perhaps the films’ most valuable quality: it leaves the spectator with the notion that, although a successful challenge to the status quo is extremely difficult to actualize without repeating oppression, the seeds of resistance can nevertheless be found even in the most oppressive of images. Alongside providing queer readings of films that are well-known to critics and scholars (Os cafajestes, Barravento, A rainha diaba, O beijo no asfalto and O casamento), the project has also suggested analyses for films that have been given little scholarly attention up to this point (O menino e o vento, Uma

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7 Sedgwick, Tendencies, p. 8.
verdadeira história de amor, Nos embalos de Ipanema, Corpo devasso, Os rapazes das calçadas, A casa assassinada). By indicating that these films provided a complex account of homosexual identity while focusing a discussion of queer cinema around film form, the project contributes to the ongoing investigation into queer sexualities within Brazilian cinema. In this way, the project hopes to bring about a renewed focus on popular Brazilian cinema alongside the contributions of the avant-garde, both of which are shown to offer viewpoints on homosexuality that are by no means monolithic but rather unixed and troubling.
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_Bacalhau_, 1976, Adriano Stuart

_Barravento_, 1962, Glauber Rocha

_O beijo_, 1965, Flávio Tambellini

_O beijo no asfalto_, 1976, Bruno Barreto

_Os cafajestes_, 1962, Ruy Guerra

_A casa assassinada_, 1974, Paulo César Saraceni

_O casamento_, 1981, Arnaldo Jabor

_Um clássico dois em casa nenhum jogo fora_, 1968, Djalma Limongi Batista

_Como é boa nossa empregada_, 1973, Ismar Porto, Víctor di Mello

_Coração de mãe_, 1969, Sebastião de Souza’s short

_Corpo devasso_, 1980, Alfredo Sternheim
A cruz na praça, 1961, Glauber Rocha

Um desejo Proibido, 1980, Fauzi Mansur

Deus e o diabo na terra do sol, 1964, Glauber Rocha

Dona flor e seus dois maridos, 1976, Bruno Barreto

Garota de Ipanema, 1967, Leon Hirszman

A intrusa, 1980, Carlos Hugo Christensen

Limite, 1931, Mario Peixoto

Os machões, 1972, Reginaldo Faria

Macunaíma, 1969, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade

Madame Satã, 2002, Karim Ainouz

O menino e o vento, 1967, Carlos Hugo Christensen

Nos embalos de Ipanema, 1978, Antônio Calmon
Nos tempos de vaselina, 1979, José Miziara

A opinião pública, 1967, Arnaldo Jabor

Orgia, ou o homem que deu cria, 1971, João Silvério Trevisan

Porto de caixas, 1962, Paulo César Saraceni

A rainha diaba, 1974, Antonio de Fontoura

Os rapazes das calçadas, 1981, Levi Salgado

O roubo das calcinhas, 1975, Braz Chediak

Sadismo – aberrações sexuais, 1981, Fauzi Mansur

O sexualista, 1975, Egídio Eccio

Toda nudez será castiga, 1973, Arnaldo Jabor

Uma verdadeira história de amor, 1972, Fauzi Mansur

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