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Confrontation Cinema in the Age of Neoliberalism; Where Brazil and the United States Meet

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CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE
CONFRONTATION CINEMA IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM; WHERE
BRAZIL AND THE UNITED STATES MEET

SUBMITTED TO
SALVADOR VELAZCO
AND
DEAN GREGORY HESS
BY
RACHEL FAYE ROSENFELD

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Introduction

“Looking at Brazilian cinema for an American is like looking into a distorting mirror. The image is familiar enough to reassure but alien enough to fascinate”¹

In the authoritative work on Brazilian Cinema, Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, Professors of Film at the University of California at Los Angeles and New York University, respectively, assert that Brazil seems familiar to Americans because it is the New World country which most resembles the United States. Former European colonies, and currently residing “super-economies” of their respective continents, the United States and Brazil have shared a similar history, and as a result, a similar ethnic makeup. From the start, Brazil and the United States both badly mistreated the First Peoples of their respective territories. Once these native populations made it clear that they would not be a good source of labor, both nations heavily participated in the African slave trade. When the English took the moral highroad and abolished slavery, both the United States and Brazil fell in line and began to receive German, Italian, Lebanese, Slavic, Japanese, and many other immigrant laborers. These migrants intensely affected the intellectual and creative climate in these nations. Additionally, “No intelligent discussion of Brazil’s cultural production can ignore the central fact of its economic dependency”.² The solitary significant difference between these two nations is that one became economically independent, and the other economically dependent. Where the United States landed on its feet after gaining political independence, Brazil did not. Portuguese influence was

¹ Randal Johnson, and Robert Stam ed., *Brazilian Cinema*. (Expand , Morningside ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 17.

² Ibid.

followed by British imperialistic economic dominance, and later substituted by America as the Good Neighbor and Big Brother. Therefore, Brazil is structurally and economically tied to the nations which it has been dependant on. Generally, dependant nations are penetrated socially, culturally, and economically by those nations which they are dependant upon. In the case of cultural commodities, Brazil has been on the receiving end, and American literature, art, and film has become well known and received, where the United States knows very little about Brazilian art, literature and film, perhaps with the exception of the beautiful fruit-hat-clad, (I should mention Portuguese-born), actress Carmen Miranda. I believe, as do Stam and Johnson, that this one-way stream in the trade of creativity is unfortunate, as Brazil has produced many “culturally vital and formally innovative”³ novels, pieces of art, and films in history. My purpose then, in choosing to compare American film with Brazilian film, is to use a nation which is culturally similar to the United States in order to provide for deep comparative analysis into a society and history of film makers which may relate to and identify closely with the American experience and vice versa.

Through film, both the United States during the current War on Terror, and Brazil during and after the Military Dictatorship have protested government actions and a perceived threat to democratic rights. Due to the inherent similarities in American and Brazilian culture, how have Brazil and the United States acted similarly and how have they differed in their approach? How do these films undermine and seriously question the internal and external policies of their governments, specifically in relation to perceived threats against democracy, with specific attention paid to the Brazilian military

³ Ibid., 18-19.

dictatorship and the American experience in the War on Terror, and what does this imply for the future of politically charged cinema? In an age in which the usual suspects for alternatives to authoritarian, capitalist, or dissatisfactory regimes have fallen (socialism and communism), what will emerge as a dominant alternative, if any? Historically, how have American and Brazilian films and filmmakers communicated political messages regarding the powers-that-be, and may this be used as an indication of future action? I intend to discuss these problematic issues in further detail in the following chapters.

The consequent sections will be structured in the following manner. Political Film will be defined and explored throughout the first chapter. Primarily, this investigation asks: What is the relationship between politics and cinema, and why is it significant? How have directors and artists conveyed this relationship through film? Here, I will identify the different forms a political film may take. Subsequently, the investigation will move to the United States and Brazil, the two countries on which this study focuses on, to discuss the specific connection between politics and film as isolated cases. Additionally, I will look at the particular types of political films from both Brazil and the United States which will be used in this study of political film. The second chapter will focus on a historical analysis of the time period of the Military Dictatorship in Brazil, subsequent leaders since the fall of the dictatorship, and the current political climate in the United States regarding the War on Terror. In the third chapter, I will analyze and discuss the particular Brazilian films which have been chosen for the purpose of this investigation in relation to the political climate. These films include *Zuzu Angel*(2006), *City of God*, *Cidade de Deus* (2002); *Land in Anguish*, *Terra em Transe*(1967); *Four days in September*, *O que é isso, companheiro?*(1997); and *The Elite Squad*, *Tropa da*

Elite(2007).⁴ Accordingly, the last chapter will analyze the American films which have been chosen to compare with the Brazilian films listed above. These films include: *In the Valley of Elah*(2007), *Redacted*(2007), and *Rendition*(2007), among a brief discussion of other relevant and quite recent releases such as *Lions for Lambs*(2007). The epilogue will consider and compare my findings in the previous two chapters regarding the ways in which films and filmmakers have addressed the problem of popular opposition to government and domestic/international actions and decisions made internally and externally.

I would like to acknowledge that the topic of political film is a widely studied and varied subject in which I am a humble student compared to the established and coveted minds which have already contributed to the field. I would like to contribute to the specific topic of protest film, understanding Brazilians' seeming complacency, and the way in which American film is not alone in its outspoken views against the status-quo. This is not a study of genre or films generally, nor is it an investigation of the specific policies of the Brazilian and American governments. This is also not a study of the history of protest film in Brazil and the United States, or a general history of film and the film industry in either nation. This examination of political film does not aim to prove that the film industry has (or has not) deeply changed in character and purpose at the hand of popular opinion, nor that film has profoundly swayed society or had intentions to do so. This is a study of how society responds to policy that it does not feel represents the interest of the people of the nation and what the function of film may be in this equation.

⁴ Please note that the titles of all Brazilian films mentioned in this study have been translated into English by me if there has not been established a popular American title for the film. The structure I intend to use throughout the work is English Title, *Portuguese Title* (year produced).

I aim to examine how the age-old interplay of politics and film has decided the tone with which society records and recalls history. The period of the Brazilian Military Dictatorship, through the 1960s-1980s, is uniquely marked by an extremely violent and repressive government in Brazil, and the first popularly-protested military defeat for the US post-WWII (the Vietnam War). The current era at the start of the 21st century for the United States is marked by an age of terrorism and the war against it in which religion, ideology, and violence are woven into a complicated mess both in and outside of Iraq. This research is important because it will analyze the way in which films of these distinctive periods have responded to these extreme perceived threats to democracy and society's perception of national interest. This is important for today's critical films and the way film will continue to record (protest/tolerate) controversial political decisions in the future. The films that have been created with their hands over their ears regarding the Vietnam War, in loud protest to the Iraq War, or in the coded language of revolt in response to the harsh military dictatorship in Brazil and may lead an audience to seriously question the concept of government itself. This research is also important to compare the internal and external politics of the time with the way politics influenced these films and how politics were represented. While the intellectual and privileged minority attends private institutions of higher learning, the mass public understands history through cinema, among other media in popular culture. What is not factually accurate in the theatre is reproduced as "common knowledge" and public opinion. As television/cinema is the only uniting experience which most Brazilians and Americans share despite the economic gap in between these countries, the issue of broadcasting information through film is quite important. This may shed some light on today's problematic confusion over

reported news and, in general, understanding of international and historical actions (for example, the common belief that Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein share the same vision for the future of Islam, the fuzzy uncertainty regarding the connection between Afghanistan, Iraq, Al-Qaeda, Saddam Hussein, September 11th, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Israel, or the harm the military dictatorship caused in return for promised economic stability, and who terrorists may be defined as both in Brazil and the United States).

It is generally accepted that while some films are made to imagine the future, record history, and inform audiences, films help to relieve tension and offer escape to many whose lives are neither exciting nor glamorous like the lives of those in films. Although this may superficially appear to serve the purpose of entertainment, what is more profound is the ability of the film to instill hope and faith in people to create change for themselves or in the will and capacity of the powers-that-be to bring about the necessary change to improve the quality of living. Important questions to ask are: What freedom of choice do the characters in these films have to choose a better future? Is the future unclear? What are the possibilities for the present? Does the past give the audience any hope for a return to liberty, prosperity, and happiness or simply closure regarding the past? Many political films are able to accomplish both of these goals.

Chapter 1: The Smell of Revolution and Popcorn

Sam Goldwyn, American film producer, has been quoted many times with regards to political films for his statement that, “Messages are for Western Union”.⁵ Though pithy and clever, Mr. Goldwyn’s claim that politics should be kept out of the movies, which are for entertainment, has not gone unchallenged. With regards to Mr. Goldwyn’s statement, there have been various polemic texts and works representing the view that films are highly political, whether it was the film’s intention to be political, or not. Often, political sentiments are well hidden in a film to inconspicuously challenge or support the status quo. Examples of films from the United States and Brazil will outline the various ways in which political films have been organized and the terms in which they have been analyzed. This chapter will provide a basic framework of political film to aid in analysis and understanding of the following chapters. Laying out this basic history of previous work and thought in this field, will facilitate identification of patterns and trends in the context of the films used for the purposes of this investigation.

I have chosen to concentrate on specific iconic films from the United States and Brazil and identify how these films challenge society as they cleverly or ineffectually include politics through both oblique and explicit remarks. In analysis of the selected Brazilian films, the approach for looking at films politically will be through the film’s

⁵ Phillip Gianos, L. *Politics and Politicians in American Film*. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), 3.

narrative, or literally, story. This line of thinking is adapted from Mas'ud Zavarzadeh's work, *Seeing Films Politically*, where Zavarzadeh, much like myself, is looking not at how films are political solely through rhetoric and the most formal aspects, but why they are political. In other words, though the formal aspects of film analysis are accounted for, the overall story and cultural context are paramount to this study. In Zavarzadeh's critique of how modern film criticism "makes sense of film"⁶, he focuses on ideology in film and the ways in which ideology forms connections between the viewer and the outside world. In his critique of the film critic's habit of protecting the individuality and uniqueness of film, he believes that film criticism has been limited to the formal aspects of film which tell us how a film gives the message it does, as opposed to using the narrative of a film to explain why the message has the significance it has within the context of film and society. Zavarzadeh admits: "I must add here that seeing films 'other' wise (or even ideological struggle for that matter) in and of itself, will not change the world, but it will help to produce counterintelligibilities that can denaturalize the existing social relations and thus become part of the larger project of a global revolution".⁷ In other words, these narratives presenting protest will not bring political change in isolation, but do contribute to or reflect the general sentiment of dissatisfaction, disapproval, and the need for change.⁸

Although ideological films have successfully influenced, comforted, and united many people, have they equally motivated society to fight for and against the status quo to gain justice or democracy? Various cinema personalities may hesitantly agree with

⁶ Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, *Seeing Films Politically*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-31.

Goldwyn, as they find it difficult to believe that films instigate political change. They acknowledge political messages in movies, but believe that: “movies seldom lead public opinion; they merely reflect public opinion and perhaps occasionally accelerate it [...] No motion picture ever started a trend of public opinion or thinking. Pictures merely dramatize these trends and keep them going.”⁹ These are the words of Dore Shary, producer of *Battle Ground*(1949), and a number of political films in the 1940’s. The ongoing debate over whether political films reflect political opinions or communicate messages to attempt to influence, inspire, and mobilize the masses continues today. Interestingly, many of the critics who hold the opinion that that films are not political identify as part of the political left. They charge that films are not political *enough* and need to deal more directly with racism, sexism, war, violence, and torture.

What makes a Political Film

There have been many conflicting voices in the debate over of what constitutes a political film, one of which maintains that all films are political, whether they were intended to be or not. A film may deny having political intentions, yet the way in which the audience interprets the film and gives it political urgency, however ephemeral, causes the film to gain political significance. A prime example of this phenomenon is *The Wizard of Oz*(1939) by Victor Fleming based on the children’s novels written by L. Frank Baum in 1900. Although both Baum and Fleming deny having any political agenda, many fans and film critics have interpreted the film as a politically charged allegory and believe that despite denials, both Baum and Fleming were Populist artists.

⁹ Michael A. Genovese, Politics and the cinema ed., *The Political Film : An Introduction*. 2nd ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom Pub., 1998), 10.

According to the analysis of such fans and film critics, the Tin Man is representative of the factory worker, the Scarecrow is the farmer, the Yellow Brick Road is the Gold Standard, and the Cowardly Lion and Great Wizard of Oz represent the Democratic-Populist candidate in 1896, William Jennings Bryan, a coward chock full of big, yet, empty words and promises.¹⁰ The relationship between film and politics may be structured in terms of intentions, but this relationship may be discussed in terms of genre as well.

Michael A. Genovese, in *The Political Film: An Introduction* (1998), structures the typology of political films in terms of genre, the three most general being Commercial, Noncommercial (Private Organization), and Government. Under Commercial there are six subcategories which are: Drama, Propaganda, War, Sci-Fi, Comedy, and Documentary. There are four subcategories under Noncommercial identified as: Propaganda, Documentary, Promotional and Instructional. Lastly, Government only holds three subcategories: Documentary, Information, and Propaganda.¹¹ Of course, there are many other genres and subgenres of political film. The Western, Slapstick and Satire are good examples of other classifications.¹²

In terms of genre, this study is mainly concerned with commercial film, though noncommercial and government film will be mentioned and used to supplement information regarding commercial films. The independent film is omitted from Genovese's analysis, but I would like to include this genre as well, as independent films

¹⁰ Paul Buhle, David Wagner ed., *Radical Hollywood : The Untold Story Behind America's Favorite Movies*. (New York: New Press, 2002), 123-124.

¹¹ Genovese, *The Political Film : An Introduction*, 30.

¹² Note: In my corpus which I have consulted, political film theory has been laid out in terms of genre as opposed to hard analysis. I acknowledge that sources may exist which contain analysis constructed differently. For this reason, this chapter is structured in terms of genre, though my own analysis will be constructed in other terms to be defined in Chapter 4.

are often political in ways which commercial films cannot be due to lack of creative liberty. Independent films may not have the budget and technology which sponsored films have, but in return they have freedom from control of the industry and sponsors. It is important to briefly discuss different approaches to the political film, though Drama/Melodrama is the style of the films analyzed in this examination. In addition to these genres, films may be structured allegorically which may be considered a subgenre. In Brazilian film, this is a convenient technique, due to the extensive censorship by the Military Dictatorship, particularly in the period of 1968-1972. The parallel between political figures and events in an allegorical structure allows the film to communicate a political message and avoids the problem of criticizing and speaking directly to any specific event, time period, regime, or figure, and therefore, also avoids the wrath of oppressive political forces. The most obvious example of allegorical film in Brazilian film history is Glauber Rocha's *Land in Anguish*, *Terra em Transe* (1967), a film I have selected to analyze in depth. In its narrative, the film criticizes President João Goulart's leftist populist government for its weakness, as it could not prevent the military *coup*. Although the setting of the film is obviously in Brazil, the fictional country is called *El Dorado*, satirically recalling the European legends about a land of gold to be found in Latin America. Even the title is allegorical; *terra* or land in "*transe*" literally translating to "trance", the state of a person possessed by an *Orixá* or god/saint in the Afro-Brazilian religion *Candomblé*, similar to Haitian *Voodoo* and Cuban *Santería*. The allegory in the 1960s and 1970s in Brazil is very much based in the protest film and music of the artistic philosophy and strategy of Tropicalism or *Tropicalismo*, which gave birth to the film movement, Cinema Novo, employing allegory in the form of the melodrama.

No longer able to make a cinema of direct social critique, former cinema novo film-makers turned to melodrama and more specifically to family dramas to make their comments obliquely and ironically on Brazil's conservative modernization.¹³

In Rocha's *Terra em Transe* this is most obviously seen in the corrupt and wretched politicians opposed by the poet protagonist, who is also shown to be equally weak.

Generally, it may be said that: "Melodramas are often highly stylized. [...] this is to do with the effects of censorship [...] In this regard, style becomes used as meaning. In order to convey what could not be said [...] décor and mise-en-scène had to stand in for meaning"¹⁴, indicating that action and narrative, as opposed to characters, drive the film forward, representing a particular situation exaggerated by the staging and set.

An allegorical film may take the form of not only melodrama and drama, but also comedy, horror, etc. The allegory does not need to be exceedingly specific with respect to the issue and personality it represents, and may often employ the technique of the balanced scale or a wide-ranging political stance in order to deal with controversial subjects to avoid the problem of insufficient funding and exposure. An example of this cup-half-full and half-empty strategy is the last scene of the Brazilian film; *City of God*, *Cidade de Deus*(2002); in which the film clearly expresses anticipation of an increase in violence in poor communities in Rio de Janeiro as the antagonist in the film is shot to death by a group of young children who represent a multiplication of violence and a hopelessness which Brazilians appear to inherit at an increasingly early age. Yet, at the same time, the protagonist finds social mobility and the opportunity to successfully express himself through photography and photojournalism. The audience may take away

¹³ Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies : The Key Concepts*. (2nd ed. London ; New York: Routledge, 2000), 57.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 220.

what it wishes from these inconclusive closing moments of the film. Although this sort of film is sending mixed messages, most political films are decidedly partial to one view. Propaganda, the most obvious type of political film, is the extreme opposite of open-ended and balanced.

Ironically, political content is not what makes propaganda truly propaganda. The propaganda film is defined by the intentions behind the film and not the actual content. The intent is to persuade and influence belief and behavior. The propaganda film should not be underestimated. Leaders such as Benito Mussolini, Vladimir Lenin, and Leon Trotsky have defined this as the “best weapon”, a great tool to influence large masses, and “the best instrument for propaganda”, respectively.¹⁵ Propaganda film is different than the educational film; although both force the audience to process information and reflect on it, the propaganda film conveys exactly what the audience should think, whereas education instructs on the method of thinking.¹⁶ Looking to foreign film, Sergei Eisenstein was one of the world’s greatest propaganda film makers. A Russian film director in the 1920s, Eisenstein helped Vladimir Lenin to indoctrinate Marxism and educate Russians in the Glorious Revolution. Some of his most famous works include *The Battleship Potemkin*, *Броненосец Потёмкин*(1928); *October*, *Октябрь*(1928); and *Alexander Nevsky*, *Александр Невский* (1938). These films heavily influenced the infamous Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s head of Propaganda.¹⁷ Government leaders were quick to pick up on the power of films over culture. “The first generation of ideologically oriented scholars tended to see the culture industry as a monolithic source

¹⁵ Genovese, *The Political Film : An Introduction.*, 57.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 58.

of officially sanctioned propaganda”.¹⁸ Case in point: in addition to pro-America films to both inspire and scare Americans during the 1940s-70s, many other parts of popular culture were used such as clothing items with camouflage and American Flag patterns. However, there are other ways to influence the behavior and thoughts of the people.¹⁹

In film, genre is most often defined by a common style or subject, yet, the genre of political films has no common style or subject throughout. There are no formal features to determine what a political film is and the line between political and non-political film is decidedly porous and ambiguous. There are many different phrases that have been used to name the above types of political films such as “confrontation cinema”, “problem films”, “ideological films”, “social problem films”, and “audience-determined political films”. These films both reflect and influence popular political thought and mobilization in favor of or against a government or influential figure. These films can be used as propaganda, overt tools of revolution and transformation, protests of censorship, and as records of history in the way the film director and producer, or the entity which controls the purse strings, wants the world to remember history. (An example of the latter would be to glorify war and minimize the horror of battle, or to redefine as heroes what a previous regime deemed as terrorists and enemies of the state). Even films which avoid the subject of war or a violation of domestic liberties and

¹⁸ James E Combs, ed., *Movies and Politics : The Dynamic Relationship.* (New York: Garland Pub., 1993), 10-11.

¹⁹ Other such ways to influence society outside of the direct formation of films through genre and other formal aspects include influence from government institutions. It will be discussed in following chapters how the influence of the government through created institutions to dictate popular intellectual thought and support film industry through subsidizing, financing, producing, and distributing film in both Brazil and the United States has affected the ideology in such commercial films. The discussion of independent film, then, is quite important to this discussion. Even though government sponsored or permitted films protesting government actions, only the independent film may be considered truly as expressing genuine political dissent.

freedoms are indirectly political; the political climate and concerns of the film industry are revealed by what they do not say, rather than what they do say. Both liberal and conservative directors have used propaganda and war-themed film in order to communicate their dialogues.

Liberal directors may be challenging the same conservative hegemony that right-wing directors promote. War films both excite and inspire through heroism and action; they give purpose to suffering and sacrifice, and revive spirits. World War II inspired a myriad of pro-war films and propaganda films. As Brazil and Mexico were the only two Latin American countries to join the allied cause in WWII, Brazilian film also depicted a pro-USA and WWII spirit. Although there are many cinematic examples of such, the most commonly cited is Disney's *Zé Carioca*, or Jose Carioca, a parrot friend of Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse, along with Mexican rooster, Pancho Pistoles, introduced in 1943. Introduced for the purpose of introducing Brazil and Mexico to the United States and vice versa, *Zé* was a key character in film's take on the "Good Neighbor Policy". WWII was a common theme in film in the 1940s and 1950s, however, the American film industry during the Vietnam War is best known for acting as though the war simply did not exist. War films have historically served the interest of the state, yet, the films which depict the Vietnam War following a withdrawal of U.S. troops were not pro-war films. An anti-war film, "shows the dangers and anxieties involved in even a minor military excursion".²⁰ Just the opposite of the pro-war films of World War II such as *Twelve O'Clock High*(1949) by Henry King in which even the cooks and secretary at the U.S. airbase sneak onto fighter planes to get a piece of the Germans, these anti-war films show

²⁰ Ibid., 72.

the grotesque nature of war, the futility of the war, a war which as it progressed increased in madness and horror. Films such as *Apocalypse Now*(1979) by Francis Ford Coppola which literally depict the journey into the heart of hell as the progression of the war continues, are among the most famous anti-war films. The incompetence of military leadership and the attempt to personalize the war are both popular themes throughout. These films “show the actual consequences of military life when actual war breaks out”.²¹ Although the anti-war film is most often portrayed as drama or tragedy, various successful comedies have been made as well.

The Marx Brothers and Charlie Chaplin are among the most famous comedic political critics in film. “Within this political and historical context, Chaplin and his collaborators fashioned the film and expressed an ideological perspective. Chaplin’s *The Great Dictator*(1940) develops its Popular Front anti-fascism through topical satire”²², as Chaplin plays both a Jewish character and Adenoid Hynkel, a thinly disguised Hitler figure. The Marx Brothers, constricted and cynical with regard to politics, violated as many rules as possible in their surreal and anarchic comedies which attacked social conventions, logic, and order. One of their most famous exploits, *Duck Soup*(1933), depicts a war triggered by a petty affront on one of the characters, showing patriotism as silly and diplomacy as a ridiculous charade. Through comedy, directors may approach what would otherwise be a serious and morose topic through unconventional means. By poking fun and ridiculing, many films discredited Hitler and Communism in the Second World War and the Cold War following.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 249.

In the same way that the Comedy may poke fun and comment on a very serious topic, political films in the form of Science Fiction have the opportunity and potential to show a hypothetical world, future or past, in which different regimes take control, particular individuals gain power, and wars are raging. Though removed from reality, these allegorical and hypothetical situations serve to communicate, remind, and warn the world against the disastrous price we will pay as a result of such turns of events. *Metropolis*(1926), by Fritz Lang, shows a world in which technology has dominated humans and runs a totalitarian-state. This dehumanized state clearly depicts the sentiment that the future of democracy and mankind did not look bright in 1926, though Lang does end on an optimistic note: that it is not too late. He vicariously says through the solitary slave girl, who stands up and preaches love, that if society is able to find its human dignity and regain its humanity, as well as find the bravery to fight the state, all is not lost.

The Documentary makes political commentary and communicates a message in the opposite way that Sci-Fi does. Where Sci-Fi is representational, indirect, and fictional, the Documentary is real and directly expresses the opinions and beliefs of individuals. Whether the Documentary is Propaganda, Social Action, Realistic, or Newsreel oriented, the realist approach of the documentary lends itself well to social and political analysis. Often including interviews, the political opinions of individuals and groups are explicitly expressed. Emile De Antonio, best known for his documentary *Point of Order*(1963), regarding the Army-McCarthy hearings, says regarding the documentary:

The film is not an attack on McCarthy. The film is an attack on the American government. [...] the basic idea was to tell the story of what happened and to reveal the softness of the system, and to reveal how a demagogue was undone by a machine, because he was not undone by a principled stand or by morality or by anyone being against him²³

which is also indirectly criticizing everyone who did not stand up against McCarthy because they were paralyzed by fear. These hearings did not disgrace Communists; rather the witch-hunters were debased by their cruelty and seen as monsters.²⁴ The successful political documentary will give new meaning and insight into reality and life with regards to the democratic character of government, or lack thereof.

Everyone Loves a Drama Queen

A study of political documentary would be fascinating and give light to the issue of social responses to perceived encroachment on democratic liberties through the voices of many, however, this study focuses on a selection of dramas/melodramas which give voice to the artist, a conscientious individual who may view themselves as representing the masses, or responsible for communicating to the populace. A successful political film in the form of a drama will strike an emotional chord. Dramas may be current, important, affect the thinking of its audience, capture or embody an emotion or experience of a certain generation or other demographic, or none of the above.²⁵ The Drama, more so than the other genres mentioned, has the potential to be more than a commercial success directed by a technician of film rather than an artist. The technician has no other objective than to entertain and competently construct a film. The artist has a style and

²³ Genovese, *The Political Film : An Introduction*, 55.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 29

independent vision. Such artists are Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Fritz Lang, Frederico Fellini, Pedro Almodovar, and Jean-Luc Godard.²⁶ Within the debate regarding political films, there is another debate regarding the creation of the film and who is responsible for the political message within. The most commonly accepted response to this is that the studio, writers, producers, and director combined are responsible. However, for the purpose of this study, “auteur theory” will be employed with regard to Glauber Rocha and other directors/producers with a very distinct style. This theory credits the director with having the political enthusiasm shown in the film.²⁷ “This leads us to the idea that to understand the politics of the movies, one might focus either on the messenger or the message. [...] We here suggest the expansion of the familiar auteur theory to include in what sense was the creative talent political. The great ‘pantheon’ of directors who did have some financial and artistic control over their movies might be usefully studied as to what kind of political vision seems inherent in their work”.²⁸ Auteurs as political communicators are only as effective as their ability to communicate and the audience’s ability to understand.

For the purposes of this study, the directors and artists such as Cao Hamburger and Glauber Rocha will be discussed in further detail in later sections which deal with specific Brazilian films, the intentions and dreams of the auteurs, and the Cinema Nôvo movement.²⁹ In relation to the genre of Drama, however, the director’s message, often in the case of American wars and Latin American military regimes, the actions the

²⁶ Daniel P. Franklin, *Politics and Film: The Political Culture of Film in the United States*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 96-97.

²⁷ Genovese, *The Political Film : An Introduction*, 27.

²⁸ Combs, *Movies and Politics : The Dynamic Relationship*, 236.

²⁹ The Cinema Novo movement, as it was extremely anti-Hollywood, anti-big budgets, and anti-fancy technology until the 1970s left ample room for auteurs to produce intellectual and low-budget films.

government is taking to “protect and preserve freedom”, does so at the cost of the personal freedoms of the individuals in the society. The emotional ties the audience should feel with the characters and the character development which takes place in a drama allow the audience to identify with the emotions of the characters. Loss, restriction, conformity, fear, failure and powerlessness are all common emotions the audience may identify with. The Drama is close enough to the human predicament that the audience is easily affected by and learns from it, yet romanticized and removed sufficiently so that the audience does not create cognitive dissonance or dismiss the political message at hand. The melodrama in Brazil is even more effective, as the allegorical story used is often domestic and much more similar to quotidian predicaments. The various dramas selected for analysis demonstrate the Auteurs’ desire for change and justice, as well as their criticisms. I would like to argue that Drama is particularly important to analyze with respect to political films depicting society’s perceived infringement on their democratic freedom or rights. The Drama may attack government and the ideological construct of society or the way in which we view history. People attach themselves to a drama/melodrama, a good story, whereas they do not do so with documentaries. Although a comedy or sci-fi may be entertaining, we do not connect with and relate to these genres as easily. With regards to political films generally, “within those canons of communication the movies have the potential to ‘reach’ large and diverse audiences whose movie experience lets them understand intuitively”.³⁰ A person can truly live vicariously through a drama/melodrama.

³⁰ Ibid., 20.

Strike a Pose

In addition to looking at Auteurism and Genre, one may identify political film through Formalism, or the form the film takes in terms of structure and style. Such elements in formalism may include frame, title, dialogue, color, and sound, among many other elements. The title of a film may be cleverly suggestive; *Land in Anguish, Terra em Transe*(1967) is clearly signifying that the film will center on a place which is in trouble. The dialogue of a film, particularly in the beginning, is also quite important as it generally will inform the audience about the characters and the action. Frequently there will be a character, “one who plays the role of the audience’s surrogate and is uninformed about background information,”³¹ for the sake of the audience, so that this information may be fully explained. Besides the actual content of the dialogue and the way in which it is delivered may be of importance. An accent may amplify dialogue; a perceived Russian accent may be employed to point out which of the characters are “bad guys” in many James Bond films. Names may also be particularly significant. A good example of how a name may be essential to getting at the crux of intention is in Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: Space Odyssey*(1968). “The computer HAL in *2001: Space Odyssey*(1968) becomes IBM if one goes one letter further into the alphabet for each letter in Hal’s name”.³² Therefore, Kubrick’s message regarding technology and the dangers and power of such advances are clear, and refer to an entity in this field with which the audience is familiar.

Sound and music are equally indicative of the political agenda of the film/auteur. These indicate mood and may force the audience to listen to dialogue, sit in silence,

³¹ Gianos, *Politics and Politicians in American Film*, 27-28.

³² *Ibid.*, 28.

drown out the sounds of a speech or action, or may exaggerate and amplify speech.

Likewise, lighting is another important element to consider. Robert Ebert, film critic, wrote a commentary in 1989 on the significance of the lighting in Alfred Hitchcock's, *Notorious*(1946):

There is a moment when Ingrid Bergman walks slowly through a doorway toward Cary Grant. He is listening to a record of secret testimony, which proves she is not a Nazi spy. At the beginning of the shot, Grant thinks she is guilty. In the middle, he does not know. At the end, he thinks she is innocent. Hitchcock begins with Bergman seen in blacklit silhouette. As she steps forward, she is half light, half shadow. As the testimony clears her, she is fully lighted. The lighting makes moral judgments.³³

The lighting in the film shows the audience what the character is realizing. Lighting gives us clues as to who to trust and who to doubt, or what may be safe and what may be dangerous. The lighting and audio effects help the audience decipher what the film wants them to understand, but the characters themselves must also be analyzed. The actions of characters most often move and illustrate the plot of the film. A character may represent more than an individual, but a type of person or a group of people as well. The props and wardrobe used by the characters in their dealings further the impact or subtract from the significance of their actions. Mirrors, guns, hats, photographs, and even hair color may be used as props or considered part of the wardrobe of a character. These props signal different things to the audience. A common example is the association of evil with dark and good with white; blonde and brunette hair may be used specifically to describe the nature of a character. The importance of color in films extends far beyond the hue of hair. Donald Spoto, a celebrity film biographer, has often commented on color in films

³³ Ibid., 14.

associating specific colors symbolically repeated through films to show connections between various characters.

Another aspect of Formalism is the Composition and Camera Movement and Placement, also known as *mise-en-scène*. This allows one to experience the film from the perspective of a particular character; as part of a crowd; or in a small series of frames, and see a symbolic progression of the plot. Editing determines the pace of a film or the order/perspective shown. Israeli film director, Amos Gitai, is well known for his lack of editing. In his films *Kippur*(2000) and *Kedma*(2001) he uses long unbroken shots with long pauses between action and dialogue. He edited very little of what he filmed. This makes for a long and painstakingly slow film, which is exactly how Gitai felt about wars. All of the above elements of Formalism may be examined to extract political messages of revolution or criticism. “Further, these messages take on patterns of internal arrangement, allowing us to read the semiotics, or ‘signs and meanings’ in the movies that only the medium can communicate”.³⁴ In other words, the formal elements which will prove to be the most fruitful in analysis are those which are repeated or arranged in a particular way in which the significance and warnings become clear to the audience.

Finding Your “ism”

Outside of Formalism, a less technical way to analyze film is in terms of political ideology. Political ideology may be defined as an ethical set of principles which give a structure for how society and politics should be constructed and how this structure may

³⁴ Combs, *Movies and Politics : The Dynamic Relationship*, 20.

be implemented.³⁵ Often political film theorists “look behind ideology to see the social and historical forces and struggles which require it and to examine the cinematic apparatus and strategies which make ideologies attractive”.³⁶ Whatever it is that makes these ideologies attractive in films, it likely contributed to the fact that, “The movies were often as likely a medium of ideological subversion as ideological indoctrination. It began to become clear that the mass public, and movie audiences, were not fools, and got a polysemic variety of messages from movies that were not necessarily those approved by the authorities”.³⁷ Films reflect messages both which the director wants to audience to see and that the audience wants themselves to see. In this way, films may attack or support a political ideology simply because the viewers of that film provide the film with an ideology which they interpret the film to represent. Ideology is a main mobilizing force in films as it does not simply provide the audience with an idea or criticism but literally sets out a plan of action or an image of what utopia/an ideal plan of action for government would and should look like.

In many cases in the past, this ideal change in policy, or hypothetical utopia, has resembled ideologies which the home nation of the filmmaker is opposed to. In order to stop communist sympathizers or political dissidents within the film community, many nations practically destroyed all creative freedom within the industry. This has been done most often under the cover of Nationalism. Dissenting opinion becomes “Un-American”, or in the case of many nations, signifies to the government, correctly or incorrectly, that the artists are terrorists or cooperating with resistance groups. In the United States,

³⁵ Ibid., 73.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 11.

expressing one's opinion, if it differed from the status quo, resulted in blacklisting, particularly in the Cold War era. The House Un-American Activities Committee began to investigate Hollywood in the 1940's in order to "preempt fascism and communism".³⁸ Blacklisted directors and actors may have been out of a job in the United States, but Brazilian directors and artists were not as fortunate. The various Authoritarian-Bureaucratic governments in Latin America forced many filmmakers and other artists to leave Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Brazil throughout the 1960s until the 1980s and live in exile in the United States, France, or elsewhere in Europe or the Americas. Artists who did not go into exile may have been tortured or killed as traitors and terrorists, accused of helping and participating in the perceived plethora of rebel movements against the military regimes. Artists were not able to include any hint in their artwork that might have been interpreted as sympathizing with communism. A much larger analysis and explanation of this political history will be laid out in later sections regarding the US and Brazil. "The inclusion of political propaganda in movies seemed 'natural' during World Wars One and Two, but did not during the Vietnam War [...] What is excluded from communication is as important to understand as what is included".³⁹ The inclusion of anti-war material and sympathy for the Vietnamese would have been a fatal career move for any person in the industry. Gerald Mast; author, film historian, and University of Chicago's English Chairperson; believed that it was of utmost importance that American students study the political context of films, and in their attempts to historicize and contextualize, they must take into account the sociological and narratological aspects.⁴⁰

³⁸ Genovese, *The Political Film : An Introduction*, 20.

³⁹ Combs, *Movies and Politics : The Dynamic Relationship*, 237.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

In the same way that movies in Vietnam lacked any indication that America was at war, there may be a large group of films that are released in a short period of time which focus on the current war state. From 2007 to 2008 the American film industry has seen a huge influx of anti-war films criticizing the Bush administration and the neoconservative politics for their ideologies. “When, for example, a particular ‘cluster’ of films appear at a particular time, it may be the case that such a phenomenon is a response that conjoins moviemakers and movie watchers in ritual play that has possible political meanings attached”.⁴¹ As the war on terror has not ended and many of these films have not yet been released, the political meanings are uncertain, though the trend toward anti-war films is clear. This theme will be explored in more detail in later sections.

Ain't What She Used to Be

Concerning the influential ability of film, though many filmmakers and directors are stepping up to the political plate, some believe that modern films simply “aren’t made like they used to be”. Mort Sahl, actor and screenwriter, has often expressed that today’s films are “stuck”. The characters are trapped in a point in their lives and they don’t know how to get out. Sahl believes that through films we can see that the “America” which was, is no longer. The nationalism and pride has gone out of films, and we are left with pessimism and characters going nowhere. What has happened to the influential American film inspiring dreams and hope? Various figures have discussed and considered this issue. Traditionally, “The American movie has provided a common dream life, a common fund of reference and fantasy, to a society divided by ethnic distinctions and

⁴¹ Ibid., 7.

economic disparities”.⁴² These are the words of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., political historian and social critic best known for his participation in John F. Kennedy’s cabinet, where he and William Fulbright opposed the invasion of Cuba in the Bay of Pigs. Max Lerner, journalist and educator, in his study, *America as a Civilization*, wrote that: “Never in history has so great an industry as the movies been so nakedly and directly built out of the dreams of the people”.⁴³ Brazilians were also dreaming the American Dream.

American films were dumped on Brazil just as they were all over the world, and Hollywood quickly became quite popular as American culture, revolution, and patriotism gained popularity in Brazil in the 1920s and 1930s. Earlier, from 1900 to 1912 the Brazilian film industry boomed and dominated the Brazilian domestic market. This was called the Golden Era, or *Bela Epoca* of Brazilian Film. Although many popular films of this period were light critiques of the newly elected President, national politics, and social norms, the relationship between cinema and the government and/or politicians may be best represented by Cinema Nôvo, the period of film which this study focuses on. Cinema Nôvo strove to “present a progressive and critical vision of Brazilian society [...] its political strategies and esthetic options were profoundly inflected by political events”.⁴⁴ As the Brazilian Vera Cruz studios, (an attempt at a Brazilian Hollywood), went bankrupt, a space opened for independent artists who opposed commercial cinema and Hollywood esthetics. These new political views, mostly to the political left, influenced many socialist and leftist student groups to form, what would

⁴² Genovese, *The Political Film : An Introduction*, 8.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Randal Johnson and Robert Stam ed., *Brazilian Cinema*, 32.

later be the main source of protest against the military dictatorship. Cinema Nôvo was influenced by Italian Neo-Realism and French New Wave film, however, it was critical of the politics of the New Wave film, which the Cinema Nôvo group characterized as petty love stories in comparison to their political films dealing with the harsh reality of the urban and rural proletariat.⁴⁵ In 1964, Brazil saw the end of populism and the beginning of authoritarian rule and neoliberal economic policies bringing in foreign investment and influence. Needless to say, political films in Brazil lost their tragic optimism and gained a hidden cynicism.

The Tropicalism, or *Tropicalismo* movement, along with Cinema Nôvo, “played aggressively with certain myths, especially the notion of Brazil as a tropical paradise characterized by colorful exuberance and tutti frutti hats a la Carmen Miranda”.⁴⁶

Tropicalismo and Cinema Nôvo developed “a coded language of revolt” and created plots “with obvious implications for military-ruled Brazil”. Such films include *How Tasty was My Little Frenchmen*, *Como Gostoso Era meu Frances*(1970) by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, which suggests that Brazil should cannibalize and consume the foreign influences on the country and in doing so, appropriate power and strength as opposed to being dominated and dependant.⁴⁷ Such ideology and philosophy influenced protest music, cinema, and intellectual groups.

Now that we have established the ways to define and think about political film, where do we go from here? Where will political film go in an age where the Berlin Wall has already fallen and Fidel is no longer an exciting revolutionary, rather an old sick

⁴⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

man? The good news is that with increasing technology and knowledge, this democratization of the monopoly over film will further open up to allow artists on lower budgets to access the information and equipment needed to make popular films and share them with the world at the low cost of downloading them onto the internet. In other words, although the traditional routes to utopia and protest such as socialism and great revolution are in the past, more people now have a voice. In our modern world of neoliberalism and post-capitalism, what should political films protest? What should they warn against? What is the new utopia, now that communism has failed? With this tremendous influx of information that has occurred as a result of the liberalization of many nations in the last decade, what sorts of boons and burdens will globalization bring? On a darker note, "It could usher in a new totalitarianism, with the power over communications being despotically held by one man or a political movement. It could destroy the cultural differences which make ethnic variations so interesting. It could make us so homogeneous and so much alike that life would be dull".⁴⁸ However, it seems that despite obvious government censorship, the Brazilian and American government have allowed much more protest cinema to be released than one may expect, and American and Brazilian totalitarian control over cinema is highly unlikely. The movies may expedite the process of blending cultural differences as they transcend national boundaries and languages. Yet, "Films are political documents, and we are political animals".⁴⁹ Interest remains strong for both creators and consumers of political film. Modern trends in cinema will be applied in order to address these questions later on, when both Brazilian and American films will be discussed.

⁴⁸ Genovese, *The Political Film : An Introduction*, 8.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

Chapter 2: Filling in the Gaps: Historical Context

"In my opinion, it disrespects the United Nations, it doesn't take into account what the rest of the world thinks. And I think this is serious." Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, Presidente do Brasil, on the U.S.

This chapter serves to provide a brief historical context relative to the film industry for both Brazil and the United States through which one may better understand the selected films and their political significance for the past, present, and future. Popular protest, public opinion, and society's reaction to these films are central to understanding the historical context of films. Politically charged films are vital in reflecting and instigating the public's views and actions on past and present political actions. For this reason, the torture, violence, and disapproval of war depicted in film must be reflected in the attitudes of the public. Through studying protest movements and public displays of mistrust and disapproval, we may understand these historical periods. Often a government which proposes action to create, save, or salvage democracy often uses undemocratic means to do so. In their zeal and iron intent, they squash the very last or first trace of democratic activity in whose name they claimed to fight. Films which may seem appealing to the "left" and criticize the government's actions may be received badly by the public and dubbed an instrument of the government if any part of the film associated with the "left" is perceived as having been misrepresented.

As governments make changes internally to adapt to a new rule of ensuring democracy, various institutions are put into place in order to purge dissenters, encourage groupthink and homogeneity, and strip suspected "terrorists" of rights and interrogate them extensively. The most obvious institutional changes may be the Patriot Act and AIs

or *Atos Institucionais* (Institutional Acts) which slowly dissolve the power of congress and strengthen the executive's ability to spend more money and make decisions quickly. Although the concepts of Iraqi Freedom and Brazilian Order and Progress are generations apart and rhetorically unlike, in meaning they are one and the same. These expressions signify an intervention by a government to control a society with the goals of bringing capitalism and securing a new way of government and livelihood which benefits this government.

In the case of the United States in recent years, the Iraq War, Afghani War, and War on Terror have dominated mainstream media and bestselling nonfiction and fiction titles. There are many angles from which to approach our recent history of war and terror, but for the sake of this study, we will briefly look at how the United States entered a state of war, and how the public reacted to this. The films used in this study deal mostly with topics of the Iraq War and the soldiers there, the background of the war (the political conflict with various nations in the Middle East over oil and petroleum), and the feelings of distrust and anxiety which surround both the CIA and various international terrorist groups. Topics such as media coverage and media personalities' take on the war, as well as the more recent popular assertion that the public has been lied to, (although there have been voices from the start which assert this), are integral parts of this discussion as there is relatively little study into the evolution of public sentiments of loss of civil liberties. There are also many assertions that a lack of democracy in the United States has been barely/poorly documented. There are many interesting and engrossing pieces of literature which surround the continuing controversy of our wars and 9/11. Literature on the omissions and distortions of the 9/11 commission report, histories of

President Bush, assertions that politicians have lied to the public all along, and accounts of soldiers, soldiers' families, and journalists litter the book shelves in book stores and libraries. This is not to say that all of these sources are not important to the study of the war, as they are absolutely vital to the understanding of the war. However, for the purposes of this piece, however engrossing the purported omissions and distortions of the commission report may be, these are treacherous and tempting distractions which threaten my limited research time and provide little understanding as to how much of these omissions the public know about, how much of these asserted lies films depict, and how much disapproval and protest/anger generated from such books is reflected in film and in popular protest movements.

In the case of Brazil, I will approach the history of the military dictatorship through public opinion as well. Obviously, there is little to be said for widespread public approval or disapproval documented during the dictatorship; no good dictator wants a record of his disapproval ratings. What is documented, however, are a few names of dissidents of the state and accounts of torture, as well as the progression of the film industry and how the government intervened and interacted with the industry. This serves to communicate the history and legacy of protest during this time period. I will first summarize how and why the military dictatorship assumed power, what progress and blunders were made, and how Brazil returned to democracy. I will discuss public opinion through the ideas of artists, writers, politicians, and academics who have written about the rise and fall of the dictatorship and document public support and protest of the junta. I will also discuss the evolution of the film industry and various developments associated with this industry at the time of the military dictatorship.

How the Terrorists Stole Christmas

In October 2000 the USS Cole was bombed, and on September 11, 2001 the World Trade Center towers were attacked in New York City. Forget strike three, Americans were demanding a response. Terrorist organizations' and associated groups' assets were frozen and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 was written up, requiring all states in the UN to punish any assistance to terrorist organizations or activities as a criminal offence, as well as deny finances and asylum to terrorists, and share all intelligence on terrorist attacks.⁵⁰ On September 18, 2001, the 107th Congress passed Public Law 107-40, a joint resolution, "To authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States".⁵¹ With this in place, the United States and NATO began to bomb Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 when the Taliban refused to turn over al-Qaeda terrorists. October 2001 also marked the signing of the USA Patriot Act, "To deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world, to enhance law enforcement investigatory tools, and for other purposes", by, "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism".⁵² Although President Bush noted the successes of the Act in combating domestic terror in June 2005 as he

⁵⁰ *UN security council resolution 1373 (2001)*. Available from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/index.cfm?docid=5108> > Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁵¹ *Public Law 107-40, 107th Congress*. Available from http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ040.107 > Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁵² *Ibid.*

commended Congress for renewing the act,⁵³ the American Civil Liberties Union has spoken out against the Act complaining of abuses.⁵⁴

On March 20, 2003, the United States entered Iraq to find Weapons of Mass Destruction. As this was happening outside of the country, an internal search was underway, as investigations progressed through the branches of state and federal government as well as in civilian groups, resulting in the questioning, searching, and detention of thousands. In 2005, the Security Council adopted resolution 1624, which “called upon states to cooperate against terrorism by denying terrorists safe haven, strengthening their borders, and continuing efforts to ‘enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations’ as a means of discouraging religious and ideological extremism and indiscriminate attacks against civilians”.⁵⁵ Other resolutions and institutions have been put in place, such as DARPA to develop and collect technologies and information to aid in counterterrorism,⁵⁶ and the Department of Homeland Security to combine domestic security operations.⁵⁷ The Office of Strategic Influence is an interesting case of covert propaganda efforts, but this effort was shut down after being discovered.⁵⁸ Most of these resolutions and institutions have come under fire for civil liberties violations, human rights violations, and other issues of questionable legality.

⁵³ *USA PATRIOT act*. Available from <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/patriotact/>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁵⁴ *American civil liberties union : Patriot act abuses and misuses abound, ACLU says; disclosure comes before congress begins review of controversial law*. Available from <<http://www.aclu.org/safefree/general/17564prs20050404.html>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁵⁵ *U.N. security council calls for global effort against terror - US department of state*. Available from <<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2005/Sep/14-576357.html>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁵⁶ *DARPA home*. Available from <<http://www.darpa.mil/>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁵⁷ *DHS | national response framework*. Available from <http://www.dhs.gov/xprepresp/committees/editorial_0566.shtm>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁵⁸ *BBC news | AMERICAS | pentagon plans propaganda war*. Available from <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1830500.stm>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

Although the media has done a terrific job in covering, both accurately and inaccurately, the progression of the War on Terror, the War in Afghanistan, and the War in Iraq, my focus is solely on Hollywood. If terrorism may be defined as:

activities that—

(A) involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State;

(B) appear to be intended—

(i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population;

(ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or

(iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and

(C) occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum,⁵⁹

it seems as though many activities could be construed as acts of terror. This rhetoric is reminiscent of that of the Cold War, as President Bush points out,

At a time when some wanted to wish away the Soviet threat, Paul Nitze insisted that the Cold War was, in his words, ‘in fact, a real war in which the survival of the free world is at stake.’ He helped rally America to confront this mortal danger -- and his strategic vision helped secure the triumph of freedom in that great struggle of the 20th century. At the start of this young century, America is once again engaged in a real war that is testing our nation's resolve. While there are important distinctions, today's war on terror is like the Cold War. It is an ideological struggle with an enemy that despises freedom and pursues totalitarian aims. Like the Cold War, our adversary is dismissive of free peoples, claiming that men and women who live in liberty are weak and decadent -- and they lack the resolve to defend our way of life. Like the Cold War, America is once again answering history's call with confidence -- and like the Cold War, freedom will prevail.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *US CODE: Title 18,2331. definitions.* Available from http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/18/usc_sec_18_00002331----000-.html. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁶⁰ *President bush discusses global war on terror.* Available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/04/20060410-1.html>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

The Cold War, for Hollywood, was a witch-hunt. The idea that America was defending and spreading Freedom was laughable. November 25, 1947 marked the beginning of conspicuous censorship and alienation in Hollywood. The Hollywood Ten, a group of ten writers and directors, were held in contempt of Congress as they refused to testify for the HUAC, the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The Motion Picture Association of America fired these individuals. In 1950, a pamphlet, *Red Channels*, was circulated, naming over 100 members of the Hollywood community who were then also blacklisted. In the 1960s, the government's attention moved away from potential spies for communist countries within the United States, and to the actual countries themselves. Today, we have a combination of the two, we are afraid of potential terrorists within our own country and we are afraid of terrorist nations themselves. The nation is internally politically divided, and we see enemies within and outside of our own nation. This complex situation is reflected in the slew of films about the Iraq war which have been released during the Iraq war shows both an internal division between Americans and also our sensitivity to the views of the people in the countries we target in our military ventures. Politics and film have had a rocky relationship, with periods of both great cooperation and discord. As new political situations rise, political film will continue to undergo various incarnations in the future and treat politics with corresponding affection and pride or disrespect and disagreement.

See no Evil, Hear no Evil, and Speak no Evil

In November of 2001, the government worked quickly to meet with Hollywood to encourage harmony and cooperation on the topic of the war. The original meeting

between President Bush's top political strategists and various top entertainment executives was headed by senior Bush adviser, Karl Rove, and Jack Valenti, chairman of the Motion Picture Association of America. Rove's various ideas included short commercials before films where prominent and famous Muslims or Arabs in the United States would speak about the war and emphasize that it was a war on terror and not religion. Rove expressed that there would be,

no effort to pressure the industry, but that as issues like homeland security, terrorism, and chemical and biological warfare are portrayed in entertainment and other media programming and products, 'it is our hope that these issues are handled in a responsible manner and providing information on what we are up to and what we see as the challenges hopefully is something they will find useful'.⁶¹

Rove's close connections to the entertainment industry drew no criticism from the Republican Party, unlike Clinton's ties to Hollywood which were harshly criticized by the GOP. An industry source notes that:

We don't expect them to ask 'Make movies glorifying the president or the troops' and that is not something we would be receptive to if they did ask, [...] But there is a high level of interest in being supportive and informative and these are the people who give things the green light and get projects moving along.⁶²

Here is a blatant admission of the interference and control of the federal government in the entertainment industry. It was also suggested that films be developed for a more "international view" to portray the country in a flattering light for the viewing pleasure of other nations. It is surprising to see that this meeting took place and that the industry agreed with the government to manufacture subtle propaganda films. Yet, if one looks at the levels of support for the war by year from 2001 through 2007, it is easy to see why

⁶¹ *CNN.com - white house sees hollywood role in war on terrorism - november 8, 2001*. Available from <<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/08/rec.bush.hollywood/>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁶² *Ibid.*

most producers, like most of their audience, would have been gung-ho about supporting our war efforts at the start.

Since confidence and support in and for the War on Terror declined after April 2003, many critics have suggested that the topic of 9/11 and terror be shielded from Hollywood, and protected from artistic analysis, interpretation, and use for profit and education. In the name of political correctness, in 2003, Jack Valenti, head of the Motion Picture Association of America asked, "Who would you have as the enemy if you made a picture about terrorism? You'd probably have Muslims, would you not? If you did, I think there would be backlash from the decent, hardworking, law-abiding Muslim community in this country".⁶³ His statement is fair, as the film based on Tom Clancy's *The Sum of All Fears* shows Arab terrorists trying to blow up our coveted Super Bowl. Interestingly, the film went into development before September 11, 2001, and yet still the Council on American Islamic Relations petitioned to have the terrorists changed into neo-Nazis, and neo-Nazis they became.⁶⁴ Hypersensitivity, saturation of the nightly news and media to the point of disinterest, and rawness due to the recentness of the casualties of this war, are three main factors which affect the popularity of such films. Hollywood might be afraid that audiences are simply not ready to confront the rawness these events on screen might sting, but with *Syriana*(2005), *Munich*(2005), *United 93*(2006) and *World Trade Center*(2006), followed by a slew of films in 2007, Hollywood is bringing doubts about the war in Iraq, the nature of our soldiers, terrorism itself, the oil industry, and the trustworthiness of our government into mainstream cinema.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *War? what war?* Available from <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/003/247gruen.asp>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

During the Vietnam War, not a single mainstream film was released portraying the war. This has not been true of the Iraq war, but those films which have been released have been harshly criticized from all sides. At the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, Jonathan Taplin, a well-known producer, believes that the latest group of films released reflecting the war and related issues are not about shock and awe of the American Public, but about a realistic view of war and the minds of the enemy. The cost of human life and the human intentions are shown, and for this reason, these movies have been unpopular and criticized.

Whether a movie like 'Munich' or a movie like 'Syriana,' even most recently 'United Flight 93', all attempt to portray the terrorists with a little bit of nuance, in a way that you understand that they have their own reasons for doing what they're doing, and it's not such a clichéd caricature as it used to be, says Taplin. [...] The scene that was most striking for me in 'United 93' is a scene at the very height of the crisis, where you cut between the Americans praying to their god in the cabin as the plane is plunging downward and the Arabs who have taken over the plane praying to their god. And it's literally cutting back and forth between these two sets of prayers." Taplin says, ironically, they are praying to the same god.⁶⁵

In showing humanity and parallels between the Americans and Terrorists, Hollywood is bridging the gap and fostering at least a small peek at what cultural understanding and cultural relativism might look like. This new trend in war films is still on the testing ground and it is not clear as to whether the 20 or more films produced, released, or are in the process of filming this year are going to be popular with audiences, critics, neither, or both. As the conflict is ongoing, popularity of these films may peak and drop sharply, or it may be too early to tell. The "Line of Fire" of films directed at the War on Terror which have been shot, released, in production for 2008/2009 currently are:

⁶⁵ *Hollywood's role in the war on terror*. Available from <<http://128.11.143.113/english/archive/2006-06/Hollywood2006-06-07-voa42.cfm>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

Lions for Lambs Directed by and starring Robert Redford as an antiwar professor whose students end up fighting in Afghanistan. Also stars Tom Cruise as a pro-Iraq war senator

Grace Is Gone With John Cusack as a father who must tell his children that their mother died in the line of duty in Iraq

Charlie Wilson's War Mike Nichols's adaptation of George Crile's book about a congressman's covert dealings with rebels in Afghanistan. Stars Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts

The Fall of the Warrior King A Tom Cruise film about an officer who resigned after a scandal in which men under his command drowned an Iraqi civilian

Imperial Life in the Emerald City About life in the Green Zone in Baghdad after the 2003 invasion,

Stop Loss Ryan Phillippe is a soldier who refuses to return to Iraq

The Return Neil Burger's film about three US servicemen who return from Iraq to find a country divided over the war ⁶⁶

Additional films include *Rendition*(2007) and *Redacted*(2007). *Redacted*, by Brian De Palma, is also the creator of *Casualties of War*(1989), has said about *Redacted*, "Once again a senseless war has produced a senseless tragedy. I told this story years ago but the lessons from Vietnam have gone unheeded."⁶⁷ De Palma believes that the American audience is disconnected and uninterested in the war and military conflicts our country is engaged in. He says,

All the images we have of our war are completely constructed - whitewashed, redacted [...] Unlike Vietnam, when we saw the destruction and sorrow of the people we were maiming and killing, and soldiers coming home in body bags, we see none of that in this war. It's all out there on the internet, you can find it if you look for it, but it's not in the mainstream media. [...] I remember picking up *Life* magazine and seeing pictures that would horrify me about the Vietnam War. We don't have those pictures in America now. The pictures are what will stop the war.⁶⁸

He believes and hopes that *Redacted*, based on various bloggers, testimonials on the internet from soldiers, footage of the war on You Tube, and the various homemade movies and journals of soldiers, with graphic imagery will make people "incensed

⁶⁶ *Hollywood opens new front in war on terror - and goes gunning for oscars - times online*. Available from http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/film/article2364445.ece. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

enough to get their congressmen to vote against the war".⁶⁹ Popular approval and opinion on the war and therefore related incidents and topics is essential to understanding the timing and the messages of the films released which depict the war and related issues.

Down with the Government

Although September 11, 2001 was initially met with a unified and angry American public, by 2003 the country was split. Of Americans, 63% preferred a diplomatic solution to the escalating tensions in Iraq compared to 31% asking for immediate military action. Over 60% however, approved of military action to take out Saddam Hussein if diplomacy proved fruitless.⁷⁰ By 2004, the country was split over President Bush, Iraq, and our successes there.⁷¹ From 2006 to 2008, support for the war had drastically dropped, but that is not to say that protest groups have been widespread and outspoken. The most active groups are Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER), United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ), and Not In Our Name (NION) and though they are active, they are not often visible or audible in the media. In 2007, as the various American Hollywood films were being produced, over 70% of Americans thought the War on Terror was going badly, over 40% said it was going very badly, and over 60% believe we should have stayed out in the first place. More than 70% believe

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *The new york times > washington > support for war is down sharply, poll concludes*. Available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/29/politics/29POLL.html?ex=1209009600&en=8147e0f0dd902605&ei=5070>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁷¹ *56 percent in survey say iraq war was a mistake (washingtonpost.com)*. Available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A14266-2004Dec20.html>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

the country is seriously misled, and over 60% wanted to see a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq in 2008.⁷²

Thomas Friedman, author of *The World is Flat*, and New York Times columnist has published a collection of pre and post 9/11 articles which influence and touch a large part of the public. When the New York Times began their op-ed page in the 1970s, it was instantly the paper's most popular section. Friedman's articles have touched many, and he represents the direct and mainstream challenge to the status-quo treatment of international affairs. For these reasons, his op-eds merit a read-through as one of the windows into public opinion and mainstream thinking on the war. On September 11th, 2001, his column declared World War III, but that this would be a war of justice and security and not revenge.⁷³ Soon after, Friedman was quick to realize that America would be ousting Saddam alone.⁷⁴ He expressed the desire to escape the atrocities of war.⁷⁵ Yet, his most insightful articles express that the same anger we have allowed to grow inside of us against foreigners is what makes us same as our so-called enemies. He wants to tell Americans that not all Arabs are the stereotypical radical "bad guys" from the news: "When you are with modern, progressive Arabs [...] who really let down their hair, you start to realize the simmering frustration that boils in them every day – having to live in a world so full of lies, so full of religious leaders they don't respect, so full of newspapers they can't believe, so full of political leaders they've never elected".⁷⁶ Additionally, he points out that the most anti-American populations are from some of the most pro-

⁷² *Poll shows view of iraq war is most negative since start - new york times*. Available from <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/25/washington/25view.html>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

⁷³ Friedman, Thomas L. *Longitudes and Attitudes : Exploring the World After September 11*. 1st ed. (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2002), 45, 61.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 316.

American regimes, and likewise, the most pro-American populations come from Anti-American regimes. It's the blame game.⁷⁷ Also that, "antidemocracy reinforces the antimodernism and the antimodernism reinforces the poverty and the poverty reinforces the antidemocracy, and the wheel just goes round and round and round".⁷⁸ In other words, Friedman is saying that we need to be understanding both of individuals and their respective societies if we ever want to successfully address the problems within the War on Terror. Hollywood seems to be on a similar trend. In both Brazil and the US, films with the intention to protest and depict in violent acts of government in a negative light, but which also give humanity and insight into enemy-figures have traditionally been unpopular. Who does society want to support? In Brazil the military soldiers and participants are despised and blamed but the heads of the actual governmental are not accused; in America, we support our troops but not the government, though our troops are portrayed as both the victims and perpetrators. An Academy Award-Winning film, *Ryan's Daughter*(1970), contains a few lines of script which are particularly apt. An English Corporal admits to the Irishmen in the bar that violence was inflicted upon children in Dublin, and comments, "All right, there were. They get you in this uniform, you aim your gun where you're told to point it, and you pull the trigger. And so does Jerry... and so would you!" Later in the film, Tom Ryan, the father of the heroine of the film, welcomes a British soldier, Major Doryan, to his pub, and says "A brave man is a brave man in any uniform, be it English khaki, Irish green, aye, or German gray", clearly referring to the Nazis with whom the Irish cooperated to attempt to gain liberation from the English. These are messages we all may agree with in this film as it is disconnected

⁷⁷ Ibid., 323.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 317.

from the subjects this study analyzes, but when it comes to the personal experiences of Brazil and the United States, it becomes more difficult to be understanding.

The sun was coming out for Hollywood in 1968, as HUAC, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, disbanded, which had been attacking and intervening in Hollywood since World War II. This same year, the military dictatorship in Brazil cracked down on artistic and intellectual freedom, as a coup within the coup took place. Just as anyone who had a connection to any organization which had been nominally socialist or communist, or had anyone with beliefs which could be said to be sympathizing with communists was burned in the witch-hunt in Hollywood, Brazilian filmmakers fled Brazil to Europe, Chile, and the United States in order to escape certain imprisonment and torture at the hands of the military for being involved in or with anyone who was involved in any activity which could be construed as being anti-establishment. The film industry was shaking off shackles in one country and was being chained up in another.

The Right to Remain Silent

The dictatorship lasted for the 25 years between 1964 to 1989 and contained six different presidents: five from the military and one civilian. This period of rule has been divided by Adriano Nervo Codato of the Federal University of the state of Parana into five major periods. The first period beginning on March 31, 1964, marked the date on which the military led by General Castello Branco and later by Costa e Silva overthrew President Joao Goulart, and began to reverse the course of state interference in the free-enterprise economy which was characteristic of the presidencies of Janio Quadros and

Goulart. General Castello Branco chose to restore democracy to Brazil, safeguard it from Communism, and free it from ineptitude and corruption. The second stage spans from the coup within a coup in 1968 to 1974, consisting of the consolidation and clamping down of the regime, and was mainly run by President Médici. The third stage from 1974 to 1979 was a stage of transformation at the hands of President Geisel, followed by President Figueirido in 1979 to 1985, who embarked on the disbanding of the regime. Lastly a transition from autocratic government to liberal democracy was led by President Sarney in 1985 to 1989 when the first democratic elections were held. Ending the dictatorship, President Geisel embarked on a mission against torture.⁷⁹ Torture was changing from the top up, not only bottom down through protesters. Geisel was against the torture, and ended the torture in DOI-CODI, the *Destacamento de Operações de Informações - Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna* (Department of Operations of Information - Center for Internal Defense Operations). The 1990s were then a time for consolidation and breaking-in of new shoes. The administrations of Collor de Mello, Itamar Franco, and Fernando Henrique Cardoso introduced a federalist democracy and constitution to Brazil as well as a new fragmented party system with free elections. The political movement between 1974 to 2002 is particularly important to understand for the purposes of modern Brazilian film depicting the past. President Castello Branco was the first president-elect of the military dictatorship, and moved to privatize the economy, though this period did nothing to accredit capitalism and liberalism, as the period between 1964 and 1967 was plagued by devastating economic performance. This coup on Populism had been a political guarantee from the Army to the Brazilian citizens for better

⁷⁹ Boris Fausto Brakel, *Historia Concisa do Brasil English; A Concise History of Brazil.* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 296.

government by combating disorder, corruption, inefficiency, and communism as well as help the economy recover and prosper. Previous coups (1937 marked the entrance of the New State or *Estado Novo* and 1945 which ended the *Estado Novo*) were different in that the centralization of power was not from the bottom to top and from the outside to the center as the 1964 centralization of power was. Actual progress which was promised in 1964 as the coup against Populism took place was difficult to see at the lowest rungs of society. The November 1964 *Estatuo de Terra* (Land Statute) outlining a new agricultural policy and land reform amounted to little more than words on paper.⁸⁰ Between 1945 and 1964, President Getulio Vargas' authoritarian Populism had a profound affect on the military, and as their support swayed from his authoritarian rule to criticism of Populism and the base of the intervention in 1964 was formed, though this coup did not bring about widespread change for all socio-economic groups as promised.

Nervo Codato nicely outlines the main progressions:

Phase 1: *Constitution of the military dictatorship* (Castello Branco and Costa e Silva administrations)

Stage 1: March 1964 (coup d'État) – October 1965 (political parties abolished)

Stage 2: October 1965 (indirect elections for the President of the Republic are established) – January 1967 (new Constitution)

Stage 3: March 1967 (Costa e Silva takes presidential office) – November 1967 (armed struggle begins⁹)

Stage 4: March 1968 (beginning of student protest) – December 1968 (increased political repression¹⁰)

Phase 2: *Consolidation of the military dictatorship* (Costa e Silva e Médici administrations)

Stage 5: August 1969 (Costa e Silva takes ill; a military junta takes over the government) – September 1969 (Médici is chosen as President of the Republic)

Stage 6: October 1969 (new Constitution) – January 1973 (ebbing of armed struggle)

Stage 7: June 1973 (Médici announces his successor) – January 1974 (indirect congressional election of President Geisel)

⁸⁰ Ibid., 284.

- Phase 3: *Transformation of the military dictatorship* (Geisel government)
Stage 8: March 1974 (Geisel takes office) – August 1974 (politics of regime transformation announced)
Stage 9: November 1974 (MDB victory in Senate elections) – April 1977 (Geisel shuts down the National Congress)
Stage 10: October 1977 (dismissal of head of the Armed Forces) – January 1979 (Institutional Act no. 5 revoked)
- Phase 4: *Decomposition of the military regime* (Figueiredo government)
Stage 11: March 1979 (Figueiredo takes office) – November 1979 (extinction of the two political parties, ARENA and MDB)
Stage 12: April 1980 (workers strike in São Paulo) – August 1981 (Golbery leaves the government)
Stage 13: November 1982 (direct elections for state governorships; opposition becomes majority in the House of Representatives) – April 1984 (amendment for direct elections defeated¹²)
Stage 14: January 1985 (Opposition wins in Presidential elections) – March 1985 (José Sarney takes office¹³)
- Phase 5: *Transition – under military tutelage – to a liberal democratic regime* (Sarney administration)
Stage 15: April/May 1985 (Tancredo Neves dies; constitutional amendment reestablishes direct presidential elections) – February 1986 (the *Plano Cruzado* to combat inflation is announced)
Stage 16: November 1986 (PMDB victory in the general elections) – October 1988 (new constitution is promulgated)
Stage 17: March 1989 (beginning of campaigning for the upcoming presidential elections) – December 1989 (Collor de Mello elected president)
- Phase 6: *Consolidation of the liberal-democratic regime* (Collor, Itamar Franco, and Fernando Henrique Cardoso administrations)
Stage 18: March 1990 (Fernando Collor de Mello takes presidential office; economic plan – *Plano Collor I* – announced) – January 1991 (*Plano Collor II* is announced)
Stage 19: December 1992 (President Collor is *impeached*. Vicepresident Itamar Franco takes over as President of the Republic) – July 1994 (economic plan, the *Plano Real* is announced)
Stage 20: January 1995 (Fernando Henrique Cardoso takes office as president) – June 1997 (amendment approving reelection to a second term as President of the Republic and for heads of state and municipal governments is approved)
Stage 21: January 1999, (Fernando Henrique Cardoso begins his second term in office) – October/November 2000 (opposition parties are victorious in municipal elections throughout the country)
Stage 22 : July 2002 (presidential campaigning begins) – January 2003 (Luis Inacio Lula da Silva takes office as president)⁸¹

⁸¹ Adriano N. Codato, ed. *Political transition and democratic consolidation : Studies on contemporary brazil*. (New York: Nova Science Publishers. 2006), 7-9.

This brief summary of the political progression throughout the past half a century will help us to think about the evolution of the film industry, and to understand the plot and the importance of historical references and political messages in the films analyzed in this study.

Weren't We Discussing Films?

The year 1964 caught Cinema Novo off guard. Populism had failed and politics were being rejected left and right. As filmmakers began to criticize and lack for funding due to their controversial subjects, the creation of the National Film Institute came to fruition as Castello Branco signed Decree-law no.43 in 1966. A number of changes were made before the Institute could be approved. These alterations to the original proposal included the technical autonomy and power of censorship of the Institute which ultimately answered to the Industry and Commerce. Although the Cinema Novo movement had accepted state aid, the movement,

opposed the INC [Instituto Nacional de Cinema, National Institute of Cinema] on political grounds, fearing that it would result in a 'totalitarian 'statizing' of art' and that it represented an attempt by [...] the military regime, to eliminate Cinema Novo. [...] In short, dos Santos [Nelson dos Santos] and others feared that the INC would lead to a loss of freedom of expression as well as of economic freedom, since it would tend to monopolize finance capital for national film production.⁸²

The opposition to the law was on both economic and cultural grounds. The law was seen as a violation of the free enterprise system but also as what was called the "birth control pill of cinematic creativity that will transform one of our most promising manufactured

⁸² Randal Johnson, *The film industry in brazil : Culture and the state*. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1987), 109.

goods into a condemned fetus”.⁸³ At first glance, Cinema Novo dominated awards given by the INC, and it seems as though creativity was still fostered. Yet, it is interesting to note that the politically explicit films from 1970 to 1973 were excluded from the awards. Instead, films remaking classic novels and tales were chosen, a reflection of the most heavily repressive period within the military rule where old traditions and thoughts were valued and new ideas and thought were discouraged, ironically, as the country was pushing ahead in innovative technologies and liberal economics.⁸⁴ Clearly, creative censorship was a large issue within the INC for domestic films, and a myriad of directors chose to go and film abroad or find financing from other sources after the 1968 coup within the coup. Those who chose to stay and create films were often arrested for crimes of an ideological nature. The INC did not implement direct ideological power over domestic film, but clearly had an ideological influence and guiding hand in the quieting of opposing voices. The impact of the changes made in state policy on the film industry due to political transitions in 1964 and 1968 may be most clearly seen by briefly tracing the evolution of Cinema Novo. It is thought that the “coup d’etat of 1964 generally caught Cinema Novo [...] off guard [...] Despite repression and censorship there was still room for cultural and political discussion, although any effective link between leftist intellectuals and the potentials revolutionary classes was prohibited”.⁸⁵ As a result, Cinema Novo made little effort to use this film as a political tool thereafter, even if it contained political messages. Not only were the established commercial circuits primarily showing foreign films, but Brazilian society, which largely consists of the poor

⁸³ Ibid., 110.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 121.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 127.

masses, was conditioned to see American films and was not receptive to the low-budget and highly intellectual and elite Cinema Novo early films. Ironically, these people were both the subject and intended audience of their first films, which focused on an “aesthetic of hunger” or poverty which they felt the common people would identify with. As the majority of Cinema Novo films began to move away from this elitist and intellectual film to one that would appeal to the masses, the INC’s leaders public statements conveyed that, “The INC thus tries to combat two postures which opposed its market-oriented propositions: aestheticism and ideological cinema”⁸⁶. The mode of expression and the political ideology that Cinema Novo attempted to create to reach the masses were censored and the limiting list of officially approved themes for films forced many to search for financing outside of Brazil. In other words, if the film didn’t fit the approved themes satisfactorily, they would not get funding from the INC. This market-reality of economic censorship is worse than official political censorship, as Ruy Guerra explains that “A certain economic control, exercised by distributors, producers, and exhibitors, constitutes a repressive scheme within the overall colonial situation of Brazilian cinema”⁸⁷, in that the films are shut out politically and by all of the private parties in the production line of the film industry. Although various Cinema Novo films were banned at first, it was eventually decided that the majority of these would be released as they were so theoretical and intellectually complicated that it was thought that the potentially revolutionary classes would not understand or enjoy these films.

The main censoring ingredient in the military regime came from the Institutional Acts, or AIs (*Atos Institucionais*) which “Were justified as a consequence ‘of exercising

⁸⁶ Ibid., 129.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 130.

constituent power, which is inherent in all revolutions”⁸⁸ The first two acts included a provision called the *decurso de prazo*, which limited “the time that the congress had to debate and act on executive-proposed legislation before it automatically became law.”⁸⁹ The fifth act which will be further discussed later on was the most critical to the film industry’s development in some areas or lack of such development in other areas. From the acts came the Police and Military Investigations, or IPMS (*Inqueritos Policial-Militares*), “to deal with people responsible for ‘crimes of a social or political nature, and for acts of revolutionary war’“.⁹⁰ One day after the coup, the police and military invaded “The University of Brasilia, which had been created with the purpose of renewing Brazilian University life”, and was considered a breeding ground for ideas and therefore, subversive.⁹¹ The most violent repression occurred in the countryside where peasant leagues or unions were targeted. The torture which became institutionalized as well as constant disappearances and arrests created a “climate of fear and betrayal”.⁹² The National Information Bureau, or SNI (*Servico Nacional de Informacoes*), was the intelligence collecting and internal subversion agency within the government. Associated with this agency, and almost as powerful as the President, “General Golbery went so far as to claim that he had unwittingly created a monster”.⁹³ Protests against the monster were mainly student-motivated, worker-motivated, and later union-motivated due to economic failings. Union protests were also inspired by the Cuban revolution, where Batista and the Brazilian military regime were likened. However, unlike Cuba’s largely

⁸⁸ Codato, *Political transition and democratic consolidation : Studies on contemporary brazil*, 280.

⁸⁹ Johnson, *The film industry in brazil : Culture and the state*, 107.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 282.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 282

middle class revolution, Brazil's armed struggle was mainly fought by students and professors. The years of economic prosperity distinguished between the socio-economic groups, the intellectuals, which formed the minority that was against the regime, and the majority of the population who found life acceptable. Whereas the government controlled the first group through repression, the second was targeted with propaganda.

The Dictatorship was also cause for tremendous improvements in Brazil's telecommunications industry. Due to easy personal credit, many households were able to afford televisions. From 1960 to 1970, households with televisions rose from 9 to 40 percent. Through TV Globo, the national network, Brazilian Government was able to put on propaganda shows and amaze the public with the progress Brazil was making. One of the largest projects for progress was Itaipu, operating in 1984, the largest hydroelectric plant in the world. When inflation began to rise, and private banks wanted to collect on their loans and were not loaning more money, it was clear that the state could not pay the debts it had incurred against private banks to develop all of the pharaonic projects it had embarked on during the economic miracle between 1969 and 1973, and businessmen turned against the regime and state intervention.⁹⁴ High industrial progress couples with low standards of health, education and housing, which marked the military dictatorship and incited many of the working class towards the late 1980s. "The military high command, the bureaus of information and repression, and the state technocrats ran the show"⁹⁵, as was quite clear, and as Brazilians stopped believing the military would bring them success through a trickle-down from industrial progress which they never saw, they began to attack from the bottom up.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 301

⁹⁵ Ibid., 293.

The Dark Years After 1968

The year 1968 was the landmark protest for the death of a student killed by the Military Police in Rio de Janeiro in a demonstration the previous March. This represented public indignation at violence, including the normally complacent Rio de Janeiro middle class as well as the Church. This was the Protest March of the Hundred Thousand, (*Passeata dos 100,000*), a march demonstrating against the harsh, repressive, and violent measures of the military government as well as the loss of civil liberties, which also occurred in June 1968. Despite the crackdown of 1968, “No effort was made with organized massive government support. No attempt was made to build a single party to run the state, nor to devise an ideology that might win over the educated members of society. Quite to the contrary, leftist ideology continued to dominate thought at the universities and among Brazil’s intellectuals in general”.⁹⁶ Instead of propaganda, the intellectual classes as well as the masses saw repression. They were beaten and not wooed.

This began with an impasse in the constitutional relationship between the executive and the legislative branches of the Brazilian Government which led to the Fifth Institutional Act on December 13, 1968, mainly created by President Artur da Costa e Silva and minister of justice, Luis Antonio da Gama e Silva. This act, as outlined in the section below which describes all of the Institutional Acts, granted the executive more power than ever before, disregarded habeas corpus, and led to the strongest censorship the country has ever known, sending famous artists such as Glauber Rocha, Gilberto Gil,

⁹⁶ Ibid., 311.

Caetano Veloso, Chico Buarque de Hollanda and others to flee the country for fear for their lives and their creative freedoms. This was in a political context of disorganized, fragmented, and unprepared armed resistance movements and the subsequent torture which ensued as a result of the arrests and disappearances generated by the military fight against any opposition. It is in this period that Embrafilme (Empresa Brasileira de Filmes or Brazilian Film Company), which is discussed in much more detail in the next chapter, was built from Decree-law 862 in 1969. Although the government would not fund political films through Embrafilme, they did fund morally questionable films which were an obvious contradiction to the moralism within the regime. In a reorganization of policy, 1976 marked President Ernesto Geisel's decision to turn Embrafilme into COCINE, the National Cinema Committee, (Conselho Nacional do Cinema), where many powers held by other ministries and INC now belonged to the film industry itself and marked an opening in the strict policies in the industry. This was supplemented by the creation of a National Policy of Culture in 1975 which stated that

the state role includes support of spontaneous cultural production of the Brazilian people and in no way implies that the state has the right to direct such production or to in any way impede freedom of cultural or artistic creation. [...] to support and stimulate cultural production, not control it. With specific references to the cinema, the policy statement merely asserts that the state's role is to support national cinematic production, making it more competitive and providing it with an 'artistic base'.⁹⁷

This federal support of the film industry, as a part of the redirection of state policy towards cinema, although at first glance appears to be liberating, was not as liberal and hands-off as the wording makes it out to be. This is exemplified by the fact that:

⁹⁷ Johnson, *The film industry in brazil : Culture and the state*, 153-154.

One result of the reorientation of state policy has been to make ‘independent’ filmmakers (i.e. filmmakers who do not have their own production company or [...] a solid financial base) dependant on the state for production and financing. It has created structures which could potentially allow the state to control all significant film production in Brazil.⁹⁸

The question remains: why has Cinema Novo accepted state aid? Why has the state aided the often politically critical Cinema Novo? Randall Johnson offers the explanation that the Cinema Novo directors did not believe that one had to buy into or support government ideas just by taking government money. They would rather have been federally funded and distributed in non-commercialized areas than the opposite of this. The Government may have funded Cinema Novo to co-opt their critics, but Johnson believes this explanation is too simplistic, as Cinema Novo was relatively depoliticized by 1968. Attempting a more enlightened and culturally sensitive authoritarian image, or countering the sexually and morally explicit films which were popular during the period of 1972-1973 in which the most reorientation of state policy took place, (during the reign of President Médici and also the harshest period of repression), was probably a response to the crisis of legitimacy due to the unpopularity of repressive authoritarian practices. According to former Planning Minister Joao Paulo dos Reis, a great supporter of one of Cinema Novo’s largest directors, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, the general intention was to sponsor Cinema Novo’s culturally valid films even if the plot was slightly political as opposed to the sexual and intellectually empty films of the same period.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ibid., 160.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 161-164.

What's the solution? PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION

In 1969, “The incident with the greatest impact was the kidnapping of the United States ambassador in Rio de Janeiro. In exchange for freeing Ambassador Burke Elbrick, the kidnappers obtained the release of 15 prisoners who were sent to Mexico”.¹⁰⁰ The members of MR8, the “terrorist group” which kidnapped the American ambassador were most likely tortured in DOI-CODI, the principal torture center in São Paulo. Many citizens still remember the screams heard from the building of the tortured prisoners. Many of these prisoners were students, professors, and members of armed urban groups, many of them untrained students.

The armed urban groups, which at the beginning had created the impression of destabilizing the regime with their spectacular deeds, began to decline and for all purposes disappeared. This denouement was the result, in part, of the efficacy of the repression. It swept up activists involved in the arm struggle and their sympathizers, who were mainly young professionals. The other factor was the groups’ isolation from the majority of the population, whose interest in their action was minimal or nonexistent. The radical Left had been totally mistaken when it thought it could turn Brazil into another Vietnam¹⁰¹

Although most of the protesting and action against the government was done by fragmented and unorganized student leftist groups, other important parts of society occasionally took part. In 1975 Vladimir Herzog, a well known Brazilian news journalist, was tortured to death. The government fabricated a fanciful story of how he died, but most Brazilians knew better. His death and the death of other key figures, such as student leaders and other members of the media, caused the middle class and the Church to rise up against these crude cover-ups for torture and murder.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 290.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 292.

Institutional Acts

Summaries of the most important institutional acts, the first five, are as follows:

AI1: Issued on April 9, 1964, this act increased the powers of the executive and subjected the constitution to modification. The President could declare a state of emergency without the approval of Congress, and was given the power to deny the rights of political dissidents for periods of ten years. Anything which the President wanted to pass had to be considered by Congress within 30 days and only needed a simple majority to pass.

AI2: This act gave the president the sole power to create new positions in the civil service,

As AI2 ended all political parties – for better or worse, representation of popular opinions ended here.¹⁰²

AI3: This act issued on February 5, 1966, replaced direct election of governors with selection by state legislatures on September 3, 1966, scheduled legislative elections for federal senators and deputies and state deputies for November 15, 1966 and eliminated the election of mayors of all capital cities, who would henceforth be selected by the governors of the states.

AI4: This Institutional Act issued on December 7, 1966 convoked an extraordinary meeting of Congress to vote and promulgate a new constitution. The preamble of the fourth act stated that it had become necessary to give the country a new constitution that would represent the institutionalization of the ideas and principles of the Revolution.

AI5: This act issued on December 13, 1968 stated that the revolutionary process unfolding could not be detained. The very institutions given to the nation by the

¹⁰² Ibid., 286.

Revolution for its defense were being used to destroy it, said the preamble of the act. In this act the president was empowered to recess national congress, legislative assemblies and municipal councils by complimentary acts. These bodies would convene again only when called by the president. In addition, the president could decree intervention in the states when in the national interest and without regard for the constitutional restrictions on intervention; he could suspend political rights of any citizen for ten years and cancel election mandates without regard for constitutional limitations. The national state of siege was prolonged; the confiscation of personal goods illicitly gained was allowed; the right of habeas corpus was suspended in cases of political crimes and crimes against national security and the social and economic order; and the restrictions to be placed on those who lost their political rights were increased and more explicitly designated.

Closing

In the following chapter, specific films from Brazil are explored in order to make sense of this account of Brazilian politics and political film. The importance of the violence, political disruption, and portrayal of real events contained in these films as well as the public reaction to such techniques lies in this history. In all three films it is apparent,

as Ismail Xavier argues (1977), although cinema nôvo ‘disappeared’ it re-emerged in Brazil in a different form.¹⁰³

This is apparent in Glauber Rocha’s films. The ways in which Brazilian protest film has reinvented itself is in the blatant and actual portrayal of real events and real people who

¹⁰³ Hayward, *Cinema Studies : The Key Concepts*, 57.

took part in the revolution. Today, these films function as unambiguous and image-focused history lessons which guarantee that today's generations will learn about and remember the atrocities of the dictatorship.

Chapter 3: Brazilian Cinema in the Age of Neoliberalism and Political Discourse of the New Brazilian Left

Words fail: bullets talk. This is the logic of Brazil's cinematic marvel; *City of God*, *Cidade de Deus* (2002); and other likeminded and recent films: *The Elite Squad*, *Tropa da Elite*(2007); and *Bus 174*, *Ônibus 174*(2002); which speak to a culture of poverty and hunger. The culture of violence has exploded on screen as a part of the Third Cinema movement in Brazil, following directly in the footsteps of the *Tropicalismo* and *Cinema Novo* movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Incongruously, various films have been released depicting the torture and violence of the Military Dictatorship, decrying this method of brutality to gain headway in the battle against political dissenters and self-proclaimed revolutionaries. This investigation and deep analysis of specific scenes and facets of the chosen films, as well as the political discourse of film and corresponding political rhetoric aims to discover if and how the political concerns in film have changed since the end of the Cinema Novo era and the start of Third Cinema (Third World Cinema) as the Brazilian government transitioned from dictatorship to democracy, embracing the Workers Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* or PT). How has the Military Dictatorship been painted, and what role does violence play in these films? More specifically: what is the political discourse of the new Brazilian Left (the PT), and how does the Brazilian film industry through films reproduce this discourse as a result of newfound critical freedom and political opening? Some questions to be considered in the process of answering this larger inquiry are: is the PT/President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) truly a democratic-socialist? Is the film industry stuck within the context of a

neoliberal framework of gangs and violence? How have films attacked the Military Dictatorship and delegitimized its' brutality and harsh antisocialist/intellectual practices? Have Brazilian films, specifically independent films, addressed more traditionally socialist concerns such as agrarian reform and Brazil's sizeable economic disparity? At first, one might sensibly assume that critical discourse in film is often a reflection of political freedom. Therefore, a transition from a bureaucratic-authoritarian military regime to democracy, logically, would lead to a shift in the expressed political concerns in film to more severe and accusatory grievances which films were previously prohibited from conveying. Ironically, I found that the grievances are more local than at the national level; now that the government is not as harsh on society, society is more concerned with problems in their neighborhoods.

At first, after only watching a handful of Brazilian films, it appears as though many include negative references of the harsh treatment of the military dictatorship, and yet, there has also been a major shift in political discourse from one of poverty and underdevelopment, to one of violence. I noted a similarity in the discourse of the political left and political concerns in film, and had interpreted this protest of police actions, violence, and drugs, combined with a peculiar sympathy for both the federal government and specific poor "underdogs" such as *traficantes* and street kids, as being representative of democratic freedom and expression. It is interesting to note that after starting my research, counter to what I intuitively expected, it is likely that political freedom within the film industry has increased due to less censorship, but the gravity of political messages has not changed as much as I thought it might, and therefore, the framework within which films protest and are political has remained the same, even if the grievances

are different and the government now has a hands-off relationship with the film industry and is now accountable for their actions. Although I have come to the conclusion that the film industry, perhaps, does not intend/has not intended to significantly protest the government, it is still important to consider modern Brazilian Independent film which has no obligation to government officials which still partially fund commercial film, and look to this genre for possible evidence of true socialist discourse and likeminded political protest and criticism.

Setting the Scene

In order to begin to investigate this issue, it is necessary to lay out a brief history of the Brazilian film industry and trace the progress of protest film during the military dictatorship through the political transition to democracy up until today. A brief account of the relationship between film and politicians and government involvement within this industry, directly or through government-created institutions will also be presented. My corpus of films has been particularly selected due to the immense individual popularity/infamy and success/attention each film received, and therefore, this corpus may be considered representative of a significant portion of popular Brazilian cinema. Specific scenes and aspects of these films will be analyzed in detail as they are relevant in a discussion of protest film. Additionally, modern political discourse will be analyzed with respect to Lula and his respective policies which have/have not been implemented. Together, within this focus on political freedom and its effect on media shifts, evidence will be taken from the current discourse of the left and how/if this discourse is reproduced in film. Finally, I will conclude with a brief discussion of why I believe

artists haven't broken from the neoliberal framework of the military dictatorship within the context of the opening of political opportunity and freedom of expression.

The seeds of Cinema Novo, or the New Cinema movement in Brazil, were planted in the 1950s by the Italian Neorealist Movement, and the French New Wave Movement, which rejected the sophisticated technology and hefty budget of Hollywood, and embraced both the pitiable underdog and a youthful and energetic protest of classical cinematic form. Using amateurs instead of professional actors, and filming on location instead of in a studio, this documentary-like approach defined these films. As they rejected sponsorship from businesses and government, these low-budget works may not have been technologically impressive, but they were extremely conscious, intellectual, and independent of ideological control. Within this historical context, middle-class artists and intellectuals, such as the ones who founded Cinema Novo, became increasingly politicized and sought to commit their art to the transformation of Brazilian society. The first phase of Cinema Novo took place between 1960 and 1964. Within this period, the influence of the previously mentioned New Wave and Neorealist movements was most obvious, and a certain political optimism was apparent. Films such as Nelson Pereira dos Santos' *Barren Lives*, *Vidas Secas* (1963), "deal typically, although not exclusively, with the problems confronting the urban and rural lumpenproletariat: starvation, violence, religious alienation, and economic exploitation".¹⁰⁴ With a paternalistic view of the masses, dos Santos, as a member of the educated and radical middleclass artistic elite, shows the oppression of peasants by the landowners. Most of these films depict poverty in a barren and rural setting. It is in this period, I believe, that the last true movement of

¹⁰⁴ Johnson, *Brazilian Cinema*, 34.

socialist protest in Brazilian cinema thrived. As President João Goulart was overthrown in 1964 by the military regime, the second phase of Cinema Novo ensued through 1964 to 1968. The year 1968 was when the Fifth Institutional Act was put in place, which gave the President of Brazil dictatorial powers, dissolved Congress and state legislatures, suspended the Constitution, and imposed censorship. In other words, this was the beginning of extreme and repressive military rule. In this phase, Cinema Novo moved from rural to urban settings and questioned/analyzed the “failure- of populism, of developmentalism, and of leftist intellectuals”.¹⁰⁵ Glauber Rocha is Cinema Novo’s most celebrated writer and director. Rocha’s best-known work; *Land in Anguish, Terra em Transe* (1967); satirizes, “pompous senators and progressive priests, party intellectuals and military leaders, [who] samba together in what Rocha calls the ‘tragic carnival of Brazilian politics’”.¹⁰⁶ Although these films were popular in representing the populace, these films were independently produced and did not have the resources to guarantee distribution throughout Brazil, let alone North America.

As a reaction to the Fifth Institutional Act’s censorship of film, Cinema Novo turned to the allegorical melodrama and the *Tropicalismo* or Tropicalism Movement which, “developed a coded language of revolt”¹⁰⁷, by depicting domestic allegories of repression and dependency, and gross exaggerations of tropical Brazil, such as Carmen Miranda and her fruit hat. This movement aimed to focus on criticizing the problem of a superficial modernization of the Brazilian economy juxtaposed against its colonized and outmoded roots. Where originally, “Cinema Novo saw itself as a part of this process of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 38.

‘dealienation’ through a strategy of *conscientização*, or conscious-raising. [...] to show the Brazilian people the true face of the country’s underdevelopment in the hope that they would gain a critical consciousness and participate in the struggle for national liberation”¹⁰⁸, its consequent populist co-optation ran in the face of its early leftist purity. As Cinema Nôvo took a new direction, a subterranean and independent film movement was formed. The *Nôvo Cinema Nôvo* (New New Cinema) or *Udigrudi* (Brazilian-Portuguese pronunciation of Underground) was blacklisted, intentionally marginalized, and hassled and threatened by industry figures and censors. These films assumed an “aesthetic of garbage”, depicting stories of the marginalized and poor. In Ozualdo Candeias’ aptly named, *In the Margin, A Margem* (1967), “The image of a slum dweller patiently extracting lice from her mate’s hair is treated with immense tenderness”¹⁰⁹; hence Candeias treats marginalized characters with great warmth and respect. Although these underground films remained independent and favored the marginalized, as well as depicted the torture and repression of the military dictatorship, they are pessimistic with regard to the possibility of real change and do not suggest political alternatives nor communicate/commit to any real threat to the dictatorship. For this reason, various critics have condemned the Nôvo Cinema Nôvo as “suicide cinema”.¹¹⁰ Modern underground and independent cinema is so poorly funded and distributed that I personally found very little on the subject, and therefore, it is difficult to say whether independent film has remained faithful to the marginalized or has taken a more revolutionary and confrontational stance on political constructs.

¹⁰⁸ Randal Johnson, "Brazilian Cinema Novo." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 3, no. 2 (1984): 95-106.

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, *Brazilian Cinema*, 313.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 315.

In contrast, regarding state-sponsored and corporate-sponsored films, 1963 marked when a strong supporter of the 1964 coup, Governor of Fuanabara Carlos Lacerda, approved and signed CAIC, Commission for Aid to the Film Industry, into law. This allowed for a subsidy and finance program for producers and film. Proceeding CAIC, was ISEB, The High Institute of Brazilian Studies, developed in 1955 by President Juscelino Kubitschek to create a common national ideology regarding art and culture. Specifically focused on the issue of development, this institution developed a theory in relation to Brazil's dependence on advanced industrial powers. ISEB believed that:

it was necessary for an enlightened intelligencia to create an authentic, national, critical consciousness of the country's underdevelopment and its causes[...] and lead to a process of social transformation and national liberation. Such liberation would come through what they called a 'bourgeois revolution', i.e. transformation led by enlightened intellectuals [...] and progressive elements of the national bourgeoisie.¹¹¹

In other words, only through nationalization would Brazil be able to truly reach its cultural, intellectual, economic, and artistic potential. As ISEB was created with the intention that a government institution would aid and ideologically control the industry, CAIC followed in ISEB's footsteps. The government later created INC, the National Film Institute, in 1966, and Embrafilme in 1969, a national production and distribution company. It is in the Third Phase of Cinema Nôvo that the film industry began to cooperate more with the government, and film makers consequently,

began to see the making of popular films as, [...], 'the essential condition for political action in cinema.' In cinema as in revolution, they decided, everything is a question of power, and for a cinema existing within a system to which it does not adhere, power means broad public acceptance and financial success.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Johnson. "Brazilian Cinema Novo.", 95-106.

¹¹² Johnson, *Brazilian Cinema*, 37.

Although in theory the military government censored any and all images or ideas reflecting badly on the military dictatorship, for the most part, only film which acted as propaganda based on party pluralism and other democratic alternatives was banned.

Ironically,

vapid erotic comedies – *pornoanchadas* – rushed into the vacuum left by political censorship and departing filmmakers [...] they exalt the good bourgeois life of fast cars, wild parties, and luxurious surroundings, while offering the male voyeur titillating shots of breasts and buttocks [...] The military regime, phenomenally alert to violation of ‘morality’ in the films of the more politicized directors, has hypocritically tolerated, indeed encouraged, these productions.¹¹³

If the government had really wanted to shut down all criticism and ideas considered against the regime’s ideals, it could have done so. Yet, it chose not to. The dictatorship allowed a level of criticism which in turn permitted filmmakers and audiences to be “revolutionary” and gain the satisfaction of an outlet for their frustrations without realizing that, in fact, their protest was permitted and tolerated by the government. The Brazilian government has co-produced or otherwise financed Brazilian national film production since 1973, including some of the most important works in Cinema Novo. Many cineastes’ realization that only through the combination of the expertise of their own producers with the financial power of the state could they compete with the multinational film corporations, resulted in the incorporation of the state in to the production and distribution process of the film industry. Additionally, filmmakers lobbied for legislation reserving a percentage of the film market for Brazilian national films.¹¹⁴ Many film personalities today call for increased decision-making power for directors. This is because it is quite clear to all involved that without the state’s support, foreign

¹¹³ Ibid., 40.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 44.

films, particularly American films, would quickly consume the Brazilian national film's market share. Likewise, "Given the capitalist structures of production, distribution, and exhibition in Brazil today, a popular cinema [...] remains a utopian idea unless accompanied by a popular transformation of society, a truly radical change in its political and economic structure".¹¹⁵ This capitalist structure was built by the military regime, and the new dependency on cultural integration has created a state not unlike Glauber Rocha's *El Dorado*, symbolic of Brazil, which shows symptoms of these structures in *Land in Anguish*, *Terra em Transe*(1967).

A Land in Anguish

Land in Anguish, *Terra em Transe*(1967) depicts a hypothetical land, El Dorado, where all politics are rejected as inept, dishonest, and corrupt. This land promotes its government as pure and generous. In the province of Alecrim, a right-wing coup is being led by Porfirio Diaz against the governor of the province, Felipe Vieira. The film opens to an angry argument between the protagonist/narrator, poet Paolo Martins, around who's dying memories the film revolves, and Governor Vieira.¹¹⁶ As Paolo and Sara, an

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 49-50.

¹¹⁶ Robert Stam, Brazilian film expert, writes that: "A word on the prototypes for the political figures in *TERRA EM TRANSE*. Porfirio Diaz, named after the Mexican dictator, embodies the Latin American version of Iberian despotism, while his political career parallels that of the Brazilian politician Carlos Lacerda, evolving from youthful leftism to an almost religious anticommunism. Vieira, for his part, combines the traits of a number of Brazilian populist leaders. Like Miguel Arraes, he is a provincial governor elected with the support of students and peasants. Like Joao Goulart, he is a gaucho and is deposed by a rightwing coup. His description of himself as a self-made politician recalls Janio Quadros, while his speech of resignation echoes Vargas' famous suicide letter denouncing international conspiracies. Sara and her militant friends represent the communist party, whose policy it then was (and still is) to support populist politicians like Vieira, seeing itself as a kind of midwife for a bourgeois revolution which would logically precede an authentic proletarian one. EXPLINT (Company of International Exploitation) obviously represent as foreign (mainly North American) economic forces, and especially multinational corporations, which were involved in the coup against Joao Goulart." –Robert Stam. "Land in Anguish; Revolutionary lessons". *Jump Cut*, no. 10-11, 1976: 49-51.

assistant of the Governor, drive on the highway away from the house of the Governor, Paolo angrily expresses his frustration in politics, and he is fatally shot by a military/police figure on a motorcycle. This “portrays the vacillation of a poet between the Left and the Right, and his final, suicidal option for the individual armed struggle”.¹¹⁷ It is a rejection of all politics. The film then jumps back in time to four years earlier when he had been a close friend of Porfirio Diaz. He tells Diaz he wants to go his own way, and that he has dissimilar political views. These more socialist views lead him to working with Vieira, who is pictured as a populist politician, with whom he is quickly disillusioned as he sees that the promises made during the campaign can never be kept due to obligations to land owners and other wealthy individuals. Additionally, Vieira is shown to turn the military police onto the populace. Paolo represents the liberal intellectual, who believes he is the most pure, yet he is shown to be just as fond of the sound of his own voice, just as fond of power, and just as useless as his two friends, the politicians whom he opposes. He finds himself rejecting both of the political figures and creating his own political film within this political film, the story of a hero: a satire meant for those who would bring the politicians down. This film within a film is about a hero, as is *Land in Anguish*, *Terra em Transe* (1967), and the audience feels obligated to identify with one of these would-be political heroes, particularly Paolo who narrates and acts as protagonist, whose poems throughout the film give feeling to the images. Despite the cinematographic poetry and insight into Paolo, he too is shown to be the wrong political figure. In this triangle of the conservative politician, the populist-authoritarian politician, and the weak intellectual, all of the figures opting for power, are shown to be

¹¹⁷ Johnson, *The film industry in brazil: culture and state*, 126.

equally corrupt and worthless. This analysis comes from the unique and guerilla-form of the film which calls for war on traditional studio-produced film meant to show and illustrate in continuity, as opposed to analyze and break into pieces. One of the difficult aspects of the film is aptly described by Robert Stam:

The film is framed by a prologue and epilogue, both of which treat the *coup d'etat*, Paolo's flight and his subsequent death. We know from the outset both the how and the why of Paolo's death, and this knowledge frees us to look at the film critically, as an analysis of political forces. Rocha is less interested in the outcome of the conflict than in an 'anatomy' of the conflict. He has called *TERRA EM TRANSE* an 'anti-dramatic film, which destroys itself by a *montage à répétitions*.' The narrative is constantly derailed, deconstructed, re-elaborated. The incidents of the film are exploded, analyzed into a play of political forces. The world of *TERRA EM TRANSE* is one of spatio-temporal discontinuity. Rather than giving us the conventional impression of spatio-temporal coherence, Rocha forces us to reconstruct spatial and temporal relationships. There are no establishing shots to situate us. We are further disoriented by dizzying camera movements and an unorthodox variety of camera angles. Even in sequences characterized by spatial homogeneity, there is discontinuity in the cinematographic treatment of the unified space. We are given fragments which defy organization into a narrative whole. In the various orgy and cabaret sequences, for example, it is impossible to divine any preexisting fiction which has been treated elliptically. We have to create the spatiality and the temporality of the scene.¹¹⁸

This is not an easy film to watch. The true nature of guerilla film is to attack, and an attack should never be comfortable or easy to participate in or witness. This film was political in its own unique "Rochain" way. However, as Robert Stam notes, "When it first appeared, the film was widely misread as a romantic endorsement of Guevarism. The film's final shot of Paolo with upraised rifle was interpreted as a call for the kind of armed guerilla struggle that led Che Guevara and Fidel Castro to victory in Cuba. But in fact [...] the film is more interested in demystifying the liberal politics that led up to the

¹¹⁸ Robert Stam. "Land in Anguish; Revolutionary lessons" *Jump Cut*, no. 10-11, 1976: 49-51.

coup than in proposing any specific revolutionary strategy”.¹¹⁹ Ironically, the sort of armed struggle which Fidel truly did inspire in Brazil to rise up against the dictatorship was shown to be futile and unorganized, as Rocha predicted with the example of Paolo.

In relation to violence, the editing regarding image and sound minimizes the presence and effect of the ever present pistols and machine guns. While the image of guns is on screen, no shots are heard or the noise is disconnected from the image, and when there are no arms on screen, shots may be heard. Paolo does not show a visible wound or blood while driving with Sara in the first ten minutes of the film as he is shot by a military/police figure. Robert Stam believes this is all done, “in keeping with Rocha’s expressed desire to reflect on violence rather than make a spectacle of it”.¹²⁰ Rocha rightly points out, as I too noted and would like to highlight, that as Paolo argues with Vieira over the use of police force against the masses, the Castro Alves poem is featured: “The street belongs to the people, as the sky belongs to the condor”, sung over the voices of Paolo and Vieira. Stam suggests that, “The street may belong to the people in the world of poetry, the film suggests, but in fact it belongs to their oppressors”.¹²¹ As I noted, and Stam confirmed in his writing, Rocha at first glance seems to criticize “the naive notion that art in itself can create a revolution”¹²², an issue which gets to the very heart of this investigation. Internally, the film shows that poetry and language are not sufficient to make a difference in the world. Robert Stam rightly points out that, “Paolo Martins loses his initial faith in political poetry, concluding that ‘words are useless.’ Sara,

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

who generally represents the best face of orthodox communism, tells Paolo that poetry and politics are too much for one man”, Stam warns that we must not be like the,

Literal minded critics, taking Sara’s judgment as the film’s final verdict on the question of art and politics, [and] fail to appreciate the dialectical relation between poetry and politics in the film [...]the obvious irony, since the film itself not only ‘includes’ poetry but also proceeds poetically, constituting the cinematographic equivalent of poetry.¹²³

Although this film was at first banned by the Church and the state, and precautions were taken to name the country in question El Dorado, and not Brazil, the subject matter of the film was quite obvious. Although this was evident, it was finally decided that the intricacies and the actual message of the film would and could not be understood by the masses and the film was released for the enjoyment of the intellectual elite, from which the government felt no threat at that time. If the military dictatorship truly wanted to ban this sort of material, in 1967, or afterwards, it could have. I would like to suggest that perhaps by allowing this little freedom of expression, the military dictatorship avoided a resistance movement with enough motivation fueling it to be strong enough and opposed to the dictatorship enough to really get organized and try to overthrow it. Additionally, while *Land in Anguish*, *Terra em Transe*(1967) attacks the military regime, it also attacks the leftist and communist groups which were perceived to be weak and not really any better than the dictators themselves.

After 1968, everything changed. Filmmakers such as Glauber Rocha fled Brazil and went to go make movies abroad. *Land in Anguish*, *Terra em Transe*(1967), among his other films, was originally banned and then censored. Yet, as Cinema Nôvo rejected

¹²³ Ibid.

industry, they were funded by the government and the Bank of Minas Gerais.¹²⁴ This sort of intellectual-political material was never leaked to the popular classes, and therefore the government allowed these films as they were contained within the small intellectual movement.

Zuzu Angel and Four Days in September

The previously mentioned radical change in society has yet to transpire, and so the power balance and amount of protest and content of protest in film, though it is nowhere near perfect or sufficient, has improved. Many critics and film historians say that the Cinema Novo movement died in 1972 when state interference and influence became cohesive, but interestingly enough, the only collective manifesto from the movement was written in 1973; known as the Light and Action Manifesto, *Luz e Ação Manifesto*; which protested the Government's annual prize for film adaptations of literary works by dead authors, and the general stifling of creativity and novelty. The films *Four Days in September*, *O que è isso companheiro?*(1997), and *Zuzu Angel*(2006), both criticize the military government and sympathize with the student socialist movement, which runs parallel to the way in which other recent Brazilian films sympathize with young gangsters from the *favela*, or slum.

The protest against the military dictatorship is founded upon the Fifth Institutional Act removing freedom of the press in *Four Days in September*, *O que è isso companheiro?*(1997) and the torture inflicted upon the student revolutionaries who kidnapped the American Ambassador. Likewise, *Zuzu Angel's* son, another student

¹²⁴ Randal Johnson, Interview by Rachel Faye Rosenfeld, tape recording via telephone, Claremont, CA., 27 February 2008.

revolutionary, shown as having taken a part in the same bank shooting in *Four Days in September*, *O que è isso companheiro?*(1997), is also tortured to death by the military police. The most powerful scenes in these two films are those which use violence and depict torture, contrasting Rocha's technique of separating the effects of sound and image to lessen the affect of violence on the audience. While Rocha removed the audience's attention from the violence to focus on the action/inaction and dialogue of the political figures, these two films emphasize the violence by keeping both image and audio in sync, but also by showing the affects of violence inflicted upon the so-called "terrorists" in great detail. Drowning, hanging and binding, flogging, forcing prisoners to hold water buckets in the air while being beaten, having salt rubbed in the open eyes of prisoners, and electric shock are all techniques used by the military investigators to force revolutionaries to speak, and are depicted in graphic detail in these films.

Fernando and Cesar, two intellectuals in *Four Days in September*, *O que è isso companheiro?*(1997), like Stuart Angel and his fiancé, decide to join a revolutionary movement. Fernando, with the code name Paulo, is a journalist, (it may be no coincidence that Paolo the poet was Rocha's protagonist), and represents Fernando Gabeira, a journalist and political activist, and the real man who the film (and novel) are based on. Fernando and Cesar (code name Oswaldo) join MR8, which later decides at Paulo's suggestion, that the only way to break the influence of the ban on media is to kidnap the American Ambassador which they successfully carry out, only to be later caught by the government, imprisoned, and tortured. The audience sympathizes with the students of this group, as they cross their fingers hoping that the Brazilian government grants the freedom of their comrades in exchange for the life of the American

Ambassador so that the effort will not have been in vain, and that the good-natured and innocent young revolutionaries will not have to shoot someone, and therefore no longer remain the innocent students the audience wishes to root for. Likewise, the audience is left with fingers crossed that Stuart Angel is alive, as Zuzu searches government buildings and departments for her missing son.

Interestingly, *Four Days in September, O que è isso companheiro?*(1997) was originally disliked immensely by the Brazilian public and especially the Brazilian left when it was released. However, it was nominated as best Foreign Language Film in 1997 for an Oscar and won the Political Film Society award in 1998 in the Democracy category. There are two main reasons for this discrepancy. First, the character of Jonas, one of the experienced paramilitary comrades from Sao Paulo, was a real revolutionary who was killed during the dictatorship. The Brazilian left was especially angered by this strict and authoritarian portrayal of him. This parallel with the authoritarian nature of the government was looked at as a device of the government to delegitimize the cause he died for. Secondly, the humanization of the young military policeman who cannot sleep because he has to torture students and must be comforted by his girlfriend is unacceptable to the left and most Brazilian audiences. The parallel drawing in both cases to humanize both sides was not well received by Brazilian viewers, and the added effects of memory and lack of time and space to come to terms with what happened during the dictatorship seemed to rub many Brazilians the wrong way, although the book-version of *Four Days in September, O que è isso companheiro?*(1997) did quite well:¹²⁵

Probably the one author most associated with the testimonies is former journalist and militant Fernando Gabeira. His 1979 work, *O que è isso companheiro?*

¹²⁵ Ibid.

topped best-seller lists for weeks and was published in multiple editions. As of October 1984, more than 200,000 copies had been sold. Although Gabeira hardly established the genre[testimonies], he certainly popularized it. [...] Typically, these works trace the history of the period from the perspective of middle-class students or young professionals who joined the armed struggle. On the whole, they unfold chronologically, recounting the origins of the armed guerilla struggle in the student protests and mass demonstrations of 1968; the organization of the armed guerilla groups; guerilla actions, including bank robberies and other thefts to finance operations, largely abortive efforts at popular mobilization, and, most spectacularly, the kidnapping of foreign diplomats [...] the risks and fears of clandestinity; the fear and reality of capture and imprisonment; and the techniques of torture and the victims' relationship with the torturers. Some also recount the years of exile and the protagonists' return to Brazil.¹²⁶

Gabeira's film contains all of these elements, and although the film was not well received, it is clear that Fernando (the inspiration for the character in the film) wrote a book which was very popular and well received, perhaps because it was very loyal to the true story.

It is clear in *Land in Anguish, Terra em Transe*(1967) as well as *Zuzu Angel*(2006) and *Four Days in September, O que è isso companheiro?*(1997) that the military dictatorship was an undesirable form of government, which was oppressive and corrupt. In the latter two, the leftist rebel movements are shown to be disorganized and losing an uphill battle, but honorable nonetheless. Therefore, there is an aspect of protest present, but we must ask, is there true criticism of the non-democratic forces? The criticism towards everyone and everything political in Rocha's work disappeared once true political freedom was given, and marginalized individuals who do not necessarily fight for democratic freedoms along with the perceived oppressors have been exonerated in films and relieved of the criticism to which they were previously subjected.

¹²⁶ Catholic Church. Archdiocese of São Paulo (Brazil), Jaime Wright trans., Joan Dassin ed., *Brasil, Nunca Mais English; Torture in Brazil : A Shocking Report on the Pervasive use of Torture by Brazilian Military Governments, 1964-1979.*(Austin, Tex: Institute of Latin American Studies University of Texas, 1998), 163-164.

Zuzu Angel(2006) , by Sergio Rezende, was well accepted by audiences and not considered a radical film. Its importance lies in its ability to record history and act as a testament of what has transpired to all future generations so that it does not occur again. Similar to another Brazilian film which was recently in theaters, *The Year my Parents Went on Vacation, O Ano que Meus Pais Sairam de Férias*(2006), by Cao Hamburger, this film remembers a time when the dictatorship was in place and presents what the world looked like, and what the reality of parents and their children was like when one of the parties was involved in activities against the government. In *Zuzu Angel*(2006), there are graphic scenes of torture and imprisonment, depiction of the military personnel as liars and brutal killers, and the retelling of the story of a famous woman which can be interpreted and identified with by most Brazilian women. The ultimate inhumanity of the film is shown in the dropping of Stuart Angel's body into the ocean by a helicopter, denying him the right to be recognized as dead and not missing, denying him a burial, and denying his family the honor of this right when a family member dies. The military officials which repeatedly denied his existence to Zuzu were later shown in scenes rubbing salt into Stuart's eyes and beating his body. His pain and suffering caused by these individuals is shown as he shakes and bleeds after being electrocuted, repeating to himself that he is going crazy as he lies on his dirty cell floor. The last scene shows Zuzu's car, wrecked as it was run off the road by a truck driven by a government official, and the camera focuses on the same military official who tortured Stuart and lied to Zuzu many times about his whereabouts. This official removes a cassette tape from her car which is ironically playing the song that Chico Buarque had written for her and her struggle. Although this is nothing new for Brazil, this film is important in demonstrating

and testifying that the incredible rawness that Brazilians still feel regarding this period is justified and real. As amnesty was granted to both sides of the political conflict, both the tortured and torturers have returned to the country and have not met any disciplinary action. The Brazilian Government is not very large and a woman, perhaps a professor or senator, who had been tortured during the dictatorship and is currently a senator or other civil servant could be met by a military escort who had been her torturer for many months, on her way to a conference or other activity.¹²⁷ The importance of this film is not in shock value or educating children about the past. The importance of his film is to help society remember what happened and come to find peace. In looking at the successes and failures of these films and society's reaction to what has been depicted in these films allows us to judge society's feelings on the issue and the country's subsequent political actions. This is a very good indicator of protest or acceptance of the past and present governance, and hence may be relied upon as a reliable indicator for the future. When will Brazilian society heal? What standard will the Brazilian government be judged on? Brazilian audiences reactions to and opinions of political films depicted the past and present may be a good indicator to begin to answer these questions.

Pay no Attention to the Man Behind the Curtain

Today, Brazilian films focus on gangs and violence and for this reason are popular, in that they reflect and represent a part of popular society, however not the interests of the whole society. One of the questions previously asked, is how and why do these films not take the step further to criticize the system and economic disparity as

¹²⁷ Randal Johnson, interview by Rachel Faye Rosenfeld, tape recording via telephone, Claremont, CA., 27 February 2008.

Rocha might have done in the true spirit of democracy? Various films depict such issues, but it is violence and poverty which truly sells in film and politics. Politicians who address these issues, if perceived as believable, gain popularity, as do films which successfully and excitingly depict the danger and squalor of the poor majority. It is largely believed that,

the Brazilian authorities must face up to this challenge with new and creative solutions. Luiz Ignacio da Silva, Brazil's new president, is very much aware of this- so much so that during his presidential campaign in 2002, after watching *City of God*, he brought the issues raised in the film to the forefront and challenged his opponent to do the same. To alleviate the situation, Lula must make Brazil a more egalitarian society, promote economic growth, and follow through with his ambitious social agenda – including the Zero Hunger program. The rest of the burden [...] falls on [...] the city's current head of law enforcement.¹²⁸

Through Lula, the discourse of violence and gangs is brought to the forefront of cinematic and political discourse. It is important to note that the ultimate responsibility and culpability is placed on the head of the chief of law enforcement and not President Lula, nor his administration. Lula is depicted as a positive force, while the “authorities”, or law enforcement, are placed with the burden of daily street violence and crime. What the previous passage does not mention, is that if President Lula does not alleviate economic stresses and slow the gap in social class growth, the problem of street violence cannot be solved by police force alone.

By focusing on drugs and violence, both Lula and film have stayed within the neoliberal context in which these thrive. Though politicians would like to create a perceived change in policy and type of government, the evidence to the contrary is ample and evident. Originally, “Cinema Nôvo reveals that violence is normal behavior for the

¹²⁸ Marcio Siwi. *city of god, city of man - SAIS review* 23:2. Available from <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/v023/23.2siwi.html>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

starving”¹²⁹; and as hunger and violence are still rampant, it is may be that no intelligent discussion of one is possible without consideration of the other. Poverty and violence are issues the government is dealing with, but the real issues of why people are poor and why there is violence are not addressed. In the 1980’s Hector Babenco’s *Pixote*(1980) avoided why but addressed how quite effectively:

Pixote tends to indict specific institutions as ghettoized scenes of local abuse rather than designate the social system that makes such abuses virtually inevitable. The film’s deployment of point of view is also somewhat problematic. Our identification with the children- guaranteed through narrative focus, point-of-view shots, empathetic music – is usually so total that we lose all critical distance. The characters that middle-class spectators would normally identify – the doctors, the teachers, the social workers – are all one-dimensional figures unworthy of sympathy, while victims of *Pixote* and company are noxious tourists or low-life types, equally unworthy objects of identification [...] we are given little sense of our relation to what we see or what might be done about it. The emotional leaves little analytical residue in its wake.¹³⁰

As previously discussed, this film, like many others, touches on important issues and exposes the abuses of state-sponsored correctional facilities, but fails to truly enter into political analysis and analyze the role of the federal government in its failure to recognize these abuses.¹³¹ In fact, the film seems to, “contrast local ‘rogue’ sadists with a benign and concerned federal government”.¹³² Similar to *Pixote*, *Send a Bullet, Manda Bala*(2007), “chronicles the political corruption that saturates the Brazilian capital of Sao Paulo, and the trickle-down effect it has on the country as a whole [...] Interviewees include kidnapping victims, kidnappers, and the doctors behind the hottest new cosmetic-surgery trend in Sao Paulo: ear reconstruction for kidnap victims who’ve had their ears

¹²⁹ Johnson, "Brazilian Cinema Novo.", 95-106.

¹³⁰ Johnson, *Brazilian Cinema*, 414.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 415.

cut off”.¹³³ This is an American Film made in cooperation with Brazilian industry specialists, and evidence of the American artists’ inability to analyze the situation comes from an interview with Cinematographer Heloisa Passos and Director Jason Kohn where they tell of their experiences: “In the slums of Sao Paulo, the team interviewed one of Brazil’s politically motivated kidnapers.”¹³⁴, where they were in danger for being associated with the kidnapper, and noted that while they were at the home of this kidnapper the police arrived in front of his home, but luckily did not raid the building. ““After they left, we stayed another hour at the house, and we were very scared that we would run into the police on our way back””.¹³⁵ Here the filmmakers identify with the kidnapper, as they hide with the kidnapper from the police, whom they associate with danger, (as opposed to associating the serial kidnapper with danger). The film softens the audience to the traditionally rogue character, but still lacks political analysis into the reasons which the police may be so violent towards criminals despite the severe shift to the left away from the police and state-sponsored torture and brutality towards the population. I personally believe that because blanket amnesty was granted, the same officers are serving in the military in lower ranks and have not been able to rid themselves of their training and previous line of work. Brazilian audiences and Brazilian film aficionados were disappointed and even disturbed by this film. More so than the other films depicting violence, it shows the violence, places blame on the police, and offers less balanced insight to the problem of violence within Brazil than the other films mentioned here. It is important to mention this, as most of the violent films today are

¹³³ Holben, Jay. "Send a Bullet (Manda Bala)." *Am Cinematogr* 88, no.4, April 2007.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

doing well, foreign filmmakers are still misinterpreting the problem of violence and therefore not only giving the wrong message to international audiences but are also delegitimizing the struggle of other politically motivated groups.¹³⁶

José Padilha's *Bus 174*, *Ônibus 174*(2002), is a documentary much like *Send a Bullet*, *Manda Bala*(2007), except that it has been made almost exclusively out of live coverage of an incident in which a street kid in Rio de Janeiro takes a public city bus hostage. The film show us,

the life of Sandro Nascimento, all of that which led him to that bus and into the situation [...] is a life marked by the trauma of witnessing his mother's murder as she was butchered in front of him at the age of six. It is a life spent on the streets, narcotized by addition and hardened by the experience of prison. The 'reality' [...] of his situation on bus 174 is that of an actor with only one role to play: a man who will be dead.¹³⁷

This serves the purpose of aiding in the understanding of, "its constellation of rage, fear, poverty, and despair".¹³⁸ The film speaks of the,

massacre at Candelária Church in downtown Rio, where police killed seven street children (who first approached their car anticipating nighttime soup.) Sandro was one of the sixty-two children sleeping at the church that evening who survived the assault, and he invokes this prior incident [...] 'Brazil [...] My little friends were murdered by cowards.' [...] thirty-two were subsequently murdered, several disappeared, and the remaining group survives precariously, marked with the distress of having witnessed the massacre and having survived continuing violence at the hands of Brazil's police.¹³⁹

The issues are once again identified, however, the initiative to analyze the political implications and causations of the problems exposed is left to the audience. The audience is shown the world through the eyes of the street children, and is taught through

¹³⁶ Randal Johnson, interview by Rachel Faye Rosenfeld, tape recording via telephone, Claremont, CA., 27 February 2008.

¹³⁷ Amy Villarejo, "Bus 174 and the Living Present." *Cinema Journal* 46.1 2006: 113-118.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

the film to sympathize with and humanize these children. Randall Johnson and Robert Stam, two experts and renowned Brazilian film Professors, hypothesize that, “if Sandro were a character in a Hollywood film, he would be the pathologized criminal of North American fantasies rather than the frightened street kid with no options[...] no future”.¹⁴⁰ Apologies are made for the actions of the street urchins. Apologies are also made for the government and President in film.

A leftist filmmaker from Uruguay, Gonzalo Arijón, has made a film about Lula: *Lula's Brazil: The Management of Hope*(2005), which is proudly partisan, and features interviews with many who knew Lula in his struggle through poverty and as an industrial worker. These workers consider Lula “one of their own”. It is interesting to note that in the film, the leftist artist and citizens do not distinguish between Lula’s leftist rhetoric and neoliberal actions. Interviewees include: “factory workers, rural laborers from the Landless Workers Movement, political figures, landowners, and others, with television spots from Lula’s 2002 campaign and some archival footage from the Workers’ Party.” This film is another example of, “an apology for Lula”.¹⁴¹ The film decries the socio-economic gap within Brazil and celebrates the hope Lula has given Brazil, as opposed to criticizing him for neoliberal, as opposed to socialist, economic policies.¹⁴² Though the film depicts politically active Brazilians, there is much evidence that many Brazilians are behaving to the contrary. An article written about the various books and films recently released regarding Brazilian violence by an American Professor from the University of New Hampshire goes through these works and the ways in which they trace the evolution

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹Theodore Robert Young, "Lula's Brazil: The Management of Hope." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 12, no. 2, November 2007: 551-553.

¹⁴² Ibid.

of drug trafficking, gangs, police violence, and the problem of prevailing butchery. Through shockingly gruesome scenes from films, experiences, situations, or individuals described by interviewees, it is found that violence and gang culture is protested, but government was not challenged or brought into question.¹⁴³ This Professor continues to say that she,

observed the collapse of civic participation. ‘Fifteen years ago [...] my friends in various favelas talked enthusiastically about organizing and attending meetings and their newly established democratic rights. Now all they talk about – in hushed voices and behind closed doors- is their reluctance to participate in public life and their strategies for surviving the undeclared civil war between increasingly violent drug gangs and the police’¹⁴⁴

Therefore, right as the military regime fell, the Professor recounts hope and enthusiasm, however, she concludes that nothing positive has come from this. The most internationally well-known Brazilian film to be released in the last decade is *City of God*, *Cidade de Deus*(2002), which was funded generously by Embrafilme and pushed to distributors in the United States. With such success and support, this film was later made into a miniseries for television called *City of Men*, *Cidade de Homens*, aired between 2002 and 2005, in which the lives of two boys are followed, and eventually into a movie in 2007. In the miniseries the characters eventually secure an audience with President Lula himself to discuss the violent reality of their lives. This series, like the many other sources describing the harsh reality of violence, are also superficial in their treatment of the true source of the problem of violence. This series has now been made into a film of it’s own with the same name as the series.

¹⁴³ Robin E. Sheriff, "Picturing Violence in Brazil: A Review Essay." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 12, no. 1, April 2007: 305-318.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

The Brazilian film industry has been associated with and funded by the Brazilian government since the 1960s, and therefore the assumed switch in rhetoric from one of hunger is a modification to one of violence and gangs. The aesthetic of hunger and violence remains, though the depictions of violence in more explicit terms have changed. Why did the military regime permit allegorical, pornographic, and various other opposition films? Why does the democratic government today allow films to expose gross mismanagement of the poor and lack of control and safety over violence/drugs? Films were permitted to protest the violence of the dictatorship, but not allowed to protest in terms of supporting or pushing for a plural party political system. Conceivably, because the film industry was never truly nor fully quieted, the industry never hit the point where it would boil over and publicly defy the regime and advocate overthrowing the government at the expense of their financing. Although censorship has dissipated and the government's actions are much more transparent today, the relationship is the same financially, protest is not a problem for Lula because he does not see a real threat to his hegemony. The continuity between the old and new governments is quite clear. The actual community, *Cidade de Deus*, or City of God, was created by the military dictatorship; this populist project is similar ideologically to Lula's current projects in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* today where food and welfare is provided to keep communities afloat, but not socially mobile. Therefore, the same breeding ground for poverty, gangs, drugs, and violence which was in place then, exists now. Though the politicians are only now bringing these issues to the forefront, there is a great deal of continuity in underlying policies.

Perhaps, in order to pacify and satisfy society's need to protest, the government has strategically permitted cinematic forms of protest which do not propose toppling the regime, merely point out the problems which cannot directly be attributed to the federal government. As long as these problems remain, the torture or actual violence itself as opposed to a lack of government action/response with relation to the welfare of the public will continue to be emphasized and exposed. The government will be able to continue to disperse blame and satisfy the artists and movie-goers with an outlet to express frustration as long as funding is important to the film industry. Violence sells in both politics and cinema, and if violence sells, perhaps protest is no longer the goal of the film industry, but instead, raising social awareness about more local issues and capitalizing off society's love of action films.

It is important to remember that between the start of the dictatorship and today, the 1990s made their mark on the film industry. Films such as *How Good to See You Alive*; *Que Bom Te Ver Viva*(1989) and *Friendly Fire*; *Ação Entre Amigos*(1998) are good examples of films which depict the military dictatorship in the way in which it affected the lives of those involved and left them changed forever. Most of the people who survived torture and repression of the regime are still alive today; the fact that a large percentage of Brazilian national film includes the dictatorship in a major or minor way should be no surprise. These films were immensely popular in the 1990s. Perhaps a drop in the number of films about the dictatorship today signifies that as initial emotions reside, the raw pain that these individuals must feel has not healed, and films have moved to street violence to distract and move away from the direct depiction of opposition to the

government (being tortured and shot by police), to street criminals and children being brutalized by the police and by each other.

The Elite Squad

Before moving on to the American films, I would like to briefly consider a film which has not yet been released in the United States: *Elite Squad, Tropa da Elite*(2007) by José Padilha. In this film, an elite squad of police in Rio de Janeiro help keep the city clean. They are not regular police, and they are not weak, nor corrupt. They go to war against the violent crime in Rio de Janeiro every time they leave their homes. They are honorable men, who must act dishonorably at times to truly clean up Rio de Janeiro. This film criticizes the wealthy students of the Rio de Janeiro elite, who believe themselves to be worldly and active in socially beneficial pursuits such as volunteering in slums, but are completely naïve as to the danger and seriousness of the situation. The film criticizes the regular police and the politicians for being corrupt, for example, the police have a habit of moving corpses into other districts so that other divisions will have to deal with the crime scenes and reputation of not having control over their assigned areas. The film criticizes drug dealers and people in the slums for keeping silent and not talking to the elite squad of police when information is needed, thinking that they are better off ruled by gangs than what will happen to them if they talk to the police. It leaves no rock unturned, much in the way that Glauber Rocha criticizes everyone in *Land in Anguish, Terra em Transe*(1967), except for the men in the Elite Squad itself. In this way, José Padilha leaves society on a slightly more optimistic note than Glauber Rocha would have. There

is hope, there is a group which is not exactly pure, but we hope that they are right. We see that this group is capable of more than pretty leftist words of encouragement for society: they act. Brazil is not a lost cause.

Chapter 4: US Films and the Iraq War: This isn't my America

Military justice is to justice what military music is to music. - Groucho Marx

Michael A. Genovese, author of an introductory study of political cinema, suggests that the potential audience for political film may be somewhat small do to the grave nature of such films. With regard to the Vietnam War, Hollywood did not produce any mainstream films about the war until it had ended and audiences were given time to distance themselves from the grisly and grim conflict. It is understandable that society would choose not to revisit these memories so soon. It may be true that audiences have a preference for more extensive intervals between troubling events such as war and attending films depicting these events. Yet, today's films are being released strategically and purposefully to respond to these events in a timely matter. One producer of such a film, Scott Ruden of *Stop-Loss*(2007), "said his film was deliberately scheduled to be released in the middle of the presidential campaigning season".¹⁴⁵ The immediacy and urgency felt by Hollywood to mobilize a response is clear in the large number of films released in the fall of 2007 regarding the War on Terror. Yet, the lack of popularity and excitement surrounding these films such as *Lions for Lambs*(2007), *The World Trade Center*(2006), and *In The Valley of Elah*(2007). Like most of the other firms about terrorism and the war, they are not attracting much of an audience. Despite the ongoing war, humanitarian and human rights abuses, rising prices of oil, and rising death count, it

¹⁴⁵ *Movie - review - the new york times.* Available from <http://movies.nytimes.com/2007/09/14/movies/14elah.html>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

appears the American people are tired of hearing about the war. Perhaps audiences are “staying away not out of apathy but out of helplessness and fatigue”, and many must wonder, “At this point, can any movie about Iraq make us think or feel any differently?”¹⁴⁶

If audiences are not expressing interest in these films, why are they being made? A Professor of politics and media at Brown University, Darrell West, believes that “the spate of films was a reflection of widespread unpopularity with the war in Iraq [...] ‘Anti-war movies are coming out now because public opinion has crystallized against the war’”.¹⁴⁷ It is possible that artists and Hollywood are far more vocal about their political beliefs today than ever before due to the fall of the House of Un-American Activities and McCarthyism. Yet, industry experts warn, “the success of the films will ultimately hinge on their ability to entertain [...] if a film looks like something where the audience is going to be hit on the head with messages then they won’t [be successful]”.¹⁴⁸ Perhaps the messages in these films are too obvious and are scaring away potential viewers.

Why We Fight: Intentions of Films and Artists

With regard to the film, *Grace is Gone* (2007), which was considered well-liked at the Sundance Film Festival, actor John Cusack has said his desire to make the film was born out of anger at the decision by the Pentagon to ban publication of photos showing

¹⁴⁶ *Movie review: "redacted" | salon arts & entertainment*. Available from <http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/review/2007/11/16/redacted/>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁴⁷ *Record crop of anti-war films to hit cinemas - ABC news (australian broadcasting corporation)*. Available from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/08/20/2009684.htm>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁴⁸ *The daily star - arts & culture - war without end, but an entertaining one*. Available from http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=4&article_id=84650. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

flag-draped coffins returning from battlefields. ‘I feel that people will be interested in seeing the story of the human cost of this war. Not just in terms of the soldiers fighting, but the civilian leadership’¹⁴⁹ Films may personalize or add perspective to the war. *The Hurt Locker*(2008), written by Mark Boal, is thought by Boal to have the potential to, ”present a view of the Iraq war not found in other mainstream media. ‘We wanted to show the kinds of things that soldiers go through that you can’t see on CNN, and I don’t mean in a censorship-conspiracy way’ [...] Most war movies don’t come out until the war was over...It’s really exciting for me, coming out of the world of journalism, to have a movie come out about a conflict while the conflict is still going on’¹⁵⁰.

In addition to the artists and producers/directors involved in these films, some of the financiers have a good deal to say on the subject of the importance of political film. A surprising addition to this group of outspoken anti-war individuals is Mr. Daniel Snyder, owner of the Washington Redskins, and well-known Republican-party donor. Snyder has helped to fund Robert Redford’s *Lions for Lambs*(2008), both an anti-war film and a pro-America and pro-soldier piece. The dichotomous nature of this film is controversial, particularly the performance of Tom Cruise as a Republican senator pushing an aggressive military maneuver in Afghanistan.¹⁵¹ The conflicting experience in such films, empathizing with a character who should be the antagonist of the film, is a theme Americans appear to appreciate more than the one-sided story Brazilians audiences are looking for. The intention of this film, and namely the intention of Redford, is to

¹⁴⁹ *Record crop of anti-war films to hit cinemas - ABC news (australian broadcasting corporation)*. Available from <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/08/20/2009684.htm>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ FOXNews.com - anti-war film endorsed by redskins Owner/Republican donor - celebrity gossip | entertainment news | arts and entertainment. Available from <<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,303876,00.html>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

question authority, apathy, media manipulation and the future.¹⁵² Redford has stated that the Bush Administration, “asked for our obedience [following 9/11], and they asked for our trust, and we gave it to them. I resent that rip-off [...] When I see the consequence of us shutting up on our ability to express our freedom of speech, our freedom of dissent, and say, ‘Wait a minute, what proof do you have?’ ... Those questions weren’t asked”.¹⁵³ Redford does not aim to convince his audience to adopt his views, rather, he is challenging his audience to begin to debate the issues at hand and consider the questions which the film provokes.¹⁵⁴

Confusion Over Moral and Political Values

Gerald Mast asserts that the reason that American political films are of lesser quality is because, “they do not assume that moral principles and political principles are inseparable. [...] It was George Bernard Shaw who observed that if one wanted to dramatize the clash of political issues it was a mistake to make one of the combatants a moral or intellectual cripple”.¹⁵⁵ A main theme in the political films I have chosen to look at is the loss of morality, intellect, and humanity in the individuals the film wishes to condemn. Yet, in select parts of these films, there is a humanizing agent which leaves no character blank and emotionally inaccessible to the audience. This duality makes “clear that [...] the movies, are more an arena of ideological conflict and confusion than a mere conduit of agreed-upon values.”¹⁵⁶ Both sides of the story are given, and even those

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Genovese, *The Political Film : An Introduction*, 66.

¹⁵⁶ Combs, *Movies and Politics : The Dynamic Relationship*, 11.

whose actions are deplorable are given motivation for their deeds and outlooks. Yet, perhaps the combination of what is right with what is politically advantageous is key in making political films accessible to a wide audience for whom political actions and causes are no more significant in the news they hear and see than the high and low temperatures of the day.

Approaches to Criticism

Current films criticizing the War on Terror use the symbolic broken Iraq veteran, the scared American not wanting to be labeled a terrorist sympathizer, the innocent American martyr-soldier, survivors and depictions of torture by the CIA domestically and abroad, and deranged American soldiers in Iraq. Such films include *The Kingdom*(2007), *The Hunting Party*(2007), *In the Valley of Elah*(2007), *Rendition*(2007), and *Redacted*(2006).¹⁵⁷ An additional film being produced by Sony Pictures based on the book, *Against All Enemies*, by Richard A. Clarke, security and intelligence expert for the past four presidential administrations, gives evidence that the Bush administration did take heed of their knowledge of the mounting danger Al Qaeda posed pre-9/11. The book focuses, “obsessively on Iraq, even after the attacks”.¹⁵⁸ In 2008, *Eagle Eye*(2008), a story of two Americans becoming unwittingly involved in a terrorist plot for political assassination.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ *Movie - review - the new york times*. Available from <http://movies.nytimes.com/2007/09/14/movies/14elah.html>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁵⁸ *Sony pictures buys richard clarke's book for the screen - new york times*. Available from <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D00EEDD1338F933A25757C0A9629C8B63>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁵⁹ *Eagle eye (2008) - MovieWeb*. Available from <http://www.movieweb.com/movies/film/38/5138/summary.php>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

In the Valley Of Elah

Hank Deerfield, a retired military crimes investigator and war veteran finds a school with an American Flag flying upside down while he is driving down to an army base to look for his son who is AWOL. He finds the janitor and asks him, “Do you know what it means when a flag flies upside down?” The janitor replies, “No.” Hank tells him that it’s an international distress signal. The janitor replies, “No shit!” Hank confirms, “No Shit! It means we're in a whole lot of trouble so come save our asses 'cause we ain't got a prayer in hell of saving it ourselves.” The school janitor verbalizes what we are all thinking, “It says a lot.” *In the Valley of Elah*(2007) is a cinematic, “unsettling, open-ended inquiry,”¹⁶⁰ into the consequences of the War on Iraq, released by Warner Independent Pictures and directed by Paul Haggis, acclaimed director of Academy Award winning *Crash*(2005). Based on the actual murder of Specialist Richard Davis in 2003, the scene is set at a base in New Mexico where a young military specialist goes AWOL and is later found burnt and dismembered in the surrounding arid area. The father of the soldier, himself a retired veteran, along with a local detective, attempt to discover what happened to the young soldier. The film points to the lack of understanding and knowledge the general population has with regard to the quality of life of recent and young veterans, and the changes taking place in the military in general. One film critic expresses that, “Underneath its deceptively quiet surface is a raw, angry, earnest attempt to grasp the moral consequences of the war in Iraq, and to stare without blinking into the

¹⁶⁰ *Movie - review - the new york times*. Available from <http://movies.nytimes.com/2007/09/14/movies/14elah.html>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

chasm that divides those who are fighting it from their families, their fellow citizens and one another”.¹⁶¹ In a much larger sense, this film conveys,

The message [...] that the war in Iraq has damaged this country in ways we have only begun to grasp. For some people this will seem like old news. Others- in particular those who pretend that railing against movies they haven’t seen is a form of rational political discourse- may persuade themselves that it is provocative or controversial.¹⁶²

Here, this film critic points to a very valid point- the consequences of sending our young men to Iraq for such extended periods of time is seriously affecting a generation of young men socially and economically. Those who personally investigate the war and surrounded issues on their own time are already aware of this, and this news is nothing to be debated or challenged. It is reality. The critic shoots a sharp remark towards other critics such as Bill O’Reilly, conservative television/radio host, who refuses to see films he deems as un-American and offensive to our troops and himself, and points that these films are not at all controversial to those who are already aware of issues presented in films. A common theme in the discourse of today’s veterans from the Vietnam war and previous wars is, as the veteran and father in the film believes, “something [...] has gone terribly wrong with the institutions and the men he has always loved and trusted”.¹⁶³

These are changes for the worst, and the mood of the film accurately embodies this sense of the world turning over on itself. The mood of panic and dread which sets the scene for the entire film is achieved by the, “austere, washed-out look”¹⁶⁴, or cinematography, of the film, coupled by the, “eerie, sparingly applied musical score”.¹⁶⁵ Music and

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

cinematography are equally instrumental in *Redacted*(2007), where the loud music during painfully moving scenes and the docudrama approach to filming attempts to bring the chaotic and insistent reality of the soldiers in Baghdad to the audience.

Unlike other films on the War on Terror and Iraq where the violent and graphic images of soldiers and innocent victims are key technique to convey the political message, “Almost no violence takes place on screen, but there are times when ‘In the Valley of Elah’ feels almost like a horror film. Its steady crescendo of suspense builds towards the revelation – and vanquishing – of some unspeakable, monstrous evil”.¹⁶⁶ There is no person or victim to give a face or image to the horrors described, and “While there are killers, liars and sadists to be found in this movie, there are not really any villains”.¹⁶⁷ Even the murderers of Specialist Private Michael, the murdered soldier, are friends of his, genuinely sorry for his death, and yet, do not necessarily feel guilt or remorse. Private Mike, the murdered son, was no angel himself. His nickname “Doc” from Iraq came from his gleeful habit of poking around the wounds of his Iraqi prisoners. There is much left to the imagination in these brutal un-filmed scenes: the stabbing of Michael, hitting children in Iraq with army vehicles because they are prohibited from stopping, and torturing prisoners. Is this more or less effective than the explicit brutality used in other political films? This film has been significantly more popular than various other films on the same topic, grossing almost \$7 million domestically and \$19 million in

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

theaters abroad over 23 weeks in 978 theaters,¹⁶⁸ but has not inspired the same rage and controversial debate which others have either.

In one of the most contentious and defining scenes of the film, that American flag is shown flying upside down, both at the start of the father's trip to find his son, and then later, the flag his son sent to his father from Iraq, symbolic of the "young men who remain lost in a dangerous, confusing place even after they come home", and severe distress in the heart of America.¹⁶⁹ Paul Haggis, the director, "insisted that 'Valley of Elah' [...] was not intended to enforce his point of view. [...] it is meant to raise questions about 'what it does to these kids' to be deployed in a situation where enemies are often indistinguishable from neutral civilians, and the rules of engagement may force decisions that are difficult to live with".¹⁷⁰ Veterans of the Iraq war have responded both positively and negatively to the film, some expressing similar experiences to those depicted, such Vietnam veterans who experienced the same conflict over how to treat civilians, where anyone could be innocent and anyone could be dangerous with intent to hurt soldiers. Decisions had to be made quickly, with little information to use in the decision-making process, and the resulting fatal consequences are what they have to live with. Others have expressed offense and insult at the criticism of soldiers, exclaiming that many soldiers are now college students with no psychological issues as a result of war, and certainly have not all become angry bombs waiting to explode and slaughter others. This may be true, but I believe these critics are missing the point and taking the films too

¹⁶⁸ *In the valley of elah* (2007). Available from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=IntheValleyofElah.htm>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁶⁹ *Movie - review - the new york times*. Available from <http://movies.nytimes.com/2007/09/14/movies/14elah.html>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

personally. Although the messages are often intended to be taken personally, as a reason to get involved, to pull out our troops, and change the current techniques we have for dealing with both soldiers and terrorists, the films are not expressing that all soldiers and all aspects of the war are like this. The important fact is that even though these films are not describing everyone and every situation, there have been situations similar to the ones depicted, and this should be reason enough to stand up against the war.

Redacted

Redacted(2007) is based on the rape and murder of a 14-year-old Iraqi girl, Abeer Quasim Hamza al-Janabi and the murder of her family in Mahmudiya, Iraq, just south of Baghdad by US forces in March 2006. “How could these boys have gone so wrong?” De Palma asked. “If we are going to cause such disorder, then we must face the horrendous images that are the consequences of these events”.¹⁷¹ *Redacted*(2007) is a provoking, jagged, openly outraged, urgent and difficult film which forces the audience to face images and situations more difficult to watch than many gruesome scenes in a classic horror film. The French docudrama sections are slow and there is very little narration. Time passes at a snail's pace and one is able to feel the heat and time take a toll on the soldiers and on the audience themselves, safe at home or in the theater. It is a difficult

¹⁷¹ *Hollywood opens new front in war on terror - and goes gunning for oscars - times online.* Available from http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/film/article2364445.ece. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

film to watch. As film critic Stephanie Zacharek beautifully articulates, “This is one of those rare pictures that’s more significant for what it asks of us than for what it *is*”.¹⁷²

The name of the film is significant in itself. *Redacted* is defined in the start of the film as the act of censoring. The poignantly violent and graphic pictures shown of casualties of war including women and children to the tune of powerful music were edited and the faces of individuals shown were colored over in black marker; it is improbable that these pictures would ever be shown in mainstream media. The film begins with a documentary by an American soldier, Salazar, whose dream is to go to film school one day at USC, using this war documentary as his ticket to admission. He is stationed at a checkpoint in Samarra and we observe all action through the lens of his amateur camera, in addition to and alternating with a professional French documentary emphasizing the tedious job of checkpoint soldiers and their resulting abusive behavior towards Iraqis who cannot read the signs around checkpoints, nor the body language American soldiers use to communicate instructions to the Iraqis. This communication barrier is exemplified when American soldiers shoot a pregnant Iraqi woman to death who is being driven to the hospital by her brother as she is going into labor and they do not slow down at the checkpoint. Two other American soldiers in Salazar’s film are Rush and Flake, two troubled and unintelligent young men who enlist to avoid trouble they would be otherwise getting into at home. The other key soldier is McCoy, who is the “Greek Chorus” of the film, understanding the nature of his situation and comrades, yet his role is not to move the action of the plot, but to bear witness to it. As the leader of the group is blown up and the situation becomes more intense, the soldiers express

¹⁷² *Movie review: "redacted" | salon arts & entertainment*. Available from <<http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/review/2007/11/16/redacted/>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

frustration. There are various conversations where even the most unintelligent soldiers have lost interest in being in war, they appear to be losing their grip on themselves, and often wonder aloud what they are doing in Iraq. They are sitting ducks as their deployment is extended, they would all like to return home, and everyday they feel themselves stepping closer to their fate and death. The French documentary shows the soldiers as an easy target because they appear very out of place in the hot desert in their combat gear. The soldiers cannot trust any of the Iraqis. To them, it is impossible to tell apart the “bad guys” from the innocent civilians. Prejudiced language is used; they call the children “midget ali babas”, “ragheads” and “sandniggers”, and to kill one would be like, “stomping cockroaches”. There is no remorse and no trust. Flake and Rush’s grand plan is revealed to be a trip to the house of a 15-year-old Iraqi girl who goes through their checkpoint daily, and rape her. The uncomfortable scenes of the girl passing through the checkpoint and being fondled by Rush do not come close to the infuriation and humiliation of the rape scene itself, which is long and graphic. This scene strips the audience of all decency and annihilates any pretense of an artistically difficult scene or sense of distance and detachment from the action.¹⁷³

De Palma does not humanize Rush and Flake, “monsters with unholy appetites”, and the film is perhaps weaker for this. The absolute coldness of these characters give the viewer the mindset that this will never happen to my son, my husband, people I know, or me. As we have seen in the other films studied, humanizing the people who commit inhumane acts angers and scares many people, and it touches them deeply. It drives the message home. Scenes such as the rape are successful in “collapsing the distance

¹⁷³ Ibid.

between viewer and subject,”¹⁷⁴ so that the viewer feels a complicity and guilt in the act, and is denied the courtesy of the camera fading to black instead of the rape scene as explicit and extremely personal; we are forced to watch, breathe, and live through the scene in horror and extreme discomfort.¹⁷⁵ Although some of the American soldiers are not humanized, all of the Iraqis shown are completely humanized and pitiable.¹⁷⁶

This film has received a great deal of criticism from both left and right, from those who refuse to see it and those who went ahead to see it. Retired soldiers were offended by the disparaging image of soldiers in New Mexico, and George Packer, New Yorker journalist and author of *The Assassin’s Gate: America in Iraq*, was offended personally and made this known, as he has spent time in Iraq and not recoiled from the gruesome realities of this war. For those who have an interest in the war or study politics, this film will not present any new information, rather, push the awful truth into their faces. However, for those who do not follow the progression of this war carefully, this film may be quite eye opening, for better or worse. As Salon.com film critic, Stephanie Zacharek, suggests and I agree, a film of this nature must offend personally and instigate personally. A political and not a personal attack on our guilt and the graphic details of this war would not do the conflict justice.

The last scene where both Rush and Flake defend their actions and lie through their teeth is also an extremely frustrating scene. They both attempt to justify their actions and use weak one-line arguments to pressure and guilt their interviewers, such as:

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Of all of the criticism on this film which I have been able to find, not a single critic takes issue with Iraqis portrayed in a heartrending light, rather they are insulted by the way in which American soldiers are portrayed: as poor, troubled, underprivileged, unintelligent, and unsuccessful.

“You’re aiding terrorists,” by arresting U.S. soldiers. This film in this sense is truly part of the, “Get out of Iraq” campaign, as all of the action in the film does not show a single benefit to the Iraqi people, and shows only death on both sides and no clear end to this violence. At the very end, McCoy wants to bring silence to light, he expresses that he is sick to his stomach and he sees no reason to go into a country that has done nothing to him, and he does not know how he can live with himself based on what he has seen and did not stop from happening. This technique of portraying the “battered veteran” as well as the use of violence is key in the political force of this film.

As of December 20, 2007, *Redacted*(2007) had made \$65,388 in the box office domestically since its release on November 15, 2007. This is only 9.3% of the total revenue of the film with foreign viewers paying a total of \$638,255 to see the film in theaters. The Venice film festival loved the film.¹⁷⁷ It was only in theaters for 5 weeks and in the end, only 15 theaters would show it. It ranks 400 in popularity of all films this year, out of more than 500 films. The studio which produced the film, Magnolia, is also credited with the related documentary, *Control Room*(2004) which follows Al Jazeera’s reports of the Iraq war at the time of the declaration of war. In comparison, *Control Room*(2004) grossed over 2 million dollars and was in the box office over 24 weeks, in 74 theaters, although most of the popularity, 95% of viewers, were domestic and not foreign.¹⁷⁸ Mark Cuban is the owner of Magnolia Studios and a successful entrepreneur who is best known for his outspoken and strong political beliefs as well as for owning the

¹⁷⁷ *YouTube - standing ovation per REDACTED di de palma a VENEZIA64*. Available from <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U96KHjDEkQ&mode=related&search=>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁷⁸ *Magnolia pictures*. Available from <<http://www.magnopictures.com/dates.aspx?id=39011e04-cfd3-4fa2-931b-7aeca565cce7>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008. and *Redacted (2007)*. Available from <<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=redacted.htm>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008. and

Dallas Mavericks.¹⁷⁹ He is the main financier of the film, and in addition to this provocative docudrama, he has recently acted out against the war by starting the Fallen Patriot Fund to aid families of injured or deceased soldiers.

Rendition

Rendition(2007) directed by Gavin Hood, and produced by New Line Cinema, has been named for the U.S.' policy of "extraordinary rendition", a policy which allows the U.S. government to take suspected terrorists out of the country in order to hold them for longer periods of time and to use more brutal techniques to glean information than would be approved of inside the United States. The film begins as an Egyptian chemical engineer, Anwar El-Ibrahimi, is about to fly home to the United States to his American wife and child, when he is intercepted in the airport, a bag placed over his head, and at the whim of Corrine Whitman, a head honcho in the CIA, he is whisked off to another country to a damp dark prison to be tortured for information he does not have. The connection between Ibrahimi and a terrorist act where a CIA man is killed in the blast may be as weak as a cellular phone which once belonged to a terrorist, Rashid Salimi, but then had been passed along and sold, as is often the case, to one of Ibrahimi's unfortunate relatives who called him to get information on American schools. The cinematography and time frame is complicated and well executed, as the audience is most often unaware of where and at what point in the plot they are in the film. The torture of Ibrahimi, an innocent man, is brutal and as his clothing is taken from him and he is electrocuted, water boarded, and beaten nude we see the cruelty and futility of the War on Terror and the way

¹⁷⁹ *Mark Cuban's Magnolia subpoenaed Google over uploaded video - Boing Boing*. Available from <<http://www.boingboing.net/2007/03/07/mark-cubans-magnolia.html>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

we treat terrorists. As the CIA agent is killed in the start of the film, Douglass Freeman, another CIA agent with no experience with torture, must take his place and oversee the torture which is carried out by the country's local law enforcement. He has never done this before in his life, and we see the toll which the torture-observing takes on him: he begins to drink and look sleep-deprived. Towards the end of the film, he confides in his friend, a local government official with a high office, that he does not believe the torture methods work, nor does he believe most of the victims of torture have anything to actually admit: they are innocent. This film saves the audience from a more likely and more horrific ending when Douglass decides to free Ibrahimi and expose the CIA's torture methods and abuse of the policy of extraordinary rendition. The confrontation of the audience is not as strong in this film as it is in *Redacted*(2007), although the tactic of humanization of all characters and the lack of any real antagonist is heightened in this film, whereas it is weak in De Palma's work.

While Ibrahimi is held and tortured, we see his wife go to an old friend, it is probable that this friend is an old love interest, and ask for help because he works for a powerful senator. He wants to help, but in the end, finds his job to be more important to him, and turns her away for fear of labeling himself and the senator he works for as, "Bin Laden Lovers". A third plot scheme is developed as the head of the local law enforcement and expert in torture in Morocco, the country where Ibrahimi is being held, deals with a strained relationship with his daughter, Fatima, who at first we believe ran away with her boyfriend, Khalid, whom her father rejects because her husband has already been chosen for her. It is only in the end of the film that we see that the original blast which killed the CIA agent also killed Fatima and Khalid, who was the brother of a

religious extremist who had been tortured to death by Fatima's father. The pain and loss of each character fuels their actions, and no one is left cold and hard. The head of law enforcement shows Douglass the various improvised explosives used by local terrorists such as Khalid. There are many nails and bolts which are meant to cause maximum human damage. In this way, although he is guilty of the torture of innocent men, for the few men he finds who are truly guilty, he saves lives.

This reminder of this sort of nasty business is a way of

reframing a mysterious policy in dramatic, human terms, and reminding us that this sort of thing is happening *right now*. (The fact that our government denies that is all the more reason to believe it.) [...] good or bad, they make us face realities. [...] I'm not sure these exhausting, aggressively sincere movies are enough to make anyone face up to anything.¹⁸⁰

And so, although the scenes of torture are long and painful, and the reality that when one person is tortured, many more enemies are made, it is apparent that this film has the right substance to motivate audiences across the country to speak out against torture and abuses of civil liberties.

Rendition(2007) grossed \$9,736,045 domestically and \$14,909,308 in foreign theaters.¹⁸¹ It was released domestically in 2,250 theaters for only 4 weeks. Gavin Hood is the director of this film, best known for *Tsotsi*(2005), an award-winning film about a young South-African gang leader. Various criticisms of the film point out plot flaws and other problematic issues, but there are other critics who assert that the film is not meant to be factually accurate. This film is meant to make the concept of extraordinary

¹⁸⁰ *Salon.com arts & entertainment | "rendition"*. Available from <<http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/review/2007/10/19/rendition/print.html>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁸¹ *Rendition (2007)*. Available from <<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=rendition.htm>>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

rendition accessible and easy to understand for average American audiences and make them aware of this abuse of human rights, rather than obsessively and accurately depict the knowledge senators have about this issue and the way in which decisions are made in the hierarchy in the CIA.¹⁸² New Line Cinema, the studio behind *Rendition*(2007), is much bigger and more mainstream than *Magnolia*. From HBO to Harold and Kumar, New Line does not appear to have an overriding political agenda.¹⁸³

An Entirely New Genre? Or a New Trend?

It has been said by prominent news sources such as ABC News that “a whole new genre has been created even while troops remain on the front lines of the ‘war on terror’”.¹⁸⁴ I am not convinced that these war films constitute a new genre; war films and political film have been around for many years. Rather, this appears to be a new trend in the genre of political film and war film. Depending on how much longer the violence continues, how strongly society fears expressing itself, and how readily available affordable filmmaking technology is to independent filmmakers, this maybe become a new trend which we will see more often in the future: the up-to-the-minute political film which is unafraid to protest government action while that action continues.

Patterns such as confronting the audience, forcing emotion from the audience, and also humanizing and rationalizing all players may or may not be deemed successful.

¹⁸² *Movie review: Rendition*. Available from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/reviews/?id=2403&p=s.htm>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

¹⁸³ *New line cinema : Executive bios : Robert shaye*. Available from <http://www.newline.com/bios>. Internet; accessed 13 January 2008.

Robert Shaye and Michael Lynne are the co-chairmen and co-CEOs of New Line Cinema and have backgrounds in law, but it is unclear from my research as to whether they privately hold political beliefs for or against the War on Terror.

¹⁸⁴ *Record crop of anti-war films to hit cinemas - ABC news (australian broadcasting corporation)*. Available from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/08/20/2009684.htm>.

There is no quantifiable way to measure the success of a political film, it is a very subjective issue. Successful, however, does not signify that they were well-liked, well-attended, or well-funded films. Keeping in mind the goals of political film, namely changing the world, a truly successful political film may be one which fosters dialogue and discussion. Looking at past political films, they were not subdued or modified to educate a non-intellectual audience. Many political filmmakers have expected audiences to rise up to the level of a film, to seek it out, and to find a cause and call for action.

Epilogue

The writer may very well serve a movement of history as its mouthpiece, but he cannot of course create it.
- Karl Marx

American films today will undoubtedly influence Brazilian cinema in modern times and in the future, as Hollywood has always influenced the various film industries of the world, particularly in the last few decades as European intellectual influence has declined in favor of the influence of American pop culture. An example of a modern director who could be comparable to what Glauber Rocha was in his time, is Alejandro González Iñárritu, a native of Mexico and director of *Babel*(2006) and *Life's a Bitch, Amores Perros*(2000). A creator of culturally iconic films and perhaps a cultural icon himself, Alejandro, like Glauber, has developed a cinematic technique which is very specific to his films. His style is emulated in other films such as *Syriana*(2005) and *Rendition*(2006). Well-known for his drawn-out and complicated dramas, he introduces a combination of seemingly unrelated lives and stories, at first shown independent of one another, and eventually revealed to be completely intertwined. This is an important technique used in political film. In this way, it is difficult to pick a side. The hardships and motivations of all characters are revealed, humanizing and giving voice to all involved. In *The Valley of Elah*(2007) shows this to be true even in the most grisly circumstances, as a soldier admits he killed his friend and fellow soldier to the father of the murdered man, and continues to say that on another night, it might have been the other way around, and his son may have killed him. The soldier tells us that Mike, the

murdered soldier and son of Tommy Lee Jones' character, was the lucky one. The audience cannot fully distance themselves from or hate this soldier as the horror which this war has put these men through is sufficient to explain their violent actions and loss of control, in the same way that it leaves all of them looking sadistic. Another potential modern "Rocha" may be Fernando Meirelles from Brazil who produced the recent film *City of Men, Cidade dos Homens*(2007). In addition to this film he has produced *The Constant Gardener*(2005); *City of God, Cidade de Deus* (2002); and co-produced *The Year My Parents Went on Vacation, O Ano em Que Meus Pais Saíram de Férias*(2006). Through these films he has captured the many purposes and uses for political film. From using different issues to express the need for action, to cultivating the memory of a time in history when Brazil was suffering through the military dictatorship such as in *O Ano em Que Meus Pais Saíram de Férias*(2006) told through the eyes of a young son of two leftist-protesters, left in the Hassidic Jewish community in São Paulo by his parents who fled for their lives. Meirelles has protested a wide variety of issues through his film, from international pharmaceutical corporations, the military dictatorship, to drugs and violence on the streets of Brazilian cities.

Being Human

In both the Brazilian and American films which I have analyzed, the theme of humanization and understanding of all involved parties, including perceived enemies, has been important in understanding the social and political dynamics which have cultivated, encouraged, and explained these violations of democratic governance where the best interests and will of the people is reflected in the way government is run. It is interesting

that this should be so, when in Brazilian films it is found that any empathy or humanization of antagonistic characters was greatly disapproved of by audiences, especially intellectuals on the left of the political spectrum. This is to be expected. The American principle to promote cultural understanding and awareness and to bring democracy to the rest of the world lends to an artistic ideal of cultural relativism and support for the people who have been adversely affected by these goals. In the United States, a culture of fear created by the media is also a culture of indifference; we are not all directly affected in our daily lives by the war. The media announce more deaths every day and while the attentive and affected cry, the general population forgets. In Brazil, the importance of society's willingness to put forth political testimony and remember survival in a culture of fear has a different meaning. When there has been torture of prisoners on a wide scale and films are projecting humanization and suffering of the torturers, society is less forgiving. Many have been tortured in and outside of the United States in the name of the War on Terror, but this has not directly affected or touched most Americans. The victims are not students, professors, popular artists, and workers, rather, less conspicuous and vocal individuals who have not banded together in protest on any successful level to gain popular notice. I read extensively on the topic of torture and fear, specifically in Brazil during the dictatorship. Two books in particular, *Violence Workers; Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities* and *Fear at the Edge; State Terror and Resistance in Latin America*, were quite helpful and detailed the many ways fear can be cultivated, the many groups which formed to protest such actions, and the plight of both the torturers and tortured.

The first of these two books, *Violence Workers*, has been important to my research in understanding why filmmakers may desire to humanize torturers and also to understand why Brazilian society is unwilling to forgive those who inflicted violence on others during the dictatorship. First, in reference to those who participated in violence against political prisoners, this research presents the, “stress-related symptoms such as insomnia, hypertension, fear, and depression; they suffered marital discord and divorce. These violence workers’ stress was exacerbated by the inability to talk about their work with family and close friends [...] They paid allegiance to a distant, seemingly omnipresent violence-facilitating authority”.¹⁸⁵ The blanket amnesty has made for safe transfer of power from military to civilian rule, but the effects on both those who have gotten away with murder and those whose loved ones were murdered, are complicated. Although the violence workers are not as pitiable as a 16-year-old student who was tortured and killed for possible connections to communist anti-government groups, one must realize that these workers were victimized by the same culture of fear which they had created and were supporting. The repressive state machinery punished them too if they did not fall in line. To not participate would have been seen as traitorous and perhaps punishable by death as well. After all, some of the first victims of government-sponsored violence were in the government ranks. From 1964 until 1966, General Castello Branco launched Operação Limpeza (Cleanup Campaign) to morally rehabilitate President Goulart’s government. “Up to 10,000 civil servants were banished from office, 122 military officers were forced to retire, 378 political and intellectual leaders were

¹⁸⁵ Martha Knisely Huggins, ,Mika Haritos-Fatouros, Philip G. Zimbardo, and Incebrary ed., *Violence Workers : Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 15.

stripped of citizenship rights, prohibiting them from holding electoral office or even voting for ten years”.¹⁸⁶ While this is true, tens of thousands of people were arrested in the streets and searched or taken into custody within the first week of the dictatorship. One violence worker is given as an example of a victim of the system, and it is ironic that he later becomes one of the men who brings this fate upon others. His father, a French national, was arrested and beaten in front of him, taken to a torture facility, and later deported to France. His mother was raped by soldiers and later became incapable of taking care of him. He and his siblings were moved to different orphanages with new birth certificates, erasing all evidence of their origins. Their mother was also issued a new birth certificate, deeming her a motherless and single female.¹⁸⁷ Should we feel pity and attempt to understand and humanize these workers? Do they have their motivations for doing such inhumane work? Do their circumstances justify their actions? This is dilemma is not unique to the case of the Brazilian dictatorship.

Interestingly, not many armed guerillas actually participated in the armed struggle against the dictatorship. Only about 6,000 armed guerillas participated and there was not much public support or sympathy for them. What is important to note, is that the few daring acts stand out, such as Fernando Gabeira’s kidnapping of Ambassador Elbrick. It is important to note that if this is true, the majority of those who were abducted, tortured, and murdered were not armed guerillas, simply protestors or perhaps uninvolved completely. The true nature of what was happening was not fully known by the country and the outside world until the start of the *abertura*, or opening, in 1977 to 1979. In 1977 and 1978,

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 64. (original source Black 1977; BNM 1986).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

Censorship and propaganda had worked in tandem to create a false image of a harmonious society uniformly committed to security and development. But with abertura and the gradual lifting of censorship, the Brazilian press broke news about human-rights abuses, corruption, and other scandals of the regime [...] just prior to the declaration of amnesty, the restoration of habeas corpus, and the reestablishment of the multi-party system.¹⁸⁸

Up until that point, much of what the government was doing was kept secret. This point is excellently illustrated in Zuzu Angel(2006) as Zuzu tries to find out where her son Stuart has been taken, and his presence in any military torture facility is denied. The United States is guilty of similar actions as demonstrated by Rendition(2007), when Reese Witherspoon cannot discover the whereabouts of her husband and his existence in a torture facility is also denied. Yet, in Rendition(2007), the even motivations of Meryl Streep/Corrine Whitman, a top-ranking CIA official, are clear: who can blame her for being careful and afraid of terrorism? I am tempted to assert that the threat of terrorism in the United States is more serious than the threat of terrorism was from inside the country in Brazil at the time of the dictatorship. Yet, because the Brazilian government overreacted with excessive violence, the memory of torture is too painful to attribute any human qualities to the perpetrators. For the Brazilian government, creating an effective government and a successful economy was a very serious and valuable goal, and any force impeding or threatening this mission had to be eliminated. This is a bit like the United States' mission to remove all threats to freedom and democracy. I must add in conclusion, that while living in Brazil, I heard from quite a few individuals of middle-class economic status and of middle-age who were unsure whether they believed that the country was better off during or after the dictatorship.

¹⁸⁸ Juan E Corradi, Patricia Weiss Fagen, and Manuel Antonio Garretão, ed., *Fear at the Edge : State Terror and Resistance in Latin America*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 163.

Perhaps only those affected and who feel strongly respond to political film and this is why such films get radical reviews. It is possible that only those who were affected negatively by the dictatorship for identifying with the political left felt compelled to criticize the humanization of their enemies in the dictatorship in Brazilian film. Likewise, perhaps those who did not participate in protesting or supporting the government were not moved enough to respond to the Iraq War films.

Why Make Political Film?

Perhaps from the perspective that these films promote intercultural understanding, they are a positive influence, but critics suspect that domestically, the message may be negative towards a country's own citizens and history. In the 1960s and 1970s, political films in Brazil aimed to alienate capitalist foundations and the effects of capitalism in the filmmaking industry. Everything and everyone was protested, the left and the right, artists and the apathetic, and political filmmakers who believe they are making a difference. I will come back to *Land in Anguish, Terra em Transe* (1967), as I believe it is particularly apt in describing the plight of the political filmmaker.

TERRA EM TRANSE sensitizes us to the social context of filmmaking. We are shown that films do not emerge full blown from the heads of their creators. Paolo makes his film because certain political enemies of Diaz pay for him to make it. Paolo, having offered his humble pen first to Diaz and then to Vieira, now offers his humble camera to those who would destroy Diaz. If Paulo's poetry was already conditioned by political ends, his film—since cinema by its very nature is immersed in socio-economic process—is even more profoundly affected by political and material interests. The film exposes the illusion of the self-determining artist who thinks he's using the apparatus which is in fact using him.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Stam, "Land in Anguish; Revolutionary lessons", 49-51.

The militant cinema of the 1960s in Brazil viewed film as a gun, and by firing this gun, by making these political films, they were going to change the world. This was a weapon of emancipation; the contents of the bullets were such that film would be a real medium for social change. The filmmakers of the 1960s truly believed this, but this concept has since changed. Political films today serve as an instrument for remembering the 1960s and reproducing the historical constructions of this time through which we may view politics today. Both *In the Valley of Elah*(2007), and *Land in Anguish, Terra em Transe*(1967) encourage much thought on the violence of war today and in the past, as neither are graphic and both imply much more of the violence in the respective films than they actually show on screen.

These films are incredibly thought provoking and confrontational, but did anyone see them? One problem with today's political film and political film in the past is the issue of distribution. *Redacted*(2007), *Land in Anguish, Terra em Transe*(1967), and other films rejected the industry and rejected traditional means of circulation by way of mass distributing through large studios. Films which are simpler in their intentions and messages and not as controversial in content certainly reach more people, regardless of whether these people are truly moved one way or the other. Auteurs, such as Glauber Rocha, believed that the level of sophistication in people needed to rise to meet the sophisticated intellectual and political content of the films, not the other way around, where filmmakers use less controversy and less intellectual content in order to reach down to their audiences. One may lead horses to water but no one may force them to drink it. Will filmmakers be sacrificing a critical aspect of revolutionary and protest film by being softer, and marketing towards wider audiences and more mainstream studios? If

we look at films as a medium of communication perhaps we may better understand what a filmmaker intends to do by including political ideology in a film. Let us think of political ideology in the following manner:

Political ideology, then, is not a marginal afterthought of capitalist rule but rather a central feature of the system, helping to perpetuate those ideas which cloak the true nature of things in palatable terms. Ideology is thus the ideational superstructure of an economic substructure, resulting in a condition of 'false consciousness' that hides not only our dependent material class position from us but also teaches us that the system is benevolent, wise, and just, urging us toward obedience and deference.¹⁹⁰

Political film today and in the past appears to expose rather than espouse political ideology. Revolutionary political film and today's political film is meant to break through the skin and get you to jump up, or at least discuss and think, and at the same time create a historical record of political injustice for which the film must make the audience aware.

The content and form of a revolutionary film is very specific to this genre, and it is by definition not as accessible to a wide audience as other films made for popular culture. The filmmakers are looking for cult followings and movements. They are looking to rally anger and protest.

For Glauber Rocha, to have proceeded in any other way would have been radically compromised through the very artistic codes by which it had been mediated. *TERRA EM TRANSE* is a piece of revolutionary pedagogy. While its methodology and vision are Marxist, it offers no correct line or pat answers. The solution lies in *our* becoming conscious.

The political film must fuel something inside audiences, whether this is outrage, inspiration, a sense of betrayal or obligation, good or bad. Therefore, have political films changed anything at all? I believe that there has been some change, but not sufficient

¹⁹⁰ Combs, *Movies and Politics : The Dynamic Relationship*, 10.

change. I came into this project believing that political film itself has drastically changed and that with newfound freedom at the end of the Cold War and the Military Dictatorship, American and Brazilian film would be going at full-speed towards the politicians, aiming right for the head. I was expecting a continuation of the avant-garde, but through mainstream media, and not through the traditional guerilla tactics which had been necessary in the past. Today, in Brazil, we have President Lula, another Diaz and Vieira in Rocha's eyes. The same two-faced manipulative lies Rocha criticizes in the past, he might as well be foreseeing today as a President who is socialist in his words and capitalist in his actions wins the hearts of the poor and hungry people. This is the failed Populism Rocha bemoaned. The critique of failed Populism might well be a critique of a neoliberal regime which presents Brazil with the rise of the favela, the drug trade, and gun trafficking.¹⁹¹

It is the form and not simply the context which is also important to consider. The film-within-film structure, the flashbacks, the use of low-cost sets and actors, are all part of the avant-garde nature of Rocha and like-minded film makers in the hay-day of Brazilian political filmmaking. After the 1959 Cuban Revolution, the Latin American filmmakers truly believed that Brazil was next, and the militant artists rallied around this fact. Today, post 1989 and the current concessions to capitalism made by Communists' best (i.e. Cuba, China, Russia), communism is no longer a valid form of protest. However, this is not to say that the protest had been in vain. Quite to the contrary, the Brazilian Government is being held accountable. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have access into the country to report on police violence. President Lula is

¹⁹¹ Please note that Brazil bans the sale and purchase of all guns for all individuals except for law enforcement officials.

a socialist leader in his words. His social programs such as *Bolsa Familia* and *Fome Zero* provide the entire country with food and sustaining allowances which, while they are not rising out of poverty, are being sustained in their present condition. The law prevents anyone from being held in prison longer than 30 years, even if they receive a life sentence, and university professors are overwhelmingly socialist in their political and ideological beliefs. Brazil cannot forget today what happened before 1989 and the fall of the dictatorship. This comes to the point of: Why make political films about the 1970s in Brazil when there are so many social issues to bring to light today? The first reason for this is the point of the artistic historical memory and record, a tattoo forever written on the skin of Brazil, proof that cannot be erased as those generations affected die off. Generations today may not see older films but they will see modern ones, and they must always be reminded of what has happened to prevent it from occurring again in the future. Brazil today needs not only to be reminded, but also to mourn. Brazil needs to heal, and if the torturers and the politicians are not being punished for their crimes, there needs to be another outlet for Brazilians to find a sense of closure and release the burden of caged emotion. Films such as *Zuzu Angel*(2006) and *Four Days in September, O que è isso companheiro?*(1997) achieve this, as everyone who was part of this period in time will remember the death of the famous fashion designer for the cause of her murdered son. Films in this way are no longer weapons to fight the political status-quo and oppression; they are photo-books and homemade movies of their lives, like the films about the Iraq War.

When the dictatorship collapsed in 1989, the Brazilian film industry did as well. President Fernando Collor de Mello closed Embrafilme, the government's distributor and

producer of film, in 1990 and Brazilian filmmakers were left to fend for themselves in a market saturated by Hollywood. As a result, many theaters closed and Brazilians became attached to their televisions and *telenovelas* were on the rise. “Today, the country has fewer than half as many movie theaters as 30 years ago and only 7 percent of Brazilian cities have a movie theater. Mexico, the Latin American country with the most movie theaters, has one for every 30,000 residents while Brazil has one screen for each 95,000 residents”.¹⁹² The industry has recovered somewhat through the 1993 tax-deductions for investing in the Brazilian film industry. The new National Agency of Cinema, ANCINE, is the official organ of production, regulation, and funding of the cinematographic and video-phonographic industries, autonomously administrated and financed. It was created in 2001 from Provision 2228, and they are presented as an autonomous agency in the form of a special autarchy, allied with the Ministry of Culture in 2003. They are administrated by a President-Director and three Directors with fixed roles, and are approved by the Federal Senate.¹⁹³ Compared the Embrafilme, this is a far cry from regulated industry, and this is perhaps why today many films which display quite graphic images of the poverty and violence in Brazil are allowed to be produced.

One may think that American film is the most liberated and uncontrolled, but the way in which films are rated in the United States is highly political. Although the content may not be explicitly cut and banned, a high rating can kill an audience and limit who gets to see the film. Interestingly, extremely violent films, specifically dealing with the

¹⁹²Muello, Peter. Brazil's Movie Industry Eyes Comeback. The Associated Press. October 6, 2006

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2006/10/06/entertainment/e111821D34.DTL> Internet; accessed January 13, 2008.

¹⁹³ANCINE - agência nacional do cinema. Internet on-line. Available from <<http://www.ancine.gov.br/cgi/cgilua.exe/sys/start.htm?sid=53>>. Internet; accessed January 13, 2008.

Iraq war, are rarely rated NC17 (the highest rating in the Motion Picture Association) , and they are only given an R instead. Sexual content, especially of a non-traditional nature, is often given an NC17 but violence specifically depicting the war is only rated R or PG-13. This is not the case in Europe and Latin America, where violence is more highly rated and treated more sensitively than sexual content.

.A Brazilian Comeback

As a part of this epilogue, I would like to write about my experience at the very first Brazilian film festival in Los Angeles, which I was lucky enough to attend while writing this piece. I went to see the last film, the last night, *The Man who Challenged the Devil, O Homem que Desafio O Diabo*(2007). This festival was set up to create a public for Brazilian films and as it was said by one of the coordinators, “to bring new friends to Brazil”. I found this film to be characteristic of those at the time of the dictatorship, based on old legends and classic tales instead of covering modern themes and issues. This was a story of a hero of sorts, who comes from the cowardly shell of a salesman who is taken advantage of and put to shame by his wife and father-in-law. He rejects this shame and resolves to always consort with prostitutes and drink, to always outsmart and trick antagonists, and to win many women. He battles various legendary brutes and bullies, male, female, and animal. He finds a woman he loves and settles down with her to have a child, yet, the lesson of inevitable worldly retribution ruins his temporary dream of settling down, and he again sets off to be a hero and find paradise. I found this experience refreshing as it marks the increased presence of Brazilian film into the international arena and recognition in the United States, which is what a partial goal of

Cinema Novo has always been. Although this film did not speak to the current problems in the slums of Brazil today, nor did it evoke the memory of the dictatorship, it reminds us of what film and fiction are able to give us: an escape into a fantasy land where the problems of yesterday and today disappear for an hour and we may lose ourselves in a world and in people who do not exist.

My Experience

My intention in research was to show how society felt politically, reacted politically, and how artists wanted to inspire audience politically, while they were being deprived of democracy. My original hypothesis expressed that through film, society was demonstrating their anger and protesting their lack of democratic freedoms through the removal of civil liberties and explicit or implied censorship to any degree. In this hypothesis I saw society as very aware, informed, and impassioned. Through the course of my research it began to look more and more as though society is unaware. The protest in film is for the most part a superficial protest – the torture scenes and guilt stricken perpetrators give the initial impression that there is deep analysis of the issue but this is just shock-value of violence. It is no more significant or meaningful than that. This is what people are able to grab onto and what they are drawn to focusing on, not the actual problem or the root of the lack of democratic practices. Now, at the end of my research on this subject, I am more optimistic. Improvements have been made in film and society, yet these improvements are neither as wide-ranging nor conspicuous as I expected them to be. Where, as an example of what political film was originally:

provocative, aggressive, intentionally difficult film, an advanced lesson in reading political and cinematographic significations. It consistently violates our expectations; it withholds spectacle when the story demands it, and denies romance where plot conventions would require it. Even its orgies are anti-erotic. Where we expect sharp political definition, the film gives us poetic, imagistic freedom. It creates a world of systematic contradiction, between and within the personages, between sound and image, between cinematographic styles. Brutal ruptures in editing keep the spectator off balance, incapable of identifying in the conventional way.¹⁹⁴

Current films are not guerilla films but this does not mean that they are not political.

These films are no longer guns, but perhaps in order to make a political film today one must look at film not as a gun but as a mechanism to deal with pain and frustration. I am using *Land in Anguish, Terra em Transe* (1967) in comparison to both the American and Brazilian films in order to address how political film has evolved and what it may mean today to be a political filmmaker. Today, with improvements in technology, filmmakers have the equipment to successfully recreate many of the difficult and violent situations which are a part of reality. These films include real footage of such events, such as *Bus 174, Ônibus 174* (2002) and other films with real footage from Iraq. As such, political films serve as excellent historical memories and methods through which to heal and remember. Glauber Rocha said that, “Images don’t need translation and leftist words cannot save rightist images”.¹⁹⁵ Today, Lula’s leftist words cannot save the rightist images (in context) of gun violence, drug trafficking, and other economic consequences of neoliberal economic policies. Perhaps it is true that in the United States, rightist words from politicians cannot save rightist images and we are really in trouble when rightist

¹⁹⁴ Stam, “Land in Anguish; Revolutionary lessons”, 49-51.

¹⁹⁵ Johnson, *Brazilian Cinema*, 89.

images through leftist mediums such as protest film, do not provoke more leftist words, let alone leftist actions.

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Consulted Films

2001: Space Odyssey(1968)
Alexander Nevsky, Александр Невский(1938)
Apocalypse Now(1979)
Barren Lives, *Vidas Secas*(1963)
Battle Ground(1949)
The Battleship Potemkin, Броненосец Потёмкин(1928)
Bus 174, *Ônibus 174*(2002)
Casualties of War(1989)
Charlie Wilson's War(2007)
City of God, *Cidade de Deus*(2002)
City of Men, *Cidade dos Homens*(2007)
The Constant Gardener(2005)
Duck Soup(1933)
The Elite Squad, *Tropa da Elite*(2007)
The Fall of the Warrior King(2009)
Five Fingers(2006)
Four Days in September, *O que è isso companheiro?*(1997)
Friendly Fire; *Ação Entre Amigos*(1998)
Grace Is Gone(2007)
The Great Dictator(1940)

How Good to See You Alive; *Que Bom Te Ver Viva*(1989)

How Tasty was My Little Frenchmen, *Como Gostoso Era meu Frances*(1970)

Imperial Life in the Emerald City(2009)

In the Margin, *A Margem*(1967)

Kedma(2001)

Kippur(2000)

Land in Anguish,*Terra em Transe*(1967)

Lions for Lambs(2007)

Lula's Brazil: The Management of Hope(2005)

Metropolis(1926)

Munich(2005)

Notorious(1946)

October, Октябрь(1928)

Pixote(1980)

Redacted(2007)

Rendition(2007)

The Return(2009)

Ryan's Daughter(1970)

Send a Bullet, *Manda Bala*(2007)

Stop Loss(2008)

Syriana(2005)

Twelve O'Clock High(1949)

United 93(2000)

Wizard of Oz(1939)

World Trade Center(2006)

The Year my Parents Went on Vacation, *O Ano que Meus Pais Sairam de Férias*(2006)

Zuzu Angel(2006)