Anthropophagic Queer: A Study on Abjected Bodies and Brazilian Queer Theory

Joao Nemi Neto
Graduate Center, City University of New York

Recommended Citation
Anthropophagic Queer: A Study on Abjected Bodies and Brazilian Queer Theory in Literature and Film

by

João Nemi Neto

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2015
This Manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement in the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

PAUL JULIAN SMITH

___________________                                      __________________________________
DATE                                                                  Chair of examining committee

JOSÉ DEL VALLE

___________________                                      __________________________________
DATE                                                                            Executive officer

PAUL JULIAN SMITH

___________________
JOSÉ DEL VALLE

___________________
MAGDALENA PERKOWSKA

Supervisory committee
ABSTRACT

Anthropophagic Queer: A Study on Abjected Bodies and Brazilian Queer Theory in Literature and Film

by

João Nemi Neto

Advisor: Paul Julian Smith

This project analyzes contemporary Brazilian literature and film in order to discuss queer theory and its ability to resonate with, and bring to light, specifically Brazilian concerns. The main argument of this dissertation is that, on one hand, such ideas and theories may change local perspectives; and that, on the other, they are themselves changed by local contexts. Therefore my analysis focuses on the representation of same-sex desire in Brazil throughout the 20th century and a reading of queer theory with a Brazilian perspective in mind. In order to do that, I use the concept of Antropofagia. Anthropophagy was a seminal Brazilian cultural movement that, through the works of artists such as Oswald de Andrade Tarsila do Amaral and Flávio de Carvalho, proposed cultural and metaphorical cannibalism, putting together European avant-garde ideas with Brazilian traditions yet aiming to produce something entirely new.

My anthropophagic queer reading also appeals to the notion of the abject as formulated by Julia Kristeva and later examined by Leo Bersani, Michael Warner and Judith Butler and to the space in-between, a concept formulated by Silviano Santiago.

My readings reveal that, beyond the Anglo-American model of coming out and politics, there are other possibilities of affirmation, be it through acceptance or silence and failure, which are seen in this dissertation as a productive mode of queer representation. Moreover, the pieces of literature and film analyzed here depict queer alternative representations to both homonormativity and heteronormativity as forms of resistance, at the same time as prejudice and homonormativity remain present in contemporary Brazilian social practices.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, my deepest appreciation and respect for Distinguished Professor Paul Julian Smith, his guidance during these years was fundamental for the completion of this project. His talent and vision helped me make this project possible.

I must also thank Professor José Del Valle for his support during the past years. All the times he listened to my questions, aflações, and comments and responded with the utmost care.

Also, Professor Magdalena Perkowska for reading the dissertation proposal, and being part of the committee and all her willingness to help me. Her suggestions, comments and support were invaluable for this project.

All my gratitude to the Graduate Center professors who helped me during the coursework.

A very special thanks to Claudia Pio, Howard Green and Sondra Green who helped me as attentive readers of this project.

The mentoring during our PhD is undoubtedly vital for the completion of such project. However there is one aspect of our work as PhD students that is also fundamental: friendship. And for that I am most thankful to my friends, partners and New York family, Jelena Mihailovic, Pablo Guerra and Emmy Williamson.

This project would have not been possible without the companionship of Ben de Witte. His patience, attentive eyes, helping hands and voice were part of this. I do hope this is just the first project of many others we get to share with each other.

And my family and friends back home, who embraced my project of leaving Brazil to pursue a PhD and their support throughout these years.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction**...........................................................................................................................................1

**Chapter 1: Queer Theory and Lesbian and Gay Studies in Brazil: A Historical Background**

1.1 Introduction...........................................................................................................................................11
1.2 The “History(ies)” of the Same-Sex Experience in Brazil.................................................................13
1.3 Among *Bichas, Veados, Entendidos, Gays*......................................................................................29

**Chapter 2: Queering Antropofagia or Devouring Queer**

2.1 Introduction...........................................................................................................................................40
2.2 Approaching the Concepts...................................................................................................................41
2.3 Antropofagia/The Anthropophagic Movement................................................................................50
   2.3.1 Forerunners to Antropofagia........................................................................................................51
   2.3.2 The *Movimento Antropófago*....................................................................................................55
2.4 The *Manifesto Antropófago*.............................................................................................................68
2.5 What is Queer about Antropofagia? .................................................................................................73
2.6 Flávio de Carvalho, the Anthropophagus Architect........................................................................75
2.7 Abjection................................................................................................................................................79
2.8 Space In-Between...............................................................................................................................90
Chapter 3: Disappearance, Failure, Loss (and Positivity?): Abject Bodies in Contemporary Brazilian Literature

3.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 98

3.2 Caio Fernando Abreu .................................................................................................. 101

  3.2.1 Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso .................................................................... 105

3.3 André de Figueiredo .................................................................................................. 121

  3.3.1 Labirinto .............................................................................................................. 122

3.4 Herbert Daniel .......................................................................................................... 134

  3.4.1 Passagem para o próximo sonho ......................................................................... 136

3.5 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 143

Chapter 4: Silenced Bodies Made Visible: Abject Bodies in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema

4.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 147

4.2 Madame Satã and the Fictionalized Reality .............................................................. 155

4.3 Dzi Croquetes and The Documentary Tradition ..................................................... 168

4.4 Tatuagem and the Uses of Naturalism ..................................................................... 182

4.5 Romance and the Future in the Past ....................................................................... 192

4.6 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 199

Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 205

Bibliography .................................................................................................................... 211
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapter 2

Fig. 1. Cover of the 2002 magazine celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Semana de Arte Moderna.................................................................56

Fig. 2. Abaporu by Tarsila do Amaral. (the painting is part of MALBA permanent collection in Buenos Aires) ..........................................................58

Fig. 3. Flávio de Carvalho and his attempt to walk around the streets of São Paulo wearing his summer outfit in 1956. In: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo. 17ª Bienal de São Paulo – Exposição Flávio de Carvalho........................................77

Chapter 4

Fig. 4. Sill from Madame Satã, opening sequence........................................160

Fig. 5. Sill from Madame Satã, Madame Satã and Renatinho in bed..................162

Fig. 6. Sill from Madame Satã, Madame Satã’s final performance....................164

Fig. 7. Kay Johnson as Madam Satan (1930)...............................................166

Fig. 8. Still from Dzi Croquetes, Caco Barcelos’s opening dance......................173

Fig. 9. Still from Dzi Croquetes, superimposition of images. Dzi Croquetes and historical footage.................................................................174

Fig. 10. Still from Dzi Croquetes, actor performing Borboleta..........................177

Fig. 11. Still from Tatuagem, Clécio and Arlindo exchange looks........................186

Fig. 12. Still from Romance, Fernanda’s POV from her balcony........................195
Se alguma coisa eu trouxe das minhas viagens à Europa entre as duas guerras foi o Brasil mesmo
– Oswald de Andrade
Introduction

In 2013 Laerte, a transgender cartoonist from Brazil wrote a review for Sara Salih’s monograph on Judith Butler (translated into Portuguese by Guacira Lopes Louro as Judith Butler e a teoria queer) in the form of a comic strip. Drawing on her experience as a transgender person, in the unorthodox review she observes the impact of normative (that is, adhering to strictly ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’) gender expectations we allow contemporary society to impose on our self-understanding. In addition, and crucially, Laerte’s Portuguese-language comic strip-introduction to the key ideas of ‘queer theory’ is particularly revealing and representative for how Latin American intellectuals and artists position themselves (not only as scholars and writers, but also as citizens and national subjects) vis-à-vis international trends in ‘gay and lesbian’ and ‘queer’ studies. From early on in the reception of Anglo-American theorizing on gender and sexuality, this has been a prominent question for many Latin American (and Brazilian) scholars. For instance, in “Lo queer en América Latina. ¿Lucha identitaria, post-identitaria, asimilacionista o neocolonial?” Norma Mogrovejo observes that “Epps, citando a Oscar Montero, afirma que si gay circula en el mundo hispanoparlante de manera que “las complejidades de su estatus importado son imposibles de editar, y algo de su carga originariamente celebratoria se pierde en la traducción” los “usos de queer están aún más circunscritos a la metrópoli imperial” (237).

While suspicious of the possibly neocolonial effects that accompany the easy assimilation of a term like ‘gay’ in Latin America, Mogrovejo leaves open the possibility that ‘queer’ retains a certain degree of critical openness – if only by acknowledging that
the term has not yet been widely circulated (and absorbed) in the region. I cite Mogrovejo and Laerte at the start of this dissertation because they represent a growing (and transnational) community of scholars and artists who self-consciously respond to the possibilities and challenges posed by the international dissemination of ‘traveling’ gay, lesbian, transgender and queer theories. Their voices highlight two important aspects I analyze in this dissertation: on the one hand, the oppressive effects of normative, what queer theorists call, ‘heteronormative’ and ‘gender binary’ (and more recently ‘homonormative’) thinking, and on the other, in the spirit of Edward Said, those ‘traveling theories’ that have informed local Brazilian responses that give cultural expression to non-heteronormative queer lives and experiences in the margins of the nation-state.

Laerte’s reading of queer theory reflects a common Brazilian cultural practice: international theories and practices make their way into local academia and are absorbed into local practices. In Brazil, the most important perspective that has adopted and extrapolated this idea of absorption is Antropofagia, an avant-garde literary and cultural movement from the 1920s that has shaped Brazilian cultural practices ever since. The antropófagos – a collective of writers, painters, architects and artists from all disciplines – provocatively adopted and adapted a term associated with the indigenous practice of cannibalism (“anthropophagy”) to claim a self-consciously transformative stance of cultural and metaphorical absorption (swallowing), blending European avant-garde ideas with Brazilian traditions in order to create – in full-fledged modernist fashion – something entirely new. My choice to name this dissertation after Antropofagia reflects a belief in the movement’s remaining importance to define local, national practices of
reading and producing – a legacy that remains stimulating to discuss the Brazilian reception of ‘gay and lesbian’ and ‘queer’ theories. More specifically, I propose an ‘anthropophagic’ reading of certain key concepts at the heart of contemporary queer theory. Herein I follow Mario Cesar Lugarinho, who in “Antropofagia crítica: para uma teoria queer em português,” was probably the first to relate queerness with Antropofagia. Lugarinho notes, “[t]raduzir de maneira imediata o termo queer da sociedade central para a sociedade da periferia é trair a própria antropofagia que nos confere identidade” (109).

Lugarinho proposes a queer reading of Brazilian cultural texts without losing the local perspective related to Brazilian social practices. Following this lead, I propose to explore in this dissertation an ‘anthropophagic’ reading of queer and, reversely, a ‘queer’ reading of Antropofagia. My intention is thus to continue this debate by observing specific Brazilian practices and cultural contexts as a vital part of my analysis of queer literary and cultural expressions in twentieth-century Brazil. Consequently this dissertation hopes to contribute to the discussion on both queer theory and its capacity to resonate with, and illuminate specifically Brazilian concerns.

The project to theorize a productive overlap between queer and antropofagia requires a high degree of self-awareness about the rich but complicated semantic possibilities of its terminology. In order to address either the uses of queer theory or of queer as an identity category in Brazil, it seemed important to situate this Anglophone nomenclature in a national and transnational context.

The Brazilian-Portuguese vernacular has already adopted the word ‘gay’ for a homosexual person (mostly male) and more recently ‘queer’ too has made its entry in academia and in political activism. It seemed important to explore whether and to what
extent queer is taking a similar route as ‘gay’ (as, for instance, Bradley Epps has discussed about the Hispanic Latin America context in “Riesgos, Pautas y promesas de la teoría Queer”). Such adoptions usually do not ‘enter’ a country easily but create (or uncover existent, but latent) tensions. For instance, while the adoption of ‘gay’ in Brazil has now become widely accepted, a pernicious side effect of this acceptance consists in the persistent and even heightened negative and offensive connotations of the local vernacular.

The steady increase of Brazilian scholarship on gender and sexuality studies perhaps suggests that the Brazilian reception of ‘queer’ is well underway. While it remains to be seen how profound the impact of queer will be (for instance, will there be a ‘queer moment’ as some would argue US academia witnessed in the 90s?), I propose to frame this reception with a reading of queer theory in light of specific Brazilian tropes and aesthetic practices, in order to suggest ways in which my selected (literary, political, and filmic) texts are of critical value to evaluate the usefulness of ‘traveling’ Anglo-American queer theory. Keeping in mind the idea of ‘devoration’ of external theories without losing sight of local needs, ‘queer’ informs the theoretical mode of this dissertation, but is simultaneously submitted to an ‘anthropophagic’ twist that reflects on local practices. ‘Anthropophagic queer’ thus argues for a critical reception of foreign theories by acknowledging its import and possibilities but tailoring its sensibilities to the local context.

The word ‘gay’ has already become part of the vernacular of many languages worldwide and not only part of the vocabulary, but replaced words with negative connotation in those languages (as we saw in Portuguese). Will the use of ‘queer’
(contrary to its originally pejorative, hurtful meaning in English) too soon become a new replacement for positivity and acceptance in Portuguese, and once again erase prior linguistic realities, no longer told histories and lived experiences? Gay has become a symbol of social status, a hierarchized word that means “better” than bicha, veado… Such vernacular choices reflect exclusive and annihilating tendencies that bypass sexual and gendered local ‘queer’ identities (such as travesti, bichas and effeminate men and butch women) that do not fit the internationalized vocabulary of same-sex (and normatively same-gendered) expression.

In order to discuss the complex issues presented above, this dissertation is based on four theoretical axes. First, I rely on the concept of Antropofagia: I intend to recover the Brazilian cultural tradition of incorporating new ideas into its own perspective in a way that could lead us to the analysis of the abject and the space in-between.

Second, I repeatedly make use of the concept of ‘abjection,’ mostly as formulated by the French critic Julia Kristeva, although occasionally I invoke readings of this term by American critics (often associated with queer theory) as Leo Bersani, Michael Warner and Judith Butler. I further link the notion of ‘abjection’ to Silviano Santiago’s concept of the ‘space in-between’ (also translated as ‘in-betweeness’). In “O entre-lugar do discurso latino-americano,” Silviano Santiago says that colonization has created an ambivalent cultural and psychic sense of place for Latin American writers that is neither local nor international. If for Santiago, it is ‘in-between’ obedience and rebellion, assimilation and expression that the “ritual antropófago da literatura latino-americana” (26) is accomplished, for my purposes, this liminal environment serves my anthropophagic considerations on abjection and queerness well.
Hence fourth, and in addition to Antropofagia, abjection and space in-between, I invoke queer theory as an anti-identitarian critique that seeks to problematize (and in that sense ‘queers’), as Eve Kosofsky Segdwick explains, sexual and gender identity as an “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (*Tendencies* 7).

Therefore, this dissertation deals with the double perspective of queer as both a critique of normative identity and a placeholder for the incongruent identity of actual sexual minorities (that are socially ‘abject’ and occupy the space ‘in-between’). Moreover, the double perspective of queer allows me to simultaneously locate Brazilian contexts inside queer theory and situate queer practices inside Brazilian theory and literary/cultural production.

In order to do so, the dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first chapter offers a historical approach to understand the literary, political and scientific discourse on same-sex desire in Brazil. The second chapter lays out the central ideas that inform my theoretical framework. In the third and fourth chapter, I turn to the analysis of selected literary texts and films to test the validity and usefulness of the ideas expounded in the preceding chapters.

The first chapter opens the dissertation with a historical perspective on same-sex desire in Brazil, with particular regard for its visibility in political activism, the arts and scientific sources, such as sociology, anthropology, medicine, literary criticism and more recently cultural studies and queer theory. By tracing the history of same-sex desire and gay movements in Brazil, I show that foreign theories and local practices from the start
have emerged hand-in-hand and shaped Brazilian understandings of same-sex practices. I review the vocabulary from both international identity politics and local vernacular to analyze how political activism and academic work intersect or counteract. Also, I discuss the terminology we have adopted in Brazil in order to deal with same-sex desire. The discussion between ‘gay’ and local words such as bicha gives us a preamble for the theoretical discussion proposed in the second chapter.

The first chapter further clarifies the historical conditions that have informed the current understandings of queer activism in Brazil, as proposed by the country’s two most visible political associations—on the one hand the ABEH (Associação Brasileira de Estudos da Homocultura) with its proposed post-identity politics) and, on the other, the ABLGBT (Associação Brasileira de Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Travestis, Transgêneros e Transsexuais) in favor of an identity-based activism.

In the second chapter, I present the theoretical framework for the remainder of the dissertation. Besides key ideas on abjection and in-between-ness based off of the works and thought of Oswald de Andrade, Julia Kristeva and Silviano Santiago, I turn to Leo Bersani, J. Judith Halberstam and Michael Warner for a critique of sexual normativity and normalcy. In this chapter I theorize the common point between contemporary queer theory, the Antropofagia movement, and the concepts of space-in-between and abjection, while in the process consciously cross-fertilizing Anglo-American theory and practices with Brazilian perspectives.

Accordingly, I propose both a queer analysis of the experimental, modernist spirit of Antropofagia and an anthropophagic reading of queer theory. In particular, I discuss
the work of Flávio de Carvalho, named the ‘ideal anthropophagous’ and his relationship to the anthropophagic movement and queer theory.

In the third chapter I turn my attention to the works of three Brazilian contemporary authors whose books have proved relevant to the discussion of same-sex desire in Brazil. First, I analyze Caio Fernando Abreu’s short story “A dama da noite” from *Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso* (1988). Second, I read André de Figueiredo’s novel *Labirinto* (1971) and finally Herbert Daniel’s essays from *Passagem para um sonho* (1982). Whereas Caio Fernando has had a fruitful critical reception that is useful to complement my project, Daniel and Figueiredo have not received a lot of critical attention. Their work, however, is particularly provocative and merits, I argue, serious scholarship (it certainly sets up a potentially interesting dialogue with more established Brazilian writers).

The third chapter demonstrates how these three authors have chosen to explore queer lives, themes and subject matters – each dealing in his own way with their state of abjection and the *in-betweenness*. All three equally suggest the feasibility of theorizing an anthropophagic queer perspective. ‘Queer’ in this chapter thus refers both to my theoretical framework and to the specific thematic and formal content of the selected literary works.

Finally in the fourth chapter I look at the persistence of the anthropophagic queer, abjection and space-in-between in Brazilian film production. In this final chapter, I go back to the theoretical, political, aesthetic and literary ideas explored in the previous chapters and the representation of queer lives and bodies in the medium of moving images, whether in the mode of fiction, documentary or a blend of both.
The term queer takes a political dimension in this chapter because it represents characters that conform neither to the American coming-out politics nor to the Brazilian identity politics. Nonetheless they are queer in the sense of their experience and affection since they do not necessarily identify themselves as gay men as it has been conventionally called in Brazil men who are attracted to men. Therefore these characters in the films do not necessarily comply with the contemporary norms of representation of sexuality.

The analysis will focus on Madame Satã, directed by Karim Aïnouz in 2002; on the documentary Dzi Croquetes directed by Tatiana Issa and Rafael Alvarez in 2010; Tatuagem directed by Hilton Lacerda in 2013; and finally on Romance directed by Sérgio Bianchi in 1988. The four films selected range from more conventional cinema – Tatuagem – to avant-garde films – Romance – and are presented not according to their production release but according to their narrative time.

The fourth chapter also discusses the idea that some images of homosexuality are rendered negative whereas others are positive revealing some prejudice even inside LGBTQ scholars and activists against queer people that do not conform to the heteronormative representations of same-sex desire.

While my selection of novels, stories and films are often either very recent or understudied, I argue that they raise important issues to the study of gender and sexuality in Brazil. By moving these cultural artifacts from the margins (from the space in-between in which they currently exist), my aim is to interrogate ‘traveling theory’ and its applications in Brazil, but also to question Brazilian tactics and strategies of political activism and representation. More broadly, this dissertation thus attempts to discuss
which queer representations are erased, and which ones are acknowledged or have more prominence than others in the complex process of cultural translation, adaptation and *devouring* that defines the Brazilian understanding of sexual dissidents and minorities.
Chapter I

Queer Theory and Lesbian and Gay Studies in Brazil: A Historical Background

1.1 Introduction

In the past four decades Brazil has witnessed great changes in same sex desire activism and intellectual work. Since the beginning of the gay movement in the end of the 1970s in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and other major urban centers, a large amount of work has been produced both intellectually and politically and in some cases with ramifications in the two major cities of the country. Unfortunately, this broader gaze and acceptance also brought to light higher levels of hate crimes. Vicious homophobe attacks in major cities that have become frequent in the news along with difficulties in passing laws that would criminalize homophobia, have brought same sex desire to the center of newspapers and magazines and showed that homosexuality has reached higher levels of acceptance equivalent to levels of hate. What has made these changes possible in Brazilian society?

In order to understand this visibility effect, in this first chapter I attempt to give a historical overview of the literary, intellectual and political work regarding same-sex desire. I focus on the works published by several authors and also on the language and terminology which are used to describe and narrate this same-sex desire experience throughout the years. Furthermore, I suggest that Brazil – specially its major urban centers –, like any other “highly complex society” (Parker, Beneath the Equator 27), has

---

1 In Diversidade sexual e homofobia no Brasil, Venturi and Bokany brought to our attention that for almost 20 years there have been laws waiting to be approved in the national congress regarding homophobia (12).
2 In Brazil the most widely used acronym is LGBT: Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Transgêneros e Travestis.
3 James Green, David William Foster and Denilson Lopes among others mention Adolfo Caminha’s novel as the precursor of homoerotismo in Brazil. The novel deals with the story of two sailors – Aleixo, a white 15 year old boy, and Amaro, a 30 year old black man – who meet on a ship and decide to live together. Once living together in the city, Aleixo gets involved with an older woman, causing Amaro’s jealousy that
its own multipart reality that will devour alien theories and transform them into its own perception of reality. Finally, it is my intent to understand and expose the problematic of such choices in a society that still struggles to find “queer spaces and times” as presented by Halberstam in his book with the same title.

Antonio Eduardo de Oliveira says that lesbian and gay studies should be furthered in Brazil, not because they have been developed in the United States and other “first world” countries (the author uses the term *primeiro mundo*), but because it is important to question “as categorias fixas de identidade, para que seja esclarecido o respaldo da diferença na constituição de uma sociedade multicultural marcada pela intensa homophobia” (169). To the author, it is necessary that Brazil should find a unique approach to LGBT² studies. Oliveira nonetheless sees the importance of the incorporation of the American studies in Brazil, keeping in mind the latter’s local reality and diversity. Later in the current chapter, I intend to discuss in which ways the American theory and practices can be helpful to the Brazilian LGBT community, in spite of its uniqueness. As Miskolci warns in the article in which he sketches some comments about Eve Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*:

Desde *Between Men*, Sedgwick alertava para o fato de que a metodologia de análise que desenvolvera não devia ser aplicada em outros contextos sociais e históricos sem uma adaptação cautelosa. Cada sociedade tem suas características próprias, história particular e até mesmo formas diversas de compreender a sexualidade. (13)

---

² In Brazil the most widely used acronym is LGBT: *Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Transgêneros e Travestis.*
1.2 The “History(ies)” of the Same-Sex Experience in Brazil

It seems a common idea among Brazilian scholars and authors that the gay movement formally began in the 1970s in parallel with the organized groups against dictatorship (Green, Trevisan, Mott, Simões and Louro, among others). As Guacira Lopes Louro says in “Teoria Queer: uma política pós-identitária para a educação,”

Também no Brasil, ao final dos anos 70, o movimento homossexual ganha mais força: surgem jornais ligados aos grupos organizados, promovem-se reuniões de discussão e de ativismo, as quais, segundo conta João Silvério Trevisan, se faziam ao “estilo do gay conscious raising group americano”, buscando “tomar consciência de seu próprio corpo/ sexualidade” e construir “uma identidade enquanto grupo social.” (544)

João Silvério Trevisan and James Green are two authors that give us detailed accounts of this era. The former presents a more personal account as he mentions in his book *Devassos no paraíso*. Trevisan says:

Por isso, sei que estou perfeitamente envolvido nos fatos a serem aqui narrados, então alimento qualquer pretensão de ser “científico” nessa narrativa. Ao contrário, pretendo dar uma
espécie de depoimento, como protagonista que muitas vezes fui.

*(Devassos 336)*

Nonetheless, same sex experience had been present long before that in local lands. From the times of the Tupinambás to the first Portuguese explorers that set foot in the 1500s, homosexual practices were present in these lands beneath the Equator. As Luiz Mott points out:

In the Brazilian case, as is well known, the hegemonic matrix was strongly disrupted, especially by contacts with the indigenous sexual culture, notably the indigenous people of the Tupinambá tribe, and the sexual anarchy of the African slaves… *(Sodomities 168)*

In terms of literature, most authors⁴ agree that *O Bom Crioulo* by Adolfo Caminha, a novel published in 1895, is one of the first texts that mentioned homosexual desire and practices. In the field of literary studies, a study was made by Denilson Lopes in *A escrita de Adé*. The author gives us an overview, as he mentions “não exaustivo,” about the presence of gay characters and themes in Brazilian literature. To Lopes, this

---

⁴ James Green, David William Foster and Denilson Lopes among others mention Adolfo Caminha’s novel as the precursor of *homoerotismo* in Brazil. The novel deals with the story of two sailors – Aleixo, a white 15 year old boy, and Amaro, a 30 year old black man – who meet on a ship and decide to live together. Once living together in the city, Aleixo gets involved with an older woman, causing Amaro’s jealousy that leads up to a fatal denouement.
phenomenon starts in the end of the XIX century, with two naturalistic\(^4\) novels: the previously mentioned *O Bom crioulo* and *O Ateneu*, by Raul Pompéia. As the author reminds us, “é com o naturalismo que se pode falar da emergência de uma prosa homoerótica no Brasil” (39). To Trevisan, *O Cortiço* presents a same-sex couple, but not in the center of the narrative, like in Caminha’s story, where “a relação amorosa entre dois rapazes constitui sua própria espinha dorsal e é dissecada à exaustão” (*Devassos* 253). Fernando Arenas and Susan C. Quinlan consider *O Bom Crioulo* as a “landmark text in the history of modern literary representations of same-sex desire for its overt thematic treatment of homosexuality…” (xxiii). For David William Foster, this is the foundational text of gay literature in Brazil.\(^5\)

These two novels are definitely important to any historical account on same-sex desire in Brazil. However, I would also like to mention Qorpo Santo’s short play called *O casamento de dois esposos* as a representation of same-sex experience in the XIX century. In his text, the author portrays two male spouses, Tamanduá and Tatu, in an absurdist relationship. Severino J. Albuquerque is one of the few authors that mention this unique literary piece as a homoerotic text (31).

Qorpo Santo (1829–83) spent most of his life in mental institutions. Up to our date, he is not well known by the general public. As in the case of Antonin Artaud, it is not known if the diagnosis was accurate or if his personality was a misfit for that historical moment. Qorpo Santo is considered one of the precursors of the Theater of the Absurd in Brazil (Fraga). As Albuquerque mentions, “[Qorpo-Santo’s] theater as a whole

\(^4\) *Naturalismo* as a literary movement deals with homosexuality as something to be observed, as in the naturalistic approach to science. Homosexuality as a fixed category was a novelty at the time, therefore something to be observed as a trace of human kind.

\(^5\) In an online vote, *O Bom Crioulo* is ranked #71 in the list of the best lesbian and gay novels of all times: [http://www.publishingtriangle.org/100best.asp](http://www.publishingtriangle.org/100best.asp)
constitutes a wry indictment of his contemporaries, a satirical commentary on the pedantry of the Second Empire, and a truly subversive alternative to the commercially successful and officially sanctioned theater of his time” (30).

In his analysis on Qorpo Santo’s work, Maggi mentions the clear homosexual aspect of the play (3), as we can see in the following exert:

TATU. Pois já que não se contenta com o nosso casamento espiritual somente, sendo ambos homens! Já que quer o imundo e absurdo casamento carnal, declaro-lhe que não sou mais seu sócio (empurrando-o).

TAMANDUÁ. (empurrando-o também) – Pois eu também não sou mais seu! (Há a mais renhida luta entre eles em que rompem chapéus, descalçam-se, rasgam casacos, e findam a comédia saindo aos gritos.) Fiquemos sem chapéu, sem botas e sem camisa! Mas estamos divorciados carnalmente e espiritualmente. Não! Não! Não! (Qorpo Santo 247–48)

For Qorpo Santo, man’s mental health is only possible when he is married to a woman. Marriage is fundamental for the man to find his plenitude.

Although present in Qorpo Santo’s work, according to Albuquerque, the presence of same-sex desire in Brazilian theater until the beginning of the military dictatorship (1964–84) is evasive to say the least (18). In the chapter designed to study the modernist theater in Brazil, the critic deals with the topic when analyzing the works of Nelson
Rodrigues and Oswald de Andrade. He states that the homosexual representation in these works is made by heterosexual men and there is an erroneous interpretation of what same-sex desire would mean to those authors.⁶

Mary Del Priore examines Rio Nu, a magazine published in the beginning of the 20th century (133). This publication was a collection of erotica in texts and images in which one could read narratives, anecdotes and comics interleaved with images of female nudity. In 1914, this magazine published a short story named “O menino do Gouveia” by Capadócio Maluco, probably a pseudonym. The narrative deals with the sexual experience of a younger boy and an older man.

Also, in the same period, it is important to mention João do Rio, a journalist, writer and playwright and member of ABL – Academia Brasileira de Letras –, with a tropical dandy personality (Trevisan 260). His literary production described the changes in social life in Rio de Janeiro at the turn of the XX century. His homosexuality was said to be present not only in his texts but also in his daily life and style, writes Trevisan, “aproxima-o exemplarmente desse maneirismo contemporâneo que é o camp anglo-saxônico, tão fronteiriço a certa prática homossexual enquanto experiência no artifício e na máscara” (261).

This brief period of visibility was followed by a certain disappearance of homoerotic desire after the Semana de Arte Moderna in 1922. During the Geração Heróica, the concerns with the vanguards and “isms” coming from Europe as well as

---

⁶ It is important to note that Albuquerque’s perspective, while noteworthy, is not one that I share. To me, sexuality in general is just one more aspect of the decay of the bourgeoning class in Andrade’s play.
their appropriation and *deglutição* into something new became a central issue for the Modernist writers. As Denilson Lopes says in “Bichas e Letras: Uma estória brasileira”:

> Passados os dois grandes romances de fim de século, quanto mais a modernidade avança, a homotextualidade se apresenta de forma menos ostensiva, presente em contos e poemas, mas que não constituem um estética homoerótica, uma arte gay. (38)

It is important to note that this does not mean that prior to the 1920s there was a great visibility of homoerotic desire. But what one can observe with the novels published in the turn of the XX century is that before the Modernism period, a more visible representation of homosexuality seemed feasible. According to Gledson, this is due to the fact that during the first modernist generation some issues were still too shocking to the audience. To the author, “overtly gay writers only appear later, in the wake of the emergence of gay liberation in the United States at the end of the 1960s” (12).

Among the writers that were creating during this period, one of the few that explicitly deals with homosexuality is Mario de Andrade, in one short story named “Frederico Paciência,” written in 1924 and published post-mortem in 1947. As James Green states, this short story could be a reference to his personal life, since Mario de Andrade “tentava reprimir seus desejos sexuais por outros homens e mantinha segredo sobre sua vida pessoal” (*Carnaval* 288).

One other novel that must be mentioned is Patricia Galvão’s *Parque Industrial*. It was published under the pseudonym Mara Lobo, as suggested by the Communist Party to avoid associations with Oswald de Andrade – her husband – and the Modernist
movement, which was considered to be bourgeois by the members of the party. *Parque Industrial* is a proletarian novel, written in concordance with the *cartilha do marxismo*. The author portrays the romance between two women: Matilde and Eleonora. More importantly than simply discussing the topic of sexual orientation, Pagu (the nickname Patricia Galvão became famous with) wants to discuss gender and class struggles. The love affair of the two women is terminated the moment Eleonora gets married to a bourgeois man and “se contamina com a burguesia.” After that Matilde – true to her ideals – “nunca mais viu a namoradinha burguesa” (75).

Oswald de Andrade published in 1937 *O rei da vela*, one of his most experimental and modernist plays. Already influenced by Pagu and the communist party, Andrade wrote this play intended to criticize – or in his words, *espinafra*

It is interesting how homosexuality is viewed in such different ways when comparing Oswald de Andrade’s *O rei da vela* and Pagu’s *Parque industrial*. Both are modernist texts. However, since in Andrade’s play, Totó, the homosexual, is at the service of the burgeoning class, he must be *espinafrado* (made fun of). To Pagu, Matilde’s homosexuality is linked to the class struggle that took place in São Paulo, a city growing at a fast paced industrial mode.

The “reappearance” of same-sex desire and its later consolidation would only happen after the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas, an extremely conservative period in which censorship was mediated by the government. After Vargas’s suicide in 1954, Brazil experienced a period of modernization and a transition from the French influence to the American one. The *samba* – a mixture of the European ball dances with the
African rhythms – gave space to the Bossa Nova – a Brazilian “reading” of the American jazz. In the 1950s, the situation for gay men had not yet changed that much in relation to the homosexual representation in Brazilian literature:

Daniel Franco, an activist in the São Paulo gay rights movement of the 1970s, noted the lack of material about homosexuality in the 1950s: until recently there wasn’t gay literature in Brazil. The little that existed was imported, since no Brazilian author dared to ruin his name in such a risky business. (Green, Beyond Carnival 171)

Little by little and in short and slow steps, from the 1950s on, homoerotic themes started to appear. Rick Santos presents a perspective on Cassandra Rios as the first author that does not present homosexual characters as “uma patologia, um vício moral” (22) in 1948, still under Vargas government. Rios is usually left out from collections of stories, since she is considered by many critics as a popular writer. She reached fame in the 1970s when she became a best-seller in Brazil with her stories full of descriptions of sex. She ended up being labeled as a pornographer and since then has not been considered an author worth reading in the literary circles. Only recently with the advent of Cultural and Queer Studies in Brazil, Cassandra Rios has been “rescued” from the past and studied.

Following a chronological order, Denilson Lopes gives us a clear explanation of the 1960s in Brazil when affirming that,
Passando mais decisivamente para os anos 60, parece que "foi então que aquela coisa que ele mal ousava chamar amor, transformou-se em amor" (AYALA, W. in DAMATA, G.: 1968, 265), finalmente as ruas da cidade se tornam espaço de visibilidade de personagens gays, seja numa tônica entre o libertário e o panfletário. (“Bichas e letras” 40)

From this moment on, a number of authors with published works worth mentioning emerged: Lúcio Cardoso in 1959 with his novel *Crônica da casa assassinada*, Gasparino Damatta with *Histórias do amor maldito*, a compilation of short stories, in the 1960s, Roberto Piva with *Paranóia* in São Paulo, in the 1970s Caio Fernando Abreu, Aguinaldo Silva among others, and João Silvério Trevisan, and Herbert Daniel in the 1980s. Recently, we have witnessed a growing market that would include not only authors and publications but also publishing houses devoted to the LGBT public.⁷

This visibility, however, did not come without opposition and critique. In the 1970, Brazil also saw the rise of the magazines for men such as a local publication of *Playboy* in Portuguese and other native magazines like *Status*, and *Ele&Elas*. All those magazines shared the same ideology proposed by Hugh Hefner and his (in)famous publication. Such ideology Beatriz Preciado names *pornotopia* in her 2010 book that carries the same title. Using a term derived from Foucault’s heterotopia. Magazines like

---

⁷ Another canonical work that could be mentioned is Graciliano Ramos’s *Grande Sertão Veredas*, considered by many critics as one of the most important novels in Portuguese language. Until today the novel has lacked a queer reading. It narrates a platonic love affair between the main character Riobaldo and Diadorim, a woman who passes as a man in order to join the group of outlaws.
the ones mentioned above try to bring to light (or even up to a certain extent, create) a new man, a modern citizen of cosmopolitan cities: a man that is interested in the private sphere, fashion, cuisine and other topics that have also been habitually associated with the female gaze. However, in order to guarantee the necessary demand for heterosexuality for those men, these magazines needed to portray some level of masculinity, that is, the nude woman (or semi-nude in the beginning) responding to the needs of a guaranteed heterosexuality. And besides the nude female body, the discourse against homosexuality would serve as an important tool for such ideology.\(^8\) As Del Priore writes,

> A revista que deveria ser inovadora, aberta aos ventos da contemporaneidade, só lia a homossexualidade na chave da aberração e se aceitava discursos a favor dessas práticas, o fazia, inevitavelmente, com humor irônico. O comportamento gay parecia-lhe ser algo por demais ridículo para ser levado a sério. (184)

One can observe from the examples above that, besides in the literary field, in other areas of knowledge and distribution there have also been works in which homoerotic desire has appeared. Obviously, this anti-homoerotic discourse was not born

---

\(^8\) It is interesting to note that this discourse against homosexuality is present even in today’s publications designed for the straight men. Brazilian magazines such as VIP, Vogue Homem, and Men’s Health from time to time insert – usually in the form of jokes – short texts, sentences or images that would guarantee the heterosexuality of the reader, avoiding any possibility of same-sex desire. One that caught my attention once was a “guide on how to use public urinals,” in which the magazine explained to the reader to always avoid picking a urinal next right next another when in use by another man.
with the masculine magazines. It has been documented since the XVIII Century inquisition trials in which sodomy was mentioned as crime against nature.⁹

While in literature, writings about homosexuality were seen since the XIX century in Brazil, academically speaking, the first significant work that dealt with same-sex desire in a positive tone was the work by José Fabio Barbosa da Silva, published in 1959. His pioneer thesis presented at Universidade de São Paulo, entitled “Lembranças passadas a limpo: A homossexualidade masculina em São Paulo,” in the result of a sociological research done in the city of São Paulo in the 1950s. On this occasion, 70 middle class gay men answered questions related to their first sexual experiences, relationships, daily life, marriage, etc. Barbosa divided the homosexual group in three distinctive categories: *homossexual passivo, homossexual duplo, homossexual ativo* (356). His work and definitions will prevail in other discourses on the topic until later in Brazil. Perlongher in *Negócio do michê*, for instance, forty years later, will still encounter such divisions and the binary reproduction of male and female in homosexual relations.

Green and Polito published in 2004 a concise but comprehensive account on writings about homosexuality in Brazil between 1870 and 1980. According to the authors, the choice of this period is due to the fact that before 1870 “são raríssimas as fontes sobre homossexualidade” (17) while after 1980, with the end of dictatorship and political freedom, gay movements and publications spread all over the country.

---

⁹ It is relevant to mention that in Brazil there has never been a clear legislation on the prohibition of ‘sodomite acts’ or homosexual acts. As Green and Polito point out, in the *Código Penal Republicano* published in 1890, laws on morality were made not in reference to homosexuality but to sexual acts in general (27). Also, the *Código Penal do Império* from 1830 does not include sodomy as a crime. Unfortunately that does not mean there were no persecutions and arrests throughout the XIX and XX centuries. There are several reports and records of imprisonment of *travestis* and other sexual minorities.
Maria Teresa Citeli gave us an accurate account on studies regarding homosexuality in the areas of anthropology and medicine. She made an extensive reading of the works that had to do with same-sex desire in Brazil. To Citeli,

O segundo tema que perpassa grande número de estudos é o da homossexualidade. A produção antropológica sobre homossexualidade, especialmente masculina, embora também tenha recorrido à abordagem de gênero desenvolvida pelos estudos de mulher, segue a tradição própria dessa área, dialogando com trabalhos precursores. (22)

In his 1980s research, Nestor Perlongher – forgotten for some time and recently rediscovered – anticipated much of what would be discussed not only in Brazil but also in the United States and Europe years later. The lack of distribution of Perlongher’s ideas brings to light what Silviano Santiago mentioned of Brazil being not only at the periphery but also speaking a peripheral language. Mario Cesar Lugarinho in his article “Al Berto, In Memoriam. The Luso Queer Principle” names this lack of distribution of Portuguese language ideas as the luso queer principle. He thus reappropriates a concept discussed by Boaventura dos Santos and, as we will discuss in more detail in chapter 2 of this dissertation, reinterprets it in an anthropophagic queer sense:

The luso queer principle is born out of questioning the nonplace from which one speaks. The luso queer must not only deconstruct the culture in which she or he is located, but also problematize the
geopolitical position of that culture where his or her marginalized identity emerges. (296)

Perlongher traced a map of same-sex practices among men in the city of São Paulo, following Barbosa’s tradition.\(^\text{10}\) Perlongher’s work showed a new division that did not exist when Barbosa made his research, a class distinction in which upper middle class gay men would visit different areas of the city as the ones described by Barbosa. Such division would still prevail thirty years later, as testified by Júlio Simões:

> o gay-The Week\(^\text{11}\) é uma espécie de encarnação desse estilo “hegemônico” – rapazes brancos, bombados, trajando roupas e sapatos de marcas valorizadas e caras – com o qual contrasta a maior parte dos frequentadores de Vieira.\(^\text{12}\) (159)

This “gay-The Week” represents the Americanized notion that some scholars and activists – *bichas, veados, entendidos* – try to criticize in the major urban centers of Brazil.

In the 1980s, Félix Guattari came to Brazil and with Suely Rolnik wrote *Cartografias do Desejo*, a book with a series of talks, lectures and reflections on sexuality in Brazil that attempted to trace the *cartografia* of the other in Brazil. As Perlongher in an issue of the *Revista Cultural de Crítica* writes:

\(^{10}\) It is worth noting that in terms of geography, 30 years later, Perlongher’s work mapped the sexuality among gay men in the same areas in the city as Barbosa did.

\(^{11}\) *The Week* is a renowned nightclub in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. It is famous for shirtless buff guys and higher prices than average in the cities.

\(^{12}\) *Vieira* refers to *Rua Vieira de Carvalho*, the first major homosexual meeting point in São Paulo.
Es la preocupación por las fugas, por los márgenes, por las rupturas, lo que ha de guiar la exploración cartográfica.

Cartografiar es viajar. En este caso, la cartografía del deseo deriva de un viaje real, efectuado por el filósofo-militante-analista Félix Guattary y la analista brasileña Suely Rolnik por el agitado Brasil de 1982. (13)

Regarding a possible historiography of homosexuality in Brazil, another fundamental author worth mentioning is Edward MacRae. In the 1980s, he published two pivotal texts: “Os respeitáveis militantes e as bichas loucas” in 1982 and his doctoral dissertation “O militante homossexual no Brasil da ‘abertura’” in 1985. In the latter he discussed the importance of the homosexual ghetto in Brazil. To him, the homosexual movement had a social importance of challenging the norms. He also proposed the use of the words bicha and lésbica in a positive tone, appropriating the American policy towards the word queer. In the former, he does an ethnographic study of the Grupo Somos, the first gay liberation group in Brazil.

Peter Fry, in 1982, wrote an article named “Da hierarquia à igualdade: a construção histórica da homossexualidade no Brasil.” His work debates his research in the north of Brazil where men would be divided in two categories, ativo (“active”) and passivo (“passive”). The former would socially represent the role of the man – the one that penetrates – and the former, the role of the woman – the one that is penetrated. He moves on proposing three distinctive models of categorization of homossociabilidad
(“homosociality”). The first would be the reproduction of a hierarchical relationship in which one of the two men – the ativo – represents the man while the other plays the role of the woman. The second model, to Fry, moves from the religious aspect – sin – to the medical one – disease. However, this second model would consider homosexuals all men who have sex with men independent of their role. And finally, the third, egalitarian model, that tries to react against the notions of abnormality. One more aspect in his article that is important to us at this point is his reflections on the Anglo-European ideas that were disseminated in Brazil. He presents the notion of circulation of ideas instead of cultural domination, a topic I intend to discuss later in this chapter.

Citeli also mentions Carlos Nelson dos Santos and Luiz Mott. For her, Mott inaugurates the studies of lesbianism in Brazil in 1987. He presents to the public an extensive study (mentioned above) about forbidden sex (sexo proibido), feminine virginity and homosexuality among slaves and the landowners.

Jurandir Freire Costa has also played an important role in Brazil. His fundamental text “A inocência e o vício” initiated a discussion of terminology. Costa suggests that the term homossexualidade should not be used, but rather homerotismo. Severino J. Albuquerque confirms this by saying:

Jurandir Freire Costa (1992) feels that term “homosexuality” should be dropped altogether in Brazil, arguing in A inocência e o vício (Innocence and vice) that a belief in the existence of a “homosexual sexuality” predisposes those at risk against adopting preventive measures. (10)
To Santos and Garcia, the release of the book they organized, *A escrita de Adé – perspectivas teóricas dos estudos gays e lésbic@s no Brasil*, in 1992, establishes the beginning of the studies on *homocultura* in Brazil. To the authors, the book “descreve em sua ação epistemological, o nascimento dos chamados estudos Gays e Lésbicos como uma disciplina na universidade brasileira” (7). Their idea is not isolated, though. In the same year, the book *Literatura e Homoerotismo* presents a similar perspective by stating that Brazil is still out of step with the studies in the same area conducted in the United States and Europe.

All the works mentioned above belong to the areas of history, anthropology or sociology. As Fernando Arenas corroborates, “with regard to Brazil, discussions of sexuality have taken place primarily in anthropological historical or cultural studies” (xiv).

More recently, Denilson Lopes, Mario Cesar Lugarinho, Fernando Arenas, Richard Micolsky, Guacira Lopes, Julia Simões Lopes, João Silvério Trevisan, Luiz Mott, and James Green are just a few of the many authors that work with lesbian and gay issues as well as with queer studies. And even though the discussion around topics related to LGBTQ issues has emerged in academia and in the news in the 1990s, according to João Bôsco Hora Góis, still today less than 10% of the articles published in three major journals – *Estudos Feministas, Pagu* and *Revista Gênero* – deals with this kind of issues (9–10). Contemporary scholars will be discussed during the following pages, when I present current perspectives in same-sex desire research and writings in Brazil.
1.3 Among Bichas, Veados, Entendidos, Gays…

Unlike the United States, where calling oneself “queer” started with the political groups in the late 80s and early 90s, in Brazil, the concept of queer appeared in academia in the 2000s. To a certain extent, the word has not yet reached political and/or social movements. According to Richard Miskolci, “o marco de nossa incorporaçao criativa do queer pode ser estabelecido em 2001, quando Guacira Lopes Louro publicou, na Revista Estudos Feministas, o artigo Teoria Queer: uma politica pós-identitária para a educação” (38).

After this, a great number of books and articles have been published on the topic and the incorporation of the term queer seems to be the most accepted so far. However, one could question the choice of terminology in Brazil. There seems to have existed a certain restriction to the use of the words that describe same-sex desire in Portuguese – bicha, veado, sapatão, for example. The English vernacular – gay – has entered Brazilian vocabulary and has been actively used by the population. This categorization of terminology creates a tension between two groups: those who identify with the bichas, veados and other words in Portuguese, on one side, and on the other hand, a group that not only identifies with the English word ‘gay’ but also considers the Portuguese terms extremely negative.

Marcelo Hailer, in a short internet article, seems to summarize this tension between the gay and the bichas in Brazil:
[O] problema não está no fato de usar ou não a palavra bicha para denominar gays masculinos e femininos. Sim, elas também são bichas. O problema está no machismo que ainda assola os homossexuais. O problema está em ainda se achar que a "bicha" é aquela feminina e passiva. Quando na verdade bich@s som@s tod@s n@s. (par. 8)

As important as his words are, the comments left by the readers will confirm this tension. It is quite odd that we would adopt vernacular terms in English without even questioning their origins. If we were to follow the American perspective, would it not make more sense to reintegrate a word in Portuguese and transform it into something positive as it was done with queer?

This division between gay and bicha has also created some sort of class division: the contemporary gay men, with money and access to the products of culture that the American gay life style provides, and the bicha on a lower scale of social class. Papers on sociology and anthropology that investigate same-sex experience in big cities like São Paulo, have confirmed such division (Simões and França for instance). Forty years ago, Perlongher foresaw this, but he spoke about the entendidos and the gays. To him, the “questão de classe sempre conectada à questão social. Os com mais dinheiro não participam da passeata” (Negócio do Michê 110).

Paraphrasing Amy Lind in “¿Cómo se piensa lo “queer” en América Latina?” Viteri, Serrano and Vidal-Ortiz state:
las formas a través de las cuales nombramos la diferencia sexual y de género están directamente relacionadas con procesos transnacionales utilizados por grupos de personas marginadas para nombrarse en la construcción de nación, racialización, colonización o explotación de clase (Lind, 2009:12). (49)

If there is a general notion that Brazil is always one step behind, can this not be challenged? If queer or lesbian and gay studies are not institutionalized, does this mean they do not exist as fields of research in the country? Have there not been local models of liberation in the past? Could Madame Satã in the 1920s, be an example of this “tropical” liberation? Or Rogéria, the famous travesti in the 1960s? Nestor Perlongher? Silviano Santiago, Herbert Daniel among others?

In contrast with the American academia that appropriated queer and its politically and historically charged definitions as an attempt to reverse its meaning, in Brazil, the choice was to import English words into the vernacular, first gay\textsuperscript{13} and lésbica (a translation of lesbian) and currently queer. Are these choices fruitful to our cultural reality? I do not want to make too much of a comparison between the two countries. However since Brazil has been appropriating the terminology used in the United States, it is worth reflecting in which ways this act is viable or fruitful to our social reality. It seems inaccurate to import terms and vocabulary to one’s reality without questioning

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{13} The Houaiss dictionary mentions that the word \textit{gay} has been part of the Portuguese vernacular since the 1950s: “Datação 1953. Acepções: adjetivo e substantivo de dois gêneros. Uso: informal.” \textit{Veado} has been in use since the 1920s. (“\textit{veado}”). On the other hand \textit{bicha} is not dated: “ver homossexual Etimologia: ing. \textit{gay} (sXIV) \textit{adj.} 'alegre'; 'homossexual', (1953) \textit{subst.} 'homossexual', este do fr.méd. \textit{gai}” (“\textit{bicha}”).}
them. Some authors, like Laurentino Vélez-Peligrini would even go further calling the appropriation of American theories a mistake:

Particularmente siempre he pensado que es un craso error tomar e importar en su estado “puro” los debates que se han desarrollado en Estados Unidos, olvidando que responden a menudo a un determinado contexto sociohistórico y cultura política cuyas variables no encuentran siempre contrapartida en nuestro país. (13)

At first, if we think in terms of a globalized same-sex experience, it seems an accurate political standpoint to use words such ‘gay’ or ‘queer,’ since most of the western world recognize same-sex experience through those vernacular terms. As Dennis Altman says when talking about English names for commercial stores in different countries, “the name reminds us that to be ‘American’ is in many places to be ‘modern’” (29). In a way, this perspective could also apply to the political and social movements that end up choosing ‘gay’ or ‘queer’ to identify themselves. Identifying with the American gay or queer could mean being modern, or at least acknowledge acceptance by somewhere else than your own country. Since, as Altman states, “members of particular groups have more in common across national and continental boundaries than they do with others in their own geographically defined societies” (87). As Lina Meruane mentions in her book, words like ‘gay’ or ‘gay culture’ were incorporated in Latin America during the democratic transitions, but were also problematized due to their colonial connotations (27).
Also, it is worth noting that in spite of the fact that “homosexual rights progressed much further in the countries of northern Europe” (Altman 87) and even other countries as Spain and Portugal, in which equal marriage laws have been approved in 2005 and 2010 respectively, the United States still seems to serve as a model of a possible gay life free of prejudice.¹⁴ Perlongher, once again foreseeing this Americanized trend wrote back in the early 1980s:

Interessante notar a adoção do termo gay após o início do movimento homossexual. Busca no inglês a palavra que vai dar mais visibilidade para o gay. Ao se distanciar das bichas, travestis... A adoção da palavra em inglês é fundamental em uma sociedade que vê na cultura americana fator de ascensão social e cultural. (Negócio do michê 126)

This internationalization of the ‘gay man,’ thus, gives visibility to one representation of a diverse expression of sexuality, opening spaces for prejudice against other queer bodies in Brazil that do not feel represented by this normative expression of sexuality. This can be seen in Miskolci’s quote below:

¹⁴ Tony Goes, a Brazilian journalist, wrote a short article in the gay-oriented magazine H magazine (“Vitórias nos EUA mostram que maré mudou para os gays,” Revista H Magazine, # 6, Editora Mix Brasil) in which he states that the USA is the “pátria do movimento gay.” Commenting on the recent votes for marriage equality in Washington, Maryland and Maine he argues that Brazil is behind the United States. Nonetheless I would like to point out that in 2011 the Brazilian Supreme Court recognized same-sex civil union at a national level and that since then 5 states have already changed such civil unions into marriages (http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/1224972-justica-autoriza-servidor-homossexual-a-alterar-estado-civil-para-casado.shtml).
Eu nunca senti nenhuma espécie de identificação com os gays. Em que sentido? Para mim, gays são homens de classe média ou alta, que têm acesso a determinados bens de consumo... e vão à boate The Week... Eles são gays, eu não sou gay porque eu não gosto de nada disso. *(Stonewall 40 278)*

This notion of a globalized gay man that shares taste, life activities and even some sort of history, may represent what Meruane calls *orden neoimperial* (32); that is, the maintenance of imperialism, since the ‘sharing’ aspect of this globalized gay man ends up being the dissemination of the American way of life, or, in this case, the Gay American way of life.

However important it is to look at this internationalization of the gay men in a critical way, one must also keep an eye on the local representation of same-sex desire. In a mass media oriented and *spectacularized* society, the search for role models that hold some fame or visibility in the media became, since the beginning of the gay movement in the United States in the late 1960s, a way to give positive reinforcement for the struggling queer youth. Nowadays, there are actors, directors, writers, politicians, and so on, that have openly declared their sexual orientation to the public. In Brazil, this has not been the case, not quite yet. This unilateral view to the American model as a way of affirming sexuality is still problematic, it is understandable, since there are few active role models in contemporary Brazilian society. Sexuality, especially homosexuality, still remains taboo for most people in the country. Silviano Santiago in the article “O homossexual
astucioso” is one of the authors who criticizes the politics of coming out as a trend to be followed in Brazil:

Pode-se criticá-la ... alertando para o fato de que, uma vez mais, uma cultura periférica adotava processos de modernização através da cópia, da imitação de problemas levantados, debatidos, teorizados e em vias de encontrar solução em sociedades cujo passado histórico – mais precisamente: cujo passado ético/religioso – não apresentava semelhanças com o nosso. (198)

The discussion in Brazil is thus very much concerned with the linguistic aspect of it. By renaming (or rebranding) the entendidos as ‘gay’ a new reality and a new social order for homosexual men and women is established in Brazil, mainly in the urban areas, cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Annamrie Jagose says that,

describing the shift from ‘homosexual’ to ‘gay’, Weeks (1977:3) argues that these terms ‘are not just new labels for old realities: they point to a changing reality, both in the ways a hostile society labeled homosexuality, and in the way those stigmatized saw themselves’. Similarly, in distinguishing itself from those terms which form its semantic history, ‘queer’ equally foregrounds ‘a changing reality’. (75)
Therefore, if one is no longer a *homosexual, veado/viado, bicha*, but now he/she becomes a gay person, a person that shares similar interests with an international gay community based in the United States.

Leandro Colling does not share any of those interests. Consequently, to be gay, more than to have a same-sex desire, means to have a life style that brands a group and separates its members from the others who do not have the resources to consume the same brands. The *gay/bicha* relationship in Brazil, thus, reproduces the class struggles we have been facing for many centuries, as well as a division in which the city and the rural, the white and black, men and women, heterosexual and homosexual binaries have been represented where one side constantly struggles to find his/her space in our society.

Altman writes that queer theorists may have nothing “useful with which to replace the limited politics of identity” (159). This perspective also seems to be the case when reading Brazilian scholars, who are negating the identity politics that other scholars, such as Luiz Mott in *Cartografia do Desejo*, consider important. However, at the same time, they offer nothing to help the political organizations that have structured themselves around the notion of identity. If one is post-identity, as authors like the organizers of the 2010 conference *Stonewall +40* proclaim themselves to be, antagonizing a more fixed identity politics:

Outro exemplo da polarização política que se vivencia no Brasil no momento: Os que essencializam as identidades, vêem nessa ponderação e problematização um risco à estabilidade de suas plataformas políticas e a resposta é simples e surda: "ora, vocês
sã o contra o casamento gay.” (80)

Maybe we do not need to be anything, as one would argue, but in regards to politics and policies made in a society governed by laws, should one adopt an identity category in order to be recognized as a citizen?

The questionings of fixed identities characteristics of American queer theory has been helping Brazilian academia shape its own reality. The differences between pós-identitários and identitários instead of being observed as contradictory could actually be seen as an anthropophagic absorption of such theories. Brazil has thus been incorporating the exterior into its interior in a dual movement of absorption and rejection – swallowing and spitting – in the process of forming its queer theory. My intention in this dissertation is not only to observe this process, but also to analyze and offer a critical view of these apparently contradictory movements. This dissertation itself will keep executing the action of absorption and rejection as a way to understand how same-sex experience has been shaped in Brazil and how American theory has helped (or not helped) shape it.

In terms of academia and scholarly work, the appropriation of queer theory can be beneficial to local studies since queer tends to have a broader view of sexual practices. However, if we take into consideration political practices, it seems odd to absorb such a local and unique term with its own historical perspective relevant to the American experience in order to translate local needs. By absorbing ‘queer,’ it seems that we lose more than we gain since we are once again ignoring our own social reality and praxis. As Altman says, “reading work by young queer scholars in Australia I am struck by how
often they will invoke Butler and Foucault, while ignoring the particular his/her/stories of the Australian movements” (159). Unfortunately, this also seems to be the case in Brazil.

The use of ‘queer’ could also enable Brazilian theorists to reach a broader audience since the adoption of the word would put Brazil into the midst of the international discussion. As Viteri, Serrano and Vidal-Ortiz write in their *Latin American Dossier*, when discussing the use of queer in Brazil, the fact that queer is not institutionalized in the local academia does not “implica que no haya allí una riqueza de estudios sobre las sexualidades o sobre las articulaciones de raza, clase o género desde décadas anteriores, que ya evocaban categorías o acercamientos paralelos a lo queer” (54). In 2007, Miskolci and Simões corroborate this view in their introduction to the special issue on gender and sexuality for the *Revista Pagu*, a magazine from the *Núcleo de Estudos do Gênero da Universidade Estadual de Campinas*. In the presentation for the “Dossiê: Sexualidades Disparatadas,” the authors write that in spite of the lack of institutionalization of lesbian and gay studies (*estudos gays e lésbicos* in their words), there has been a

considerável produção sobre sexualidade nas ciências sociais brasileiras, na esteira do interesse sistemático pela homossexualidade e dos esforços de desvendar a articulação da sexualidade às hierarquias de classe, “raça” e gênero.” (11)
Finally, the disagreement between the scholars and activists, even though irreconcilable, can be productive in ways that can create fruitful dialogues in our experience. According to Luiz Mott,

O certo é que nós que já vivemos, eu e o Edward temos a mesma idade, ambos paulistanos, e nós somos contemporâneos de muitas teorias que foram modas fantásticas.... E nos últimos anos a Teoria Queer, que tem fascinado tantos intelectuais, e nós do movimentos temos uma crítica a isso. Essa palavra “heteronormatividade”, que se fundou mote dos queers, já era utilizada como “heterossexismo”. Isso já vinha sendo usado. (Stonewall 40 190)

Mott is not criticizing the theory itself, but its reproduction in Brazil and the unviability its uncritical adoption generates. To Mott, the uncritical ‘queer’ can undermine the political achievements of groups that believe and fight for identity politics.

As we shall see in the next chapter are the processes of appropriation, reappropriation, translation, incorporation and finally transformation of something that has been broken into something new and that may even be rebroken and reconstructed again through a process of deglutição seem to be the practices that Oswald de Andrade and the Anthropophagic Movement once conceived for Brazil in another context? And do the dialogues created between the perspectives of the pós-identitários and identitários reflect these processes in many fruitful ways?
2.1 Introduction

Antropofagia as a cultural movement has become one of the most important concepts in Brazil in the twentieth century. There is a continuity of interest in relation to what the movement has proposed and how its outcomes in various artistic manifestations in Brazil and even Latin America can be seen until now. Nonetheless, Oswald de Andrade’s literary manifestos have not been read in a ‘queer’ light yet. Therefore, in this chapter, I will analyze Antropofagia and propose a queer reading of the movement in order to understand what queer theory can bring to Antropofagia and vice-versa. I will also address the question of how one can reconcile the Brazilian movement with queer theory. An additional aim of this chapter is to present the theoretical background that will serve as the analytical framework for the examination of the cultural texts in the following chapters. As I will demonstrate here, the antropófagos rescued the abject

15 In “Uma leitura antropofágica,” Lucia Helena interprets Antropofagia not only as a literary movement but also as a critical aspect of Brazilian literature.
16 In “The Rule of Anthropophagy: Europe under the Sign of Devoration,” Haroldo de Campos shows that some of the anthropophagic principles also appear in authors such as Lezema and Sarduy (334).
17 Among the texts that I will present here, the journal Nuevo texto crítico published an entire number on Antropofagia in 1999, followed in 2011 by Antropofagia Hoje? Oswald de Andrade em cena.
indigenous body, and as a consequence brought to light the indigenous social practices as an important part of Brazilian culture.

In this second chapter, I will first present Antropofagia and give an overview of the movement. Second, I will propose a queer reading of its manifestos and revistas. Third, I will discuss Flávio de Carvalho’s work in relation to the anthropophagic movement and queer theory. Finally, I intend to present an analysis of the concepts of the abject and space in-between in the interests of understanding the queerness of Antropofagia so as to go on to analyze specific cultural texts in the following chapters.

2.2 Approaching the Concepts

Why Is a Queer Reading Important to Antropofagia or Why is Antropofagia Important to Queer?

…”queer” will not swallow up everything with its insatiable appetites and marvelous elasticity

--Carla Freccero

Andrade’s manifesto is probably one of the most original strategies to resist colonization, and at the same time, an attempt to create forms of critique of the relationship between cultures. Its method could thus help us to understand the reading of queer theory in other cultures and the ways in which it can be absorbed by them. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro following an anthropological perspective says that, “a antropofagia foi a única contribuição realmente anti-colonialista que geramos” (Sztutman Encontro 10).

If one considers that a literal translation of queer is impossible, and, that the process of translation would doubtless prove unfruitful, one strategy should be of
reinterpretation and re-elaboration, or as Haroldo de Campos described *transliterar*. Also, beyond reinterpretation, it is vital to question if such words are relevant to Brazilian (or other cultural) practices. The Brazilian anthropophagic movement could thus help us reinterpret these questions of the relevance of the queer in Brazilian social practices precisely because it proposes a questioning and re-questioning of the exogenous, assimilating the external while devouring it, and producing, then, a meaningful *totemized taboo*. Silviano Santiago will, later, continue this discussion when he formulates the idea of the space in-between.

First and foremost, it is important to understand the anthropophagic perspective that has shaped Brazilian culture in the 20th century and how it can help us grasp and devour queer theory, drawing our abjected queer bodies into a visible space. Moreover, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the notion of the abject may be connected to the idea of Portuguese as a peripheral language. By discussing the notions of queer theory and its application in Brazil and in the Lusophone world, it seems at least at this point that one common aspect in several authors (Santiago, Santos, Lugarinho among others) is the peripheral position Portuguese culture occupies in relation to the other European countries. Due to that position, an analogy with the notion of abject could be drawn.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos best synthesizes the notions I intend to discuss here:

> Durante séculos, a cultura portuguesa sentiu-se num centro apenas porque tinha uma periferia (as suas colónias). Hoje, sente-se na periferia apenas porque lhe é imposto ou recomendado um centro (a Europa). Para uma cultura que verdadeiramente nunca coube num espaço único, as
identificações culturais que daí derivam tendem a autocanibalizar-se.

(Alice 135)

Santos’s perspective makes evident the notion of cannibalism as a constant metaphor to the Lusophone world. Geographically speaking, Portugal lies at the periphery of continental Europe, the most western country in terms of location. In history books, students in Brazil learn from early age that this peripheral position was one of the advantages that allowed Portugal to be the first and most successful nation to conquer “new” lands in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As the metropolis, Portugal was the center in relation to its colonies. However as a European nation-state, Portugal is at the periphery in relation to other European countries. If one traces a parallel between this peripheral position and queer theory, an analogous relationship between lusofonia and queer becomes visible. As Lugarinho points out, to simply translate queer into Portuguese is an act of betrayal to the anthropophagic history that has been so important to Brazilian culture (“Antropofagia” 107).

With that in mind, I understand queer here as a sense of disturbing ideas of normativity. As Freccero says, “mestizaje, métissage, spectrality, the trace, and the uncanny all find themselves in certain ways allied with queer as terms that do the work of différance in relation to the identitarian inflections they carry” (“Queer Times” 17). My choice of Freccero’s words is not accidental; by using mestizaje, I intend to stress that mestiçagem has been a vital part of Brazilian culture and was one of Andrade’s main arguments while developing his anthropophagic theory.

---

18 The concept of mestiçagem has been widely discussed in Brazil and abroad in terms of the formation of the Brazilian people(s). Fundamental texts for this discussion are Casa-Grande e Senzala by Gilberto...
Even though the idea of a “queer planet” is quite problematic, since the word queer is strictly related to North-American practices, Warner provides an interesting approach to queer that would go along with Antropofagia. In *Fear of a Queer Planet*, he attempts to invoke queerness as a tool for undoing the heteronomativity of class and gender analysis, suggesting the ways in which such categories are embedded within a history of sexuality. Following Warner’s example, I argue that the queerness in Antropofagia is, for instance, the notion of emancipation and inclusion of the indigenous and people of color, women as well as the abject bodies that have been denied visibility. The movement thus created a possibility of openness for different bodies (by proposing a matriarchal society for example). In addition, the act of *deglutição*,\(^{19}\) highly important for the *antropófagos*, becomes a symbolic reference for the emancipation sought and proposed by the modernist artists who will be discussed in this chapter. Later in the chapter, I will take queer as a field of study, as an institutionalized matter that needs to be *anthropophagized*. Thus, the idea of breaking the norms that queerness brought to the anthropophagic movement needs to be rescued and *redeglutizada*. All the swallowing done during the anthropophagic moments will be spit out, now, as a way to reread queer in terms that may reconcile a specifically Brazilian need for both sexual liberation and queer visibility.

---

\(^{19}\) I decided to maintain the word in Portuguese due to the fact that Oswald de Andrade uses *deglutir* instead of *engolir*. Both would translate as swallow to English. However, *deglutir* brings a slightly more vivid expression of swallowing than *engolir*. Andrade writes in the first issue of *Revista de Antropofagia*: “Piratininga Ano 374 da Deglutição do Bispo Sardinha” (Andrade, *Utopia* 74).
I will argue that queer theory, borrowing the model of Antropofagia, needs to be eaten\(^{20}\) by Brazilian queer bodies and devoured in ways that would fit their queer needs, thus giving a queer spin on Antropofagia, and creating, hopefully, a continuing dialogue between queer and Antropofagia. At one and the same time, Antropofagia devours queer and is queered. As David William Foster proposes in an interview to W. Daniel Holcombe, a queer reading tries to understand in which ways cultural products reproduce and simultaneously question social systems (Holcombe 199). So in aligning the Brazilian anthropophagous tradition and a queer method, there might be a way, a space in-between for the irreconcilable matter between the academia and political activism that I have acknowledged in the first chapter.

Queer theory, as an American discipline developed in the United States, tries to not conform to the norm and distances itself from the institutionalized gay and lesbian studies. During the past twenty years, since when De Lauretis\(^{21}\) used the term queer (Ceballo Muñoz), there have been discussions about the institutionalization of queer theory and the fear of it not being so queer anymore, as Halperin in “Normalization of Queer Theory” points out. Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz say that queer theory has become a discussion for the white male homosexual, which was precisely one of the points that scholars were trying to change in the 1990s. The two texts mentioned above are a small part of this discussion on the outcomes and object of study of queer theory and they are important to this dissertation since it will reveal the instability of such theory and how it

---

\(^{20}\) The choice of the verb to eat is not accidental. In Portuguese, *comer* has also a sexual meaning. *Comer alguém* means to penetrate this person.

\(^{21}\) Teresa de Lauretis’s work (in particular “Queer Theory. Lesbian and Gay Sexualities: An Introduction” published in 1991 in the journal *Differences*) has been widely recognized as a foundational text to Queer Theory (see Jagose, Ceballos Muñoz among others). However, Nikki Sullivan in *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* argues that Gloria Anzaldúa mentions the word queer as early as 1987 in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestizo*. 
is similar to the unpredictability on which Oswald de Andrade had formulated his manifestos.

The moment queer theory lands in Latin America or any other country, it is invested with colonial power and is seen as a discourse through which the educated will enlighten the less educated. However, queer theory as any other “traveling theory” (as proposed by Edward Said) that functions as a U.S. theory is already preoccupied with the other (that is, non-US subjects). Such preoccupation with the other transforms the theory into the master of several subordinate bodies. Authors in the Lusophone world have taken queer theory as a resourceful model for analysis of social practices in Portuguese speaking countries. As Lugarinho says:

> Anglophone queer theory does offer interpretive tools and useful insights for the analysis of homosexuality in Portuguese-speaking cultures. At the same time, its attempt at overcoming the binary heterosexuality/homosexuality in order to include other registers of sexuality, class, gender, race, nationality, and political ideologies, provides a valuable and more exhaustive framework for the analysis of peripheral societies such as Portugal and Brazil, at the same time as it links these societies to a much larger transnational framework of concerns uniting sexual and gender minorities throughout the world. (“Al Berto” 286)
Nevertheless it is important to understand the vicissitudes of traveling theories and ask in which ways they are truly resourceful for us. In “Traveling Theory,” Said writes:

One should go on to specify kinds of movement that are possible, in order to ask whether by virtue of having moved from one place and time to another an idea or a theory gains or loses in strength, and whether a theory in one historical period and national culture becomes altogether different for another period or situation. (226)

Silviano Santiago is another author that will propose a more careful look in terms of reception of international models. In “The Wily Homosexual” he proposed that there are local models of acceptance in relation to the coming-out model anticipated by the U.S. The simple adoption of the North American model, therefore, would abject other local practices of acceptance that had been happening in Brazil. Through the analysis of a nineteenth century novel, O Cortiço by Aloísio de Azevedo, Santiago shows the readers that there are models of tolerance in Brazil that are absent in the U.S. model. Santiago will later discuss such tolerance in the novel Stella Manhattan. In Santiago’s novel, he precisely observes how an effeminate character is unaccepted and, thus, rendered invisible both in the Brazilian and American societies. The American model of coming-out has thus created gaps in visibility for all those bodies that did not conform to the ideal homosexuality that had been developed during the 1960s and 1970s. Santiago questions if the more silenced way in which Brazilians have tended to reveal their homosexuality could be as fruitful as the loud and aggressive American way.
One of the functions of any person that reads queer theory is to challenge its master. In Brazil, our main function as subordinates would be to question the proper name per se: *Queer*. How is the English term helpful to Brazilian social practices? If the term is taken from the historical perspective of the American experience towards same-sex relations, is it really fruitful to the Brazilian local experience? And then we should question whether queer theory helps us shape our experience as abject bodies in such distant lands with such different languages. Santiago proposes rather an anthropophagous ritual of Latin-American literary production:

> Entre o sacrifício e o jogo, entre a prisão e a transgressão, entre a submissão ao código e a agressão, entre a obediência e a rebelião, entre a assimilação e a expressão – ali, nesse lugar aparentemente vazio, seu templo e seu lugar de clandestinidade, ali, se realiza o ritual antropófago da literatura latino-americana. (*Vale* 26)

Santiago’s formulation precisely captures the anthropophagic queer movement that I propose in this dissertation, that is, understanding the space in-between that is created between the traveling theory and local practices.

In terms of gender practices, as Butler shows in *Gender Trouble*, it is a commonplace of Anglo-American gender theory that Western culture is phallogocentric and the masculine body remains unmarked (13, 17). *Antropofagia*, on the other hand, proposes a matriarchal society in which the patriarchal views of society should be eliminated in order to create a surrounding free from all the taboos that had infected
modern society. Therefore, the Antropofagia movement aims at combining “civilization” and our indigenous roots, thus creating a new possibility of perceptibility. To Andrade, civilization saddens the population and happiness can be achieved through antropofagia or a caraiba\textsuperscript{22} revolution through the return to the mother. As Freud suggests in Totem and Taboo: “maternal transmission probably always preceded and was only later supplanted by the paternal” (ch. 1)

In his Manifesto Antropófago of 1928 Oswald de Andrade attempts to undermine the patriarchal institutions with which the European man had attempted to colonize Brazil. As mentioned earlier, for Andrade it is necessary to return to our roots and use anthropophagy as a metaphor – and turn our eyes to a new form of civilization, a matriarchal one – Matriarcado de Pindorama, as the author states in the manifesto antropófago:

\[ A \text{ alegria é a prova dos Nove} \]
\[ \text{No matriarcado de Pindorama (Utopia 73)} \]

\textit{Pindorama} is a Tupi word (pindó-rama or pindó-retama) that means land of the palm trees and it was the colonial designation for Brazil, or the name before the arrival of the Portuguese settlers. By revoking \textit{Pindorama}, Andrade is attempting to celebrate the country before it was named Brasil. The matriarcado, then, would prove to be a constant source of reflection for Andrade and an important staging post in the attempt to “achieve” an anthropophagic model of life.

\textsuperscript{22} Later in this chapter, when I present and discuss the Manifesto Antropófago and the Revista de Antropofagia, I will situate the Caraiba revolution in the context of Antropofagia. Caraiba refers to the “orginal” populations prior to the arrival of the European settlers.
I will now proceed to analyze the anthropophagic movement.

2.3 Antropofagia/The Anthropophagic Movement

During the 1920s and 1930s, a number of manifestos\textsuperscript{23} were created in Brazil in order to discuss new perspectives and new ideas, several of which are still relevant today. Among them, one is of particular interest to this dissertation: \textit{Manifesto Antropófago}, by Oswald de Andrade. It seems to me that in order to understand how queer theory has become part of the academia and social practices in Brazil, as I presented in the first chapter, a historical view of the Modernist movement and its attempts to read and understand Brazil, \textit{brasilidade}, and \textit{brasilianismos} must be made. Also, an anthropophagic reading of queer would help us understand in which ways queer theory can be fruitful for Brazilian social practices.

At the beginning of the past century, authors, intellectuals and scholars looked to European currents of thought to create a Brazilian perspective on the recently independent nation.\textsuperscript{24} This perspective was related to “devouring” and “swallowing” and other indigenous practices, and has, to a certain extent, become a norm in different areas of knowledge in Brazil. From arts to academia, the anthropophagic principle once

\begin{quote}
\textit{O maior absurdo é por exemplo chamar de inconsciente a parte mais iluminada pela consciência do homem: o sexo e o estômago. Eu chamo a isso de “consciente antropofágico”} \\
-Oswald de Andrade
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{24} In 1922, the year of the Semana de Arte Moderna, Brazil also celebrated its 100\textsuperscript{th} Independence Anniversary.
proposed by Oswald de Andrade and the other anthropophagites has been visible throughout the 20th century. As João Cezar de Castro Rocha says, “the concept of anthropophagy is central to Brazilian culture and has been present in three fundamental stages of Brazil’s intellectual history, namely, in Romanticism, Modernism and Tropicalism” (6).

In Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil, the author writes: “Apenas brasileiros de nossa época. O necessário de química, de mecânica, de economia e de balística. Tudo digerido” (qtd. in Schwartz 162). The idea of digestion (digerido) is a key concept for the modernist movement that attempted to incorporate the European isms in a Brazilian fashion, opening up the artistic and social spheres into what was held to be a true Brazilian representation. In addition, Oswald de Andrade in Manifesto Antropófago proposed a deglutição of the European vanguards, transforming them to meet our local needs (qtd. in Schwartz 162).

2.3.1 Forerunners to Antropofagia

The Brazilian modernist movement was marked by a series of performances made in São Paulo, in 1922, at the Theatro Municipal. At the time, a group of poets, writers, painters and artists gathered together in an attempt to revolutionize Brazilian art. According to them, Brazil was still connected to the old paradigms and a new perspective was vital in order to modernize the aspiring republic.

However the primordial moments of Brazilian modernist movement go back to 1917 with Anita Malfati’s first art exhibition in São Paulo. Malfati had just returned from
a trip to Germany and the United States, in which she had a chance to absorb some of the new “isms” being produced at the time and brought to Brazil post-impressionist plastic elements (Bosi, História 333). Her exhibition was praised, but also highly criticized. Monteiro Lobato, for example, an accomplished writer in the country, wrote what has become a famous piece of criticism named “Paranóia e mistificação,” in which he says that the artist was blinded by ephemeral theories:

Among the writers and intellectuals that came out in favor of Malfatti’s exhibition was Oswald de Andrade, whose words of praise were published immediately at the end of the exhibition in January of 1918:

Há duas espécies de artistas. Uma composta dos que vêem normalmente as coisas. . . . A outra espécie é formada pelos que vêem anormalmente a natureza e interpretam-na à luz de teorias efêmeras, sob a sugestão estrábica de escolas rebeldes, surgidas cá e lá como furúnculos da cultura excessiva. . . . Embora eles se dêem como novos, precursores de uma arte a vir, nada é mais velho do que a arte anormal ou teratológica: nasceu com a paranóia e com a mistificação. . . . Essas considerações são provocadas pela exposição da senhora Malfatti. (86)

Numa pequena nota cabe apenas o aplauso a quem se arroja a expor no nosso pequeno mundo de arte pintura tão pessoal e tão moderna (...) A distinta artista conseguir, para o meio, um bom proveito, agitou-o, tirou-o
Between 1917 and 1922, most of the organizers of the Semana de 22 became active writers and members of an intellectual elite in São Paulo. Mario de Andrade, Menotti del Pichia, Oswald de Andrade, to name just a few, published poems, novels and drama during that time. The idea of a Modern Art Week had already started spreading within that group, and the organization for it took place in theAutomóvel Clube of the fast-growing city, soon to become a metropolis, as most of the modernists had envisioned for São Paulo. Bopp describes this in his account of the movement:

[R]euniam-se, num salão do Automóvel Clube, Paulo Prado, que ficou sendo o personagem fundamental dessa iniciativa, Oswald de Andrade, Menotti, Di Cavalcanti e Brecheret, para planejarem, concretamente a Semana de Arte Moderna de São Paulo. (Movimentos 18)

Sponsored by the elites who became wealthy through the coffee industry in São Paulo, the Semana de Arte Moderna was an event that put together most of the upcoming artists from São Paulo and from Rio de Janeiro in order to showcase the modern art created in Brazil.

The Semana de Arte Moderna, therefore, was only made possible with the money from the wealthy elite of São Paulo. The city, the second biggest city in the country at the time, had received more than half of all the European immigrants that came to Brazil and
was a thriving metropolis destined to become a center of modernity, industry and money. The financial support came from the coffee industry, creating a city that demanded modernity, not only in its architecture but also in its arts. Paulo Prado, a rich businessman of that generation financed the artistic week and became the main patron of the modernist generation. As Andrade said, “a Semana de Arte Moderna foi uma consequência da mentalidade criada pelo industrialismo paulista. Nasceu de uma mentalidade capitalista exportadora” (Dentes 353). Through the patronage and financial support of wealthy immigrants and the old “coffee barons,” the artists found the leverage they needed to push forward their artistic endeavors, and simultaneously the Brazilian patrons satisfied their need for a dialogue with modern Europe, transforming them into local elites in Brazil that otherwise would never have been able to succeed socially or financially in Europe.

In this historical moment, the vanguard movements in Latin America attempted to integrate themselves into the processes of modernization in a critical way. Gonzalo Aguilar helps us understand why the elite may have been interested in financing the modernist artists. The author sees three tendencies in this attempt at integration: the first one is related to powers of domination that are articulated in the state and dominant groups, while he names the other two, “cosmopolita” and “transculturadora” (following Angel Rama). For Aguilar, those tendencies are powers of opposition and resistance with the former articulated around the urban vanguard and the latter in the conflict between the “culturadas” and the “indígenas” (41).

The Semana de Arte Moderna, unlike the Armory Show in New York that showcased European artists and their vanguards, presented only Brazilian artists and their
interpretations of both the European vanguards and Brazilian art. Even though it received mixed reviews – praised by some and criticized by many –, this week in February of 1922 remains one of the most important cultural and artistic events in Brazilian cultural history in the 20th century. Throughout the subsequent years, those artists and other emerging artists produced seminal modernist texts that clustered around ideological and aesthetical affinities, through which the Movimento Antropófago emerged.

2.3.2 The Movimento Antropófago

According to a well-known anecdote narrated by Raul Bopp in *Movimentos Modernistas do Brasil e Vida e Morte da Antropofagia* published in 1966 and 1977 respectively, it was during a fancy dinner in São Paulo that the ideas of an anthropophagous movement were first developed. Prior to eating a dish of frogs, Oswald de Andrade made a speech describing human kind’s evolution, tracing it back to amphibious animals. After listening to this speech, Tarsila do Amaral said, “então somos quase antropófagos.” Oswald continued, quoting Hans Staden’s famous sentence “lá vem nossa comida pulando.” Still, according to Raul Bopp, it was during that dinner that Oswald uttered “Tupi or not tupi, that is the question,” a sentence that would become part of the *Manifesto Antropófago* and now practically a piece of common sense in Brazilian popular imagination, referring to the constant question of being or not being Brazilian, or

25 Maria Eugênia Boaventura published in 2000 a book with a collection of articles of that era bringing to light the view of the critics during the famous week of 1922 and its outcomes. According to her, “[o]s artigos favoráveis à Semana, na sua maioria, foram assinados pelos dois Andrades – Oswald e Mário –, por Menotti del Picchia, Sérgio Milliet (escritos para jornais franceses), Sérgio Buarque e por uma meia dúzia que preferiu o anonimato. Dentre os ferrenhos adversários, os mais conhecidos foram Mário Pinto Serva, responsável pelos ataques ferinos aos modernistas, os jornalistas Galvão Muniz, Oscar Guanabarino e o futuro líder integralista, o romancista Plínio Salgado” (19).
the idea of accepting our roots or not. Throughout the past century, exhibitions, books and rereading of Andrade’s sentence have appeared in different forms, as the one shown below:

Fig. 1. Cover of the 2002 magazine celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Semana de Arte Moderna

The picture above is a reproduction of the cover of a magazine, curated by Rudah de Andrade, produced by the state of São Paulo in 2002 as part of the celebration for the 80th year of the Semana de Arte de Moderna. The reference to Hamlet’s famous monologue is converted into an anthropophagic scene in which a Brazilian Indian holds a skull and questions himself “tupi or not tupi,” as Andrade once formulated in 1928.

Alongside with the dinner narrated by Raul Bopp, the movement also has its foundation in a painting made by Tarsila do Amaral (the leader of the antropófagos as Bopp stated later in his personal account of the modernist movements in Brazil mentioned above), given to Oswald de Andrade for his birthday after the frog dinner mentioned above. While observing the painting, Andrade and Bopp had the idea of starting the movement around it. The painting presents a person with an enormous foot attached to the earth, whose gender or sex is not well defined, and is named Abaporu,
which in Tupi means the one who eats people. The painting was reprinted in the first publication of the movement in 1928. If we look closely at Tarsila’s artwork, we can see that the first moment of queerness in the movement starts with the painting itself. Besides a distinct sense of time and space, different and distant from the common experience, the painting depicts an ungendered being who eats other people. Tarsila do Amaral describes the painting as:

uma figura solitária monstruososa, pés imensos, sentada numa planície verde, o braço dobrado repousando num joelho, a mão sustentando o peso-pena da cabecinha minúscula. Em frente, um cacto explodindo numa flor absurda. (qtd in Schøllhammer 188)

Marcelo Guimarães da Silva Lima clarifies the contrasting ideas presented in Tarsila do Amaral’s painting. He writes:

a sense of weight stresses the hieratic tranquility and emblematic stability of this dream-like world. Nonetheless, a sense of expansion of forms, slowly growing to occupy their full limits in space, is also present. (95)
The *Revista de Antropofagia* was the main vehicle for spreading the anthropophagic word and was published in two phases (dentições\(^{26}\) as they called it)

---

\(^{26}\) *Dentição* means “dentition” in English. The artists are playing with the words *edição* and *dentição*. The use of *dentição* besides giving the idea of a first phase and a more mature phase (*segunda dentição*), also gives us the ideas of eating, devouring and *degulição*.
between 1928 and 1929. The first phase consisted of ten issues, while the second consisted of fifteen. The Manifesto Antropófago was published in the first issue, in May of 1928 and according to Augusto de Campos in Revistas Re-vistas, the magazine was the most revolutionary magazine of Brazilian modernism.

The Manifesto, according to Alfredo Bosi is the “pedra fundamental do movimento” (História 284), and as the antropófagos themselves said, just like the birth of Christ brought a new era to civilization, the magazine and the manifesto also brought a new era to Brazil. Oswald de Andrade dates the manifesto as the year “374 da deglutição do Bispo Sardinha,” in reference to 1556, the year in which the Catholic bishop, Pero Fernandes Sardinha, was devoured by the Caeté Indians. Furthermore, according to the poet, we should also celebrate October 11, as the last day of freedom in the American continent, or the last day before the arrival of the European settlers. Silviano Santiago (whose work I will discuss in more depth later in this chapter), writes that “Oswald embaralha os dados cronológicos, propondo antecedências liberadoras e procedências castradoras. Liberação e castração se dão num idêntico compasso” (Malhas 86).

Liberação being, then, the indigenous roots and castração, the European colonization.

The Manifesto Antropófago is also part of a decolonization project. The manifesto itself is a short text—composed of a relatively small number of aforismos, and even though the definition of Antropofagia as a movement is not clear, some of its fundamental principles are to be found sub-textually within its aphorisms, as Candido describes (Vários Escritos 84).

---

27 The modernist movement was also active in other Latin American countries, as Schwartz describes in Vanguardas Latino-Americanas, “[O]s movimentos de vanguarda na América Latina – à diferença dos europeus – em algum momento depararam com a questão: quem somos?” (42). However, according to the author, the Brazilian vanguard stands out due to its intensity and originality.
One can argue that, ironically enough, there had been an antecedent in Europe to Antropofagia after all. European artists searched in Africa and South and Central America for the image of the savage in order to realize their artistic project of rupture. Such symbols reverberated with the Latin American vanguards, since there was a certain fascination with cannibalistic expressions in the beginning of the century and certainly among avant-garde artists. Francis Picabia is the most commonly author scholars have traced a parallel with Andrade’s work. Picabia wrote his Manifesto Cannibale in 1920, a Dadaist manifesto included in a number of the Dada magazine.

Besides Picabia’s manifesto, I also came across two other texts that may have also helped Oswald de Andrade mold the Brazilian movement. The first one is by Alfred Jarry, who after publishing Ubu Roi in 1896, wrote Anthropophagie in 1902. Also, Luis Tejada published in 1924 a short text named “Antropofagia”. Even though none of the authors and scholars studied during the preparation of this dissertation mentioned Luis Tejada’s text, it is in “Antropofagia,” a crónica published in 1924 in Colombia that one can see the most similarities with Andrade’s project. Luis Tejada praises the cannibalistic approach of some indigenous peoples saying that human meat has “distribuídas na proporção necessária, as substâncias mais adequadas para o alimento do próprio homem” (“Antropofagia”).

However, Andrade’s movement is not a rereading of Picabia’s manifesto, Jarry’s Anthropophagie or Luis Tejada’s Antropofagia. As Augusto de Campos explains:

Sabe-se que a REVISTA DE ANTROPOFAGIA e o MANIFESTO ANTROPÔFAGO tiveram um precedente na revista CANNIBALE e no
MANIFESTE CANNIBALE DADA de Francis Picabia, ambos de 1920. (…) CANNIBALE, revista dirigida por Picabia, “com a colaboração de todos os dadaístas do mundo” só teve dois números: 25 de abril e 25 de maio de 1920. Não há nada na revista, nenhum texto, em que se leia qualquer plataforma que pudesse identificar um “movimento cannibal.”

(Revistas 11)

European avant-garde movements nonetheless evidently influenced the modernist movement in Brazil. However the Brazilian authors were not simply appropriating European ideas and reproducing them in Brazil. As Benedito Nunes following Antonio Candido points out, “os nossos modernistas se informaram pois rapidamente da arte europeia de vanguarda, aprenderam a psicanálise e plasmaram um tipo ao mesmo tempo local e universal de expressão reencontrando a influência europeia por um mergulho no detalhes brasileiro” (Candido qtd in Nunes, “Antropofagia e Vanguarda” 326). Jauregui best explains the difference between the movements. According to Jauregui, the European texts on cannibalism did not generate a cannibal movement. Jauregui also points out while quoting Augusto de Campos that the European manifestos had nothing to do with the ideological utopia of the Brazilian anthropophagy. Finally, in regards to the co-dependency between Europe and Brazil, in the Manifesto Antropófago, Oswald de Andrade states that:

Sem nós a Europa não teria sequer a sua pobre declaração dos direitos do

---

28 Campos uses the word generoso, suggesting that the movement was also bountiful and generative since it has contributed generously to Brazilian culture.
Also, Andrade clearly differentiates between anthropophagy and cannibalism. For him, anthropophagic devouring is different from cannibalism since in the former there is a sense of harmony and communion, whereas cannibalism is pure gluttony and hunger. The cannibalistic metaphor was in the air as Campos stated; however Antônio Candido draws our attention to the fact that what seemed exotic and ‘other’ to the European artists represented the cultural facts of Brazilian life. Candido affirms that in Andrade’s project, culture is not eccentric but becomes concentric, and the world becomes regionalized (regionalizado) and the regional contains the universal (Literatura 128). Unlike Jarry or Picabia whose texts are part of a project of breaking with normative forms or Tejada’s29 whose text is simply a celebration of the anthropophagic act, Andrade’s text transforms the physical act into a metaphor for change in a modernizing country. Such a movement will not only resound for decades in Brazil, but will also have resonance for later queer practices. This is logical if one thinks of the initial concept of queer as that of reversing something negative into something visibly positive and rendering visible bodies that had been left out by the institutionalized lesbian and gay studies and movement.

Bopp, one of the founding members of the anthropophagic movement, suggests that the latter aims for a more “profound” Brazil with values yet to be deciphered. As the poet says, the movement “seria de descida às fontes genuínas, ainda puras, para captar os germens de renovação; retomar esse Brasil, subjacente, de alma embrionária, carregado

29 More in depth analysis seems important here, since this anthropophagic text seems particularly close Andrade’s. In this dissertation, though, I only briefly present the text and its main ideas.
de assombro e procurar alcançar uma síntese cultural própria, com maior densidade de consciência nacional” (Movimentos 41). This search for a national conscious becomes, then, the motto for the anthropophagites and for future generations. As Castro explains in an interview to Renato Sztutman:

A antropofagia foi a única contribuição realmente anti-colonialista que geramos, contribuição que anacronizou completa e antecipadamente o célebre clichê cebrapiano-marxista sobre as “ideias fora do lugar”. Ela jogava os índios para o futuro e para o ecúmeno; não era uma teoria do nacionalismo, da volta às raízes, do indianismo. Era e é uma teoria realmente revolucionária. (168)

Castro explains that Antropofagia distances itself from earlier nationalist movements from previous generations – mainly Romanticism – that created a romantic view of the native populations alongside with an uncritical exacerbated nationalism. Andrade’s nationalist perspective is revolutionary in the sense of bringing back to life the Brazil that existed prior to the European settler. This paradox that praises nationalism prior to Brazil being a ‘nation’ is part of Andrade’s decolonization project.

As presented in the anthropophagic perspective Brazil’s dependency on Europe is thus more complex than one would think. When Andrade read Montaigne30 he understood that Europe could create important texts such as the Human Rights Declaration only after being in contact with the native indigenous populations of Brazil.

30 In Estética e Política, Oswald de Andrade affirms the importance of the autonomy of Brazilian primitives when he read Montaigne’s Essais: “Foi Montaigne que, num dos seus Essais, tratando dos canibais me chamou a atenção para a importância autônoma do primitivo” (231).
After all for Andrade communism and surrealist language already existed in the Americas. Hence it was claimed that most of the ideas produced in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had their basic formulations among Brazilian indigenous practices.

Furthermore, one cannot reduce Antropofagia to a single manifesto and some pieces of literature produced between 1928 and 1929. First, the repercussions of the movement are still seen today; and secondly, and most importantly, this movement shaped not only our cultural practices, but also our perceptions of ourselves as a people. As Carlos Jáuregui affirms:

El movimiento, por ejemplo, releyó irónicamente el archivo colonial; enarboló el canibalismo como signo contra las academias y la literatura indianista, y como metáfora carnavalesca y de choque entre la modernidad y la tradición (especialmente en lo relativo a la moral y el catolicismo); asimismo, Antropofagia elaboró un tropo digestivo de la formación de una cultura nacional y a la vez cosmopolita y moderna. (412)

The anthropophagic project, besides reclaiming Brazil and its indigenous origin, also tried to bring to light the social advances of some indigenous populations (in Andrade’s terms): sexual freedom, liberated bodies and matriarchal societies. For Andrade, for instance, when Brazilian indigenous people visited France – as Montaigne described in his *Essais* – this sparked notions of the people turning against the monarchy, according to Oswald de Andrade. Andrade believed that the Antropofagia was not only a
Brazilian revision of the vanguards, but also a *retomada* of what already existed in Brazil within the *homem natural* – the so-called natural man, in his words. As some parts of the manifesto show us:

> Queremos a revolução caraíba. Maior que a Revolução Francesa. A unificação de todas as revoltas eficazes na direção do homem. (*Utopia* 68)

Andrade’s intention is thus not to invert the colony-metropolis dichotomy or to transform one into the other, but to recreate spaces-in-between by hybridizing the idyllic past with a modern society, as if Andrade were melding the indigenous past with the “modern” inhabitants of Brazil: the synthesis that would make up the new man: the *antropófago*. As mentioned earlier, Silviano Santiago, in the “Wily Homosexual,” presents a similar approach when talking about coming-out politics and what Brazil had already accomplished prior to the U.S. movement.

More important than trying to trace the roots of European thought or genealogies of ideas, Andrade’s innovative perception helps us to understand the position of the colony and the metropolis. The relevant aspect of the discussion is not to trace the roots of communism back to indigenous populations of Brazil, but to understand that the traditional notion of civilized/savage is broken. Ideas (and theories) have thus been traveling and the colonization of America allowed for such exchanges to happen. Andrade’s manifesto allows for a break in the hierarchy imposed by “civilized men.”

Aside from breaking the hierarchy between cultures, another important aspect of Antropofagia – if not the most important – is the way in which the “devouring” of external theories and practices occurred. Unlike other movements, Andrade proposed an
egalitarian gaze towards the exogenous. Both the local and the external have similar positions. Or, rather, the local always overcomes the external, thus eliminating the subaltern perspective in relation to the Old World. As Maria Cândida Ferreira de Almeida says:

Haroldo de Campos extraiu aspectos centrais do movimento que sedimentaram uma outra perspectiva para a relação entre o local e o universal, num processo de desierarquização que significa a possibilidade de uma expressão própria, essencial tanto para quem se expressa quanto para o outro, o receptor. Sob essa perspectiva, a citação aparece sem a “culpa” da apropriação ou da cópia, ou da submissão a uma dada originalidade, mas como uma “tradução” intercultural. (97)

As previously presented in the chapter, Augusto de Campos in Revista re-vista mentions Picabia’s text as a precedent for the Brazilian movement. However, Campos is clear in stating that Picabia presents a “nihilismo que nada tem a ver com a generosa utopia ideological da nossa Antropofagia” (12). Campos ends his text saying that “chegará em breve o dia da liberdade de antropofagia” (15). As Lúcia Helena points out, all these precedents do not invalidate Andrade’s renovation and aesthetical project, she says,

Essa arte interventora no princípio da realidade, deglutidora da própria arte é, sem dúvida, um ponto de contato suficiente para atestar o
In Benedito Nunes’s analysis, Antropofagia is thus at once a metaphor, a diagnosis and a therapy. It is a metaphor for the ritualistic devouring habits of the native inhabitants of the continent. It is a diagnosis of the current situation of Brazilian society at a time when it was smothered by the colonizing oppression. Finally, it is therapy because it is a metaphorically violent reaction against the social and political devices and apparatuses that have oppressed and restrained social independence, as Nunes says, “a terapêutica empregaria o mesmo instinto antropofágico outrora recalcado” (*Oswald canibal* 22).

This perspective is beneficial when approaching queer theory through the lens of Brazilian practices and indeed should be one of the queer lessons that the anthropophagic movement has left for later generations. As an antidote to the passive observation or the unquestioning adoption of new perspectives, as has happened with the uncritical adoption – of the term ‘gay’ into our realities31 (Montero puts it as “an ironic twist of imperial semantics” (“Queer” 217)) one should look to the anthropophagic movement’s actions: *deglutição, apropriação, reinterpretação, and resgate*. Therefore, a possible Brazilian Queer Theory – if ever named –, by “anthropophagizing” itself, opens up a

---

31 In “Notes for a Queer Reading of Latin American Literature,” Oscar Montero gives us an interesting account of the use of the word ‘gay’ in Latino cultures. He remembers the moment his mother, with whom he always spoke in Spanish, asked him if he were “gay.” He explains: “‘Gay’ is a nice word compared to any of the Spanish options available then and now: the best known being maricón, which literally means “Big Mary”, and others being the names of assorted animals, pájaro (bird) perhaps being the most familiar (…) the popular imagination is as creative as it is homophobic. It may be easier to accept an Anglicized gay son than a “bird”, a “Big Mary”, or a “duck”” (216).
space for outside practices in an attempt to incorporate, to translate and to recreate these external social practices. Such a theory would be more than a question of searching for national identity, but rather an understanding of a cultural procedure that is both queer and anthropophagic. Perhaps the most important lesson of Antropofagia is thus the act of incorporating oneself – a lesson that contemporary theorists in Brazil seem to have forgotten and the queer principle of acknowledgment of the other fits perfectly with Antropofagia’s perspective. This process of incorporation (or devouring, in anthropophagic terms) requires a strong sense of locality and exteriority, that is, of the ways in which a vanguard theory can be beneficial to our own culture and perspective. The anthropophagic queer attempts to devour such theory, recuperating its remains and transforming it into a new possibility of reality, and in the act of devouring, a selection of the parts that could feed us. The metaphors for swallowing and spitting – for abjection – thus facilitate an understanding of what needs to be devoured and reproduced as something intelligible for different cultural practices.

I turn now to a closer reading of the Manifesto Antropófago.

2.4 The Manifesto Antropófago

In the recent *Gaga Feminism* Halberstam takes up the discussion on queer times saying that queer people “do not necessarily follow the same logics of subcultural involvement as their heterosexual counterparts” (2). Hence it might be argued that in
terms of their social practices the Brazilian indigenous populations are, then, quintessential queer bodies. The social organization of some tribes could be understood as queer, not only in relation to the tribes’ anthropophagic habits, but also their sexual and economic practices. The Manifesto Antropófago precisely intends to rescue some of these practices that I intend to redefine as queer. As Silviano Santiago comments on Oswald de Andrade’s 1924 poem collection, the modernist writer criticizes historians who are obedient servants to chronology and those who are defenders of normative historical principles (“Elogio” 47). The same principle would still be applicable to the 1928 manifesto studied here.

Oswald de Andrade makes his references clear in the manifesto, but as in much of his text, at the same time as it looks back, it is also looking forward. By citing his influences, the author proposes a new revolution while creating a genealogical tree for the Antropofagia:

Filiação. O contato com o Brasil Caraíba. Où Villegaignon print terre.

Brasil Caraíba is thus the source for the revolution proposed by Andrade and the synthesis and overcoming of all the other prior revolutions. The word caraíba, which generally refers to the first inhabitants of the Americas, is the origin of the word cannibal. Thus Andrade’s model of filiation requires careful consideration, as he himself believed
that the taboo should become totem, and therefore, the act of the sons (*filhos* in Portuguese) devouring the father is a possibility in this process. By assuming Brazil’s filial lineage, Andrade is, once again, not subjected to the ‘father’ metropolis or Europe (which interestingly enough are both feminine nouns in Portuguese).

At first glance, anthropophagic texts do not explicitly mention same-sex practices. However, if we define queer theory as a challenge to normative sexuality, some of the Anthropophagic texts offer us a rich perspective of sexual freedom because according to Andrade, the indigenous populations of Brazil once lived freely but had to repress their sexual modes upon the arrival of the Portuguese. As Nunes describes it, they did not experience the “sexualidade envergonhada que nossos ancestrais indígenas não teriam conhecido.” (*Utopia* 17) As Andrade says in the manifesto:

> Contra a realidade social, vestida e opressora, cadastrada por Freud – a realidade sem complexos, sem loucura, sem prostituições e sem penitenciárias do matriarcado de Pindorama. (*Utopia* 74)

In *Bodies, Pleasures and Passions: Sexual Culture in Contemporary Brazil* Richard Parker presents a collection of texts from the sixteenth century in which the Portuguese describe the “lascivious practices” of the indigenous population. The author also mentions that in 1660 Gaspar von Barlaeus, a Dutch historian, coined a phrase that would become central to discussing sexuality in South America – especially in Brazil: “On the other side of the equinoctial line there is no sinning (*Ultra equinoxialem non peccavit*)” (153). Antropofagia will reinterpret this notion of a sinless land and propose a
return to the matriarchal societies before the arrival of the Portuguese. Free love and a sense of liberty were, therefore, part of the anthropophagic agenda. In “Esquema ao Tristão de Athayde” published in the fifth issue of the *Revista de Antropofagia* Oswald de Andrade presents the movement’s ideal of free love:

O amor natural fora da civilização, aparatosa e polpuda. Índio simples: instintivo. (Só comia o forte). [...] precisamos rever tudo – o idioma, o direito de propriedade, a família, a necessidade do divórcio –, escrever como se fala, sinceridade máxima. (3)

Sexual freedom is part of Andrade’s liberationist project, as Nunes explains:

Como se vê, ele faz do Matriarcado, – e isso arbitrariamente – uma forma cultural, um paideuma, cujos aspectos, a propriedade coletiva do solo, a liberdade sexual, etc, seriam partes correspondentes de uma totalidade sócio-histórica. (“Utopia” 54)

Even as they borrowed from European avant gardes, the anthropophagites were trying to position themselves against European moral values, against “falsa cultura e a falsa moral do ocidente” (“Utopia” 72). The idea of liberated bodies and sexuality are

---

32 The sentence “Não existe pecado ao sul do Equador” has become a part of popular culture in Brazil. In the 1970s following Oswald de Andrade’s tradition of mockery, farse and parody, the musicians Chico Buarque and Ruy Guerra wrote a song that Ney Matogrosso (probably one of the queerest artists in Brazilian contemporary music) made very popular. The lyrics are imbued with ideas of cannibalism and cultural anthropophagy: “Deixa a tristeza pra lá, vem comer, me jantar. Sarapatel, caruru, tucupi, tacacá. Vê se me esgota, me bota na mesa/Que a tua holandesa não pode esperar.”
vital, then, to the anthropophagous ideal. Flavio de Carvalho demonstrates this with his “A cidade do homem nu” discussed later in this chapter.

Gender fluidity or discussions on the politics of sexuality appear in other anthropophagous texts as well. Raul Bopp, one of the founders of the movement, published *Cobra Norato*, an epic poem in 1928 in which he plays with the notions of masculine and feminine through the association of masculine nouns and pregnancy, for instance:

\[
\text{Ai eu era um rio solteiro.} \\
\text{Vinha bebendo o meu caminho} \\
\text{mas o mato me entupiu.} \\
\text{Agora estou com o útero doendo ai ai. (26)}
\]

Raul Bopp, while formulating a number of theses that formed the movement, included the Brazilian libido as one of these taboos. A constant in the group’s publications was the notion of sexual liberty and ‘unrepression’ (my translation to Flávio de Carvalho’s term *desreprimir*) of society in terms of sexuality.

As also mentioned earlier, matriarchy plays an important role in Andrade’s formulation. According to the author, one of the first steps toward revolution is the end of patriarchy and the return to the indigenous mode of matriarchy. Andrade proposes the

---

33 In the introduction to the 1928 edition, Raul Bopp explains the addition of his poem to the Anthropophagic Library (a collection of texts that represented the movement): “A princípio era um livro inofensivo, para crianças. Mais tarde (1929), com umas ampliações na ossatura, esteve destinado a fazer parte da “Bibliotequinha Antropofágica”, planificada sob um critério fortemente brasileiro, e cuja organização seria discutida numa das teses do *Primeiro Congresso Mundial de Antropofagia*, a reunir-se em Vitória, Espírito Santo, a 11 de outubro, - o último dia da América livre (Dia seguinte chegava Colombo...)” (15).
abolishment of the patriarchal system based on heritage and lineage in order to achieve
the Matriarcado de Pindorama the matriarchal society would end private property. By
praising former Brazilian societies in order to form a new society or a new synthesis of
man, the author was actually creating a movement in which one could see how
differences could be read as similarities. Rather than searching for reference points in
Europe, the Brazilian modernists should look back to their own routes and find their
references.

2.5 What is Queer about Antropofagia?

If same-sex practices are not explicitly treated by the manifesto, why, then is it so
important to my dissertation this piece of work? It is vital, rather, because it constitutes a
mode of thinking and a method for understanding Brazilian practices as a whole. The
Manifesto Antropófago is of interest to queer theory as it revolutionizes the way the other
is seen, the way the colony saw itself, the way abject bodies saw themselves and the way
local theory could be analyzed. The sense of devouring brings a new perspective into
current theory because it allows us to question our own normative practices. Thus, the
lack of explicit homoeroticism in the manifesto does not mean that its text is not queer.
Moreover, the manifesto stands as a transgressive moment in relation to notions of
patriarchy and sexuality. As Sedgwick writes:

That’s one of the things that “queer” can refer to: the open mesh of
possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and
excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically. (*Tendencies* 7)

Andrade proposes the permanent transformation of the taboo in totem:

“[a]ntropofagia. A transformação permanente do Tabu em totem” (*Utopia* 69). On the one hand, cannibalism was one of the most unfamiliar and strange habits to the civilized western world that looked at it with shock and despair. On the other, Oswald de Andrade will find in it the motif for his formulation of *brasilidade*. Almost thirty years on from the launch of the magazine, Andrade returns to the topic saying that, “[a] operação metafísica que se liga ao rito antropofágico é a da transformação do tabu em totem” (*Utopia* 139).

By reading Freud’s *Totem and taboo*, Andrade creates an opportunity to revert the negativity of queer into something positive. What has been forbidden to be uttered now becomes a political tool for activism and theory. While Freud makes his formulation of the formation of patriarchal society based on the anthropophagous rite of the sons eating their father, Andrade inverts this logic proposing the return to the matriarchal society, as Freud had implied it could have been before, inverting the totem and taboo dichotomy. Andrade chooses one of the most extreme forms of taboo and abjection as the totem of his manifesto. Anthropophagy becomes the main motif of the manifesto. And the acts and results of abjection become, then, the *força motora* of the movement that shapes Brazilian cultural perspective in the 20th century.

Antropofagia queer, thus, can be seen as a mode of intervention, as José Quiroga explains when discussing the idea of intervention. In *Tropics of Desire*, the author describes intervention as “visibilities within forms of social praxis in the Latino
American contexts as modes of intervention that allow different publics to participate in the social sphere” (3). What is central here is the messiness of sex and gender. Various works by the movement demonstrate a quest for change. We could cite Flávio de Carvalho in *Bailado do Deus Morto* and *Experiência* #2; Patrícia Galvão – Pagu – in *Parque Industrial*, Oswald de Andrade, not only in the manifestos and the eighteen published issues of the *Revista de Antropofagia*, but also in his plays, such as *O rei da vela*, and Tarsila do Amaral’s paintings as *Abaporu* and *Antropofagia*. Nonetheless, it is in Flavio de Carvalho’s work that we may find the queuest moments in relation to Antropofagia and queer practices.

2.6 Flávio de Carvalho, the Anthropophagus Architect

Even though Flávio de Carvalho joined the movement only during the second *denticação* of the magazine, Oswald de Andrade named him as the “ideal anthropophagus,” according to Giuliana Martins Simões in “Veto ao modernismo no teatro brasileiro” (136). His experimental works, performances, paintings and architectural projects were part of a modernist project in which the artist worked through not only his ideas of modernity but also of anthropophagy. For instance, in one of his projects for a lighthouse in the Dominican Republic, he combined modern lines with the ancient American civilizations, realizing in architecture the anthropophagic ideal (137).
Moreover, Flávio de Carvalho had a particular understanding of performance. As Luis Camilo Osório explains, the artist “firma o lugar específico de sua atuação criativa: o corpo” (19) and it is through his performances that he is going to queer Antropofagia and anthropophagize queer modes of experience. Carvalho’s *Experiência #2* consisted of himself walking with a hat in the opposite direction, in the middle of the participants, through a Corpus Christi procession in 1931. At that time, the idea of wearing a hat during a religious procession was an unforgivable offense. After a few minutes the public started screaming *lincha* (“lynch him”), and he had to be rescued by the police. Luis Camilo Osório best describes the source of conflict saying that “surgia do embate entre o corpo físico e fragmentário do artista e o corpo místico e unitário dos fiéis e seu totem” (19). His third experience consisted of walking in the streets of São Paulo in 1956 wearing a gown he called a possible tropical gown for the modern era in the tropics. It is astonishing to think that in the 1950s Carvalho is performing gender by walking around the city of São Paulo in a skirt above his knees (see figure 3). To Carvalho, “antes da moda ser moda, ela é um trajo em trânsito. O que pretendo sugerir é que o trajo, antes de ser moda, pode ser mutação, ou trajo em trânsito” (qtd in Osório 44). Carvalho believed that his outfit corresponded to the “unissexualismo de uma época à qual provavelmente se sucederá um regresso, sob novas formas de bissexualismo” (*A moda e o novo homem* 299).

*Anteprojeto para Miss Brasil* is also an anthropophagic queer gesture by the artist. In this painting, Carvalho draws a *mulata* and the combination of the title and image reinforces Carvalho’s social criticism while depicting racial minorities that were not necessarily visible except for in exotic images. For an anthropophagous artist like
Carvalho, the idea of a darker Miss Brasil aligned with the movement’s project of brasilidade.

Fig. 3. Flávio de Carvalho and his attempt to walk around the streets of São Paulo wearing his summer outfit in 1956. In: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo. 17ª. Bienal de São Paulo – Exposição Flávio de Carvalho. (São Paulo: Bienal de São Paulo, 1983; print; 5).

Flavio de Carvalho is one of the authors that discuss the sexual freedom that the anthropophagic man would restore. During a lecture entitled “A cidade do homem nu,”
Carvalho proposes a modern city in which no sexual practices would be repressed and all men would have a laboratory of erotica at their disposal. In Carvalho’s utopian city, men would be “undressed” of their taboos, without god, property and matrimony.

Carvalho’s work is also an example of how Nick Salvato explains some modernist works. To Salvato, “they look forward and imagine sometimes utopian possibilities for theatrical and erotic representation that have yet to come into being.” (12) Carvalho’s “A cidade do homem nu” with its erotica laboratory is thus a perfect representation of this utopian sexuality yet to come. The modernist Brazilian architect envisions a place in which all repressions are freed and men are able to experiment with all possibilities of sexual expression. Carvalhos’s proposal during his lecture aligns with Alfredo Martínez Expósito when he says that,

El sistema patriarcal tradicional, único posible durante siglos y todavía fuertemente implantado en nuestra sociedad, es el garante del funcionamiento social de una semiótica de la sexualidad que estratifica, clasifica y juzga a los individuos de acuerdo a tres principios: la posibilidad de adscripción, para cada individuo de un sexo, un género y una sexualidad; la existencia de un doble sistema de premio y castigo a las conductas que respeten o desafíen el sistema, con el obvio objetivo de asegurar la obediencia y la subsistencia del mismo; y la ausencia de un sistema alternativo que permita una combinatoria genérico-sexual diferente. (39)
“A cidade do homem nu” also anticipates Bersani’s formulation of a new erotics if “a community were ever to exist in which it would no longer seem natural to define all relations as property relations” (Homos 128). Interestingly, Carvalho’s queer move also coincides with Bersani’s critical attitude toward queer theory. In Homos, Bersani expresses his concern over queer replacing gay, as this might suggest a “de-gaying” of ourselves as men who desire and have sex with men. Still, what I call Antropofagia queer brings this sense of destabilization to heteronormative norms that Bersani would criticize as well. Along with Carvalho, Bersani understands that without “a new erotics” such as those Flávio de Carvalho had proposed in his lab of erotica, “all revolutionary activity will return, as we have seen it return over and over again, to relations of ownership and dominance” (Bersani, Homos 128).

An important image that Carvalho discusses in his text is the circle, and hence the idea that citizens are trapped inside a repetitive pattern. The cidade do homem nu should be able to free mankind leaving it “fora do círculo, abandonar o movimento recorrente e destruidor de sua alma, procurar o mecanismo de pensamento que não entrave o seu desejo de penetrar no desconhecido” (23). Such an image will be seen again in Caio Fernando Abreu’s text “A dama da noite” which will be discussed in depth in chapter 3.

2.7 Abjection

In order to understand why abjection is beneficial and fruitful (in light of anthropophagy), one can trace its genealogy from Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler to Leo
Bersani and then David Halperin. Those authors shaped the idea of the abject in terms that enlighten this dissertation.

In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva gives us an account of the importance of abjection to artists that we can relate to Oswald de Andrade (and also in the cultural texts that will be analyzed later). According to her, “the writer, fascinated by the abject, imagines its logic, projects himself into it, interjects it, and as a consequence perverts language – style and content.” (emphasis added 16). Likewise in Antropofagia, the movement perverts itself around the abject. To build a manifesto that is ostracized by society and family, the author works with a structure that is perverted in its own language.

Kristeva also explains that abjection is concerned with the breaching or confusion of the “inside/outside boundary, and that the threat comes no longer from outside but from within” (114). She develops this theme when she cites the Bible passage in which Jesus explains that even though he had not bathed he was pure and clean from within. The tabooed act of anthropophagy when men would eat others as part of the ritual relates to this idea of inside/outside dichotomy proposed by Kristeva. The devouring of the body in that perspective is an act of cleansing, in the sense that it will make one stronger or more pure. However, this action becomes taboo and other forms of purification – burial, for instance – are developed in order to avoid such an act. Andrade understands this process and makes claims for the metaphorical devouring of the other as an act of strength and purity, reversing the taboo/totem dichotomy proposed by Freud.

Cannibalism is, consequently, an abject act in which, “the one by whom the abject exists is thus a deject who places (himself), separates (himself), situates (himself), and therefore strays instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing”
(Kristeva, *Powers* 8). To Andrade and the Antropofagia, “not without laughter since laughing is a way of placing or displacing abjection” (Kristeva, *Powers* 8).

Abjection deals with our intimate being; it deals with what we sometimes try to hide or should hide, not only sexual practices, or excretion as one would think. When dealing with abjected bodies, my concern is thus to think sexuality beyond sexual practices, identity beyond fixed categories, and shame beyond stigma. As Richard Miskolci asserts, “o abjeto é algo pelo que alguém sente horror ou repulsa como se fosse poluidor ou impuro, a ponto de ser o contato com isso temido como contaminador e nauseante” (*Teoria Queer* 43).

The main parallel between abjection and Antropofagia can be drawn in the relationship with food that Kristeva points out, writing that “food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection” (4). In her words, one’s experience with abjection is primordial, it is the deepest sensation one may carry in the body. She, then continues:

> but since the food is not an “other” for “me,” who am only in their desire,

> I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish myself. (5)

For Kristeva, “[t]he corpse, seen without God and outside science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life” (6). Therefore, the act of devouring a body (another human body) becomes the strongest form of abjection, more than food itself since it is the “other” that is being devoured instead of being totemized.

---

34 During the 2014 electoral debates for Brazilian presidency, Levy Fidelyx, one of the candidates, condemned homosexuality, stating that “aparelho excretor não reproduz.”
As part of his anthropophagic project, Andrade also proposes a matriarchal society in opposition to the failed patriarchal society in which he lived. Once again, Andrade relates to Kristeva since to her the feminine is seen as the other. In her words:

What we designate as “feminine”, far from being a primeval essence, will be seen as an “other” without a name, which subjective experience confronts when it does not stop at the appearance of its identity. (Powers 58)

It is this notion of ‘the other’ that Antropofagia is attempting to rescue and give visibility, the matriarcado is the central concept for the modernist movement, as we have seen earlier it is through the recovery of the feminine that the anthropophagic movement focuses their manifesto on.

In this dissertation, the idea of the feminine is connected to the effeminate man since the prejudice against the effeminate man is intrinsically related to the prejudice against woman. The image of a man associating himself with a woman is reason of disgust – abjection – to the eyes of a male dominated society. Thus, the effeminate man and the view of the gay man as a lesser man would respond to these anxieties in relation to male heteronormativity. That is, by accepting a normalized identity, gay men accept the ‘other’ view and a lesser abject position, while remaining still an abject body. The rejection of the effeminate man (or the feminized fag or the phallicized dyke, in Butler’s

Moreover, the idea of a man being penetrated, or ‘passive’ in sexual relations presents a case of double abjection; first, because of the notion of penetration itself and second, because of the anus’ association as being a source of diseases. Such notions are still evident in the rhetoric of groups such as “G0ys” (G – zero – y), men who do not identify as homosexual or gay but have pleasure in being with another man, as long as there is no anal intercourse.
words) becomes a tool for acceptance for those who seek visibility, a practice that sends us back to Freud:

We also know that any one who has violated a taboo by touching something which is taboo becomes taboo himself, and no one may come into contact with him. (*Totem* 46)

Distance thus becomes a powerful tool for maintaining one’s visibility. Such an idea of distance would also become effective after the AIDS epidemics, as the affected bodies begin to represent the ultimate abjection, the shame of “choices” that led to such “destiny.” The implicit figurative contagiousness of the effeminate man becomes an explicit fear of real contagions in relation to the HIV positive body. This idea of the contagious can be associated with Kristeva’s work when she asks if one is “afraid of being bitten” or “afraid of biting” (*Powers* 38). Hence, what is it that one brings in his or her body that makes him or her abjectify the other? What is this abject part of oneself that moves a person against somebody else? Bersani states a troublesome truth: “on the whole, gay men are no less socially ambitious, and, more often than we like to think, no less reactionary and racist than heterosexuals” (“Rectum” 205).

Bersani’s work is important here because he will locate the abjection into the homosexual body. As Davis says, “[a]bjection is classically associated with Julia Kristeva’s work in psychoanalysis, but gained political traction in queer theorist Leo Bersani’s call for a subversive sex-based queer identity” (103). Bersani’s work complements Kristeva’s text since it brings to light, the repudiation of some gay
identified sexual practices. Bersani moves the personal and internal tone of Kristeva’s text into a political one.

Still discussing abjection, David M. Halperin, on the other hand, attempts to distance the abject from psychoanalysis in order to approach it as a queer concept. To Halperin, abjection has little basis in psychoanalysis and it originates long before Kristeva formulates about it. Halperin traces a genealogy of the term from the 1930s in France with Marcel Jouhandeau for whom “abjection was a social concept rather than a psychological one” (*What Do Gay Man Want* 72). However Halperin seems to insist on the internal aspects of abjection, that is, on the “inside” effects, as Kristeva mentions it, of abjection into a socially abjected body. Halperin’s project aligns with Butler when she says “the public assertion of ‘queerness’ enacts performativity as citationality for the purposes of resignifying the abjection of homosexuality into defiance and legitimacy” (*Bodies* 21) or as Kristeva puts it “from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master” (*Powers* 2). Also, it is important to note that the goal of normativity is not and has never been the total banishment of the abject or abjection since it is its existence that guarantees the existence of the norm. Abjection is, therefore, the attempted controlling form of the norm, whether it is heternormative or of any other kind.

Antropofagia proposes the swallowing of the exogenous, the spitting out and vomiting up of the other. Abjection, on the other hand, is intrinsically related to the idea of projection of ‘unwanted’ fluids. How, then, can we reconcile these two concepts in order to present and discuss the abject bodies in Brazilian social practices? I propose here that, beyond shame and disgust, abjected bodies and abjection – and all the fluids that we tend to discard – could also bring to light other possibilities for queer lives. Heather Love
says that, “the feeling of shame – once understood as a poison that must be purged from the queer community – has proven to be particularly attractive as a basis for alternative models of politics” (13). In my point of view, abjection enters the discussion alongside with shame. By making visible abjected or shamed bodies, we might be giving visibility to queer abjected practices and bodies.

As Judith Butler says, “the notion of abjection designates a degraded or cast out status within the terms of socialty” (Undoing 243). Human flesh as a form of nourishment and source of power to some indigenous populations in Brazil is probably the most abjected taboo in contemporary western societies. As Freud mentioned in Totem and Taboo, the eating of the father is the ultimate taboo. Antropófagos, then, assimilate this form of abjection as their main source of knowledge. Antropofagia attempted to rescue abject bodies and abject practices as modes of a new civilized person in a modernist society. As Lucia Helena points out, Brazilian culture had been dominated by the image of the ‘father’ represented by the colonizer (24). Oswald de Andrade would follow, then, a lineage of “parricides” initiated according to some critics (Campos and Helena among others) with Gregório de Matos. From their position of abject bodies, they tried to find ways to challenge the master through parody, mockery and derision, “since laughing is a way of placing or displacing abjection” (Kristeva, Powers 8).

---

36 Gregório de Matos, 1636–96, also known as Boca do Inferno (“Hell’s mouth”), was a Baroque poet. He became famous for criticizing the church, Portugal and political institutions with his poems filled with language considered ‘not appropriate’ at his time. Matos is important on the ongoing debate about the institution of Brazilian literature, for instance in the critical disagreement between Antonio Candido and Haroldo de Campos. To the former, Brazilian literature as a system – sistema (in his words) – can only be traced back to Romanticism. Campos, on the other hand, already sees in the baroque traces of a literary system in which one can call a national literature. The two fundamental texts that discuss this issue are: O sequestro do barroco brasileiro by Haroldo de Campos and A literatura como sistema by Antonio Candido.
Antropofagia presents its queerness both as resistance and as abjection. Taking the lead from the anthropophagous movement, an observation of abjection and abject bodies seems to be an important matter in order to continue the devouring of queer both as theory and as practice as this dissertation proposes. The *antropófagos’* idea was to invert the order of the taboo, looking at the anthropophagous practice as something positive and vital to our formation of society. Nonetheless, in our twentieth century society, a return to the precise indigenous practices seemed implausible. Hence Andrade’s formulation reinscribes that notion into a metaphorical practice in order to understand our position as citizens. As Andrade expresses in one of his poems:

A síntese.
O equilíbrio.
A invenção.
Uma nova perspectiva.
Uma nova escala. (qtd in Schwartz 60)

Still on the subject of abjection and the visibility of abject practices, Beatriz Preciado presents her discussion of the abject by exalting forms of sexuality and creating a *manifesto contra-sexual*. Unlike the manifesto antropófago, Preciado’s manifesto is acute on sexuality and on the idea that all forms of sexuality must be visible and practiced. As in the case of Antropofagia, the author proposes the end of marriage and private property. Bodies are free to express themselves in all abjected ways possible. Beatriz Preciado explains:
La resignificación contrasexual del cuerpo se hará operativa con la introducción gradual de determinadas políticas contrasexuales. Uno, la universalización de las prácticas estigmatizadas como abyectas en el marco del heterocentrismo. (Manifesto 27)

More than a form a resistance, the abject comes to the center of the discussion, and pleasure. Bodies become centers and sources of pleasure, orgasm can be manipulated, created and invented, orgasm “será parodiado sistemáticamente gracias a diversas disciplinas de simulación y repeticiones en serie…” (29). Preciado organiza el manifesto in terms of total freedom of the body, with no control by the state and political organizations. If “queer studies offer us one method for imagining, not some fantasy of an elsewhere, but existing alternatives to hegemonic systems,” as Halberstam proposed in The Queer Art of Failure (89), and if the homosexual body has been historically associated with “failure, impossibility and loss” (Love, Feeling 21), Preciado, with her Manifesto Contrasexual, is exactly showing alternative modes of living, just as Flávio de Carvalho did in the 1930s in his city of the nude man. Erasing failure (whether in the past or in the present) and what I call abjection in this dissertation in order to create a rainbow colored situation for queer bodies can also be violent.

The difference between the abject and the normative is the presence of the surveillance of the state. By becoming part of society, gay men enter the state and their practices become regulated by the political instances that control our bodies: marriage, divorce, adoption, assisted fertilization, grants, insurance and all the rights that different groups have been advocating for. The abject and their abjected practices are, then, redefined as those that are not participating in these institutions (like the Dama da noite
analysed in chapter 3). The discourse that praises abject practices is, therefore, a discourse that praises the possibility of not conforming. The discourse of normality in terms of acceptance is complicated since one must question what parts of same-sex sexuality have we normalized. Preciado is proposing the “desnormalización” of all sexual practices, that is, the idea that as long as there is a contract (“toda relación contrasexual será el resultado de un contrato consensual firmado por todos los participantes” (29)), there is a possibility of sexual expression. Aside from the romanticizing of such ideas, they can become powerful tools for questioning in which ways our bodies have been denied visibility.

The homosexual body has, since its medicalization in the late 1800s, been marked with shame, being “an effect of the play of the social power” (Halperin, What Do Gay Men Want 71), as an inverted, pederastic, sinful and ultimately a sick body. After the 1970s and the beginning of a wider acceptance of same-sex practices (as long as they conformed to heteronormative standards), other gay bodies have had to be silenced or annulled.

Thus, the normalization of gayness empties and puts aside all forms of practice – mainly sexual – that will not conform to the idea of monogamy, whiteness and cleanliness. As Warner puts it, “the effect is a kind of expulsion, abjection, and contempt for those more visibly defined by sex, and this effect is all the more powerful for its apparent innocuousness” (Trouble with Normal 87). Current readings still link abjection to same-sex practices in relation to the AIDS epidemics and more recently barebacking (see Bersani in his more recent work “Shame on you” and also Edelman and Halperin,). Even with all the attempts of the gay movement to “clean” the gay body or “de-gay”
itself as Bersani has suggested, the idea of abjection still marks the gay body and its practices. There seems thus to be a double movement in relation to abjection. At the same time it makes visible rejected bodies, it makes visible practices that do not conform to normativity, for example when the authors above discuss barebacking and other sexual practices. However, practices such as masochism, orgy, and barebacking, \(^{37}\) through a “normalized” vision, tend to maintain their abject position. If Kristeva is correct when she says that, from its place of banishment, the abject keeps challenging the master, it is important that the abject still be seen, since its practices open up our eyes to situations that must be addressed. Accordingly, *in-between* the abjection and the accepted lay our bodies that may transit between abjection, acceptance and tolerance.

When Andrade formulated *Antropofagia*, he rescued the abjected indigenous body as a way to present a new form of a civilized person, aligned with our past traditions and with the modernity of his times. It seems that the gay movement has denied visibility to other forms of queer bodies in order to be rewarded with social mobility through marriage, adoption, participation in the military and so on, inside a heteronormative society. Anthropophagic queer, then, attempts to rescue other queer bodies – abjected bodies – in different forms of visibility in order to guarantee social space for those bodies that have settled for a “space in-between,” as formulated by Silviano Santiago.

---

\(^{37}\) For more sustained discussion on barebacking see Halperin, Bersani and Edelman. While I do not substantially deal with this issue in the dissertation, I do mention it as a form of abjected sexual practice that divides the gay community. I agree with Bersani and Halperin that the death drive may not be sufficient to explain its practice, and I would go further that there must be a study that relates the practice of barebacking with considerations of social class since not everybody can afford treatment and medication in the case of infection. It seems too early and even disingenuous to claim that HIV is not a threat anymore.
2.8 Space In-Between

The idyllic notion that Oswald de Andrade proposed is no longer possible; however the anthropophagic formulations could help us assimilate (or devour) the exogenous in order to reinvent social practices. As Santiago says,

Since Latin American can no longer close its doors to foreign invasion nor recuperate its condition as a “paradise” of isolation and innocence, one realizes with cynicism that, without such resignifications, its product would be a mere copy – silence, a copy that is frequently outmoded due to that imperceptible retrocession of time that Levi-Strauss talks about. Its geography must be one of assimilation and aggressiveness, of learning and reaction, of false obedience. (*Space In-Between* 36)

It is not by accident, then, that this second chapter ends with Silviano Santiago’s discussion of the “*entre-lugar*” or “the space in-between” as it has been conventionally translated into English.\(^{38}\) By formulating such an idea, Santiago is at the same time rescuing Andrade’s metaphorical constructions and placing (or displacing) abjected bodies and ideas. And the notion of occupying a space that is not necessarily clearly marked by political boundaries, a space in which partial visibility is possible, a space

---

\(^{38}\) Even though one can find parallels between Santiago’s formulation and Victor Turner’s idea of liminality, the translation of the term, *entre-lugar* was proposed in a collection of essays edited by Ana Lucia Gazola (*The Space In-Between. Essays on Latin American Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). In the Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature edited by Verity Smith (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), the term *inbetweenness* is proposed as a translation for Santiago’s *entre-lugar*.
nevertheless in which such visibility creates forms of resistance as discussed by Santiago in such texts as “O homossexual astucioso.”

Moreover, as Santiago himself explains when discussing the creation of his novel *Stella Manhattan*, what interested him while dealing with homosexuality, “no era impulsar una política de identidad homosexual sino promover lo que después llamarían de queer” (“Los viajes de Silviano Santiago” 197). Silviano Santiago was well aware of the impossibilities of a natural return to Brazilian ancestral roots of life; however, like Oswald de Andrade, he considered the total erasure of its colonial past and the denial of the existence of Europe as the metropolis (and later the United States) another impossibility, so he formulates this idea of a space in-between in which Latin American discourse is produced.

In “O entre-lugar do discurso latino-americano,” Santiago starts his article discussing Montaigne’s text on cannibals and the first encounters between the European explorers and the native inhabitants of the Americas. Santiago, like Oswald de Andrade before him, is searching for the mythological construction of the nation in order to build a possible space of interaction between cultures. Nonetheless, unlike Andrade, Santiago’s goal is not one of parody or literary construction, at least not in his academic articles. The idea of imitation for Santiago is seen already in the first official document about Brazil, a letter to the king of Portugal written by Pero Vaz de Caminha. Santiago points out that, according to Caminha, the Indians were naturally inclined to convert since they could be seen imitating the Christian gestures of the Portuguese settlers.

The references to Andrade are clear in the text. The first time Santiago mentions the modernist poet, it is to exemplify what he considers to be the greatest contribution of
Latin America to the western cultures or in his words, “destruição sistemática dos conceitos de unidade e pureza” (19). Santiago sees the need of a new form of looking into our Latin American writings and writers since their work cannot be compared to a literal translation, it is a “tradução global, de pastiche, de paródia, de digressão” (23). This idea of going beyond literal translation could also help us understand how queer theory can be acknowledged by Brazilian social and academic practices. More than a literal translation of ‘queer’ as an identity or as theoretical practices, as a global translation, as a parody or as a digression as he proposes could be put in place. The space in-between would not negate external influences or inspiration; it would devour and reconnect them with the local practices in ways that could be meaningful to comprehending what, if anything, is queer in us.

Even though Silviano Santiago has not devoted himself to the concept of abjection per se, as much as to the questions of cultural dependency and Latin American autonomy (Raízes 2006, for instance), his novels deal with the idea of abjection in the homosexual body. In terms of theory, his article “O Homossexual astucioso” – later translated into English as “The Wily Homosexual” –, begins by questioning the peripheral position that Brazil holds in international academia:

Costuma-se perguntar ao intelectual brasileiro, quando em viagem aos países metropolitanos, em que a produção cultural feita no Brasil contribuiu, ou pode chegar a contribuir para essa, ou aquela outra teoria crítica. É um modo de salientar não só o caráter periférico da produção cultural no país (e, por consequência, do intelectual que a representa),
como também a condição subalterna da experiência brasileira e, ainda, a
ignorância sobre a especificidade histórica da nossa cultura nacional na
atualidade do Ocidente letrado. (198)

Santiago is here commenting on one novel – *O cortiço* – that has been discussed
by queer theorists lately in terms of homosexuality and same-sex practices. To the author
the idea of coming-out as proposed by American activists may not serve as well as it did
to the American gay movement, since Brazil, besides being a country with its own needs
and practices, has already found ways to deal with homosexuality, as he could see in
Aloisio de Azevedo’s novel.

In the two articles mentioned above, Santiago is clearly looking at *Antropofagia*
as a contemporary way to discuss academia and literary texts. To the author, Latin
American writers/writing is never innocent, and can never be just an imitation. Santiago
starts his seminal text looking back to the way cannibals were described by the
Europeans. Following Andrade, he discusses Montaigne and continues the discussion
citing Levi-Strauss and reaching his topic of discussion: the space of Latin American
literature or the space in-between as he names it.

More than constituting a simple continuation of Andrade’s formulations,
Santiago’s perspective contributes to the analysis in my dissertation. From the place of
abjection of the indigenous populations in Brazil to the current space in-between of Latin
American literature, there is a great deal of representations in Brazilian culture that will
challenge our normative views and create a position of visibility. More than the abjected
body, it is worth looking at the abject pieces that those bodies will expel – bodily fluids – and other pieces that will be *degluted* in order to fill this space in-between.

Santiago’s anthropophagic movement is one of perception of the colonized position that Brazil has been inserted in and, at the same time, a challenging situation in relation to Europe and the United States, the sources of knowledge. As Denilson Lopes explains:

Os escritos de Silviano redimensionam a tradição intelectual brasileira a partir de um ecletismo teórico que incorpora o impacto do pensamento de Derrida, mas também de Foucault e Deleuze; passando pelo debate sobre a pós-modernidade até o diálogo fecundo com os Estudos Culturais. (‘‘Do entre-lugar ao transcultural” 5)

Santiago claims that Latin America “establishes its place on the map of Western civilization by actively and destructively diverting the European norm and resignifying pre-established and immutable elements that were exported to the New World by Europeans” (*Space* 30). In terms of literature, Santiago proposes a reading that will not only look for influences, but also for subversion. However, Santiago is not totally immersed in Andrade’s positivity and *espinafração*. 39 He understands the anthropophagic movement, but tries to maintain a critical view concerning the incorporation of the exogenous or praising of the endogenous. In an article entitled “Apesar de dependente, universal,” published in 1982, the author says, “nem manual populista, nem folclore curupira – estão aí as polarizações que devem ser evitadas para o bem de um socialismo

---

39 According to the Dicionário Houaiss, *espinafra* means “falar mal de (alguém) para um terceiro; criticar, desmoralizar, arrasar com” (“Espinafrar”). The origin is associated with *espinafre* (“spinach”), but the dictionary is not sure of its etymology as a verb.
democrático. Nem o paternalismo, nem o imobilismo” (Vale 18).

Santiago’s “space in-between” is not an abstraction, nor a replacement or inversion of positions. The critic aims to question hierarchy(ies), basing himself in a cultural anthropophagy that goes beyond mere representations or mirrors of cultural production. The space in-between propitiates the use of abjected fluids once discarded by our culturally cannibalistic manifestations.

I take a cue here from Denilson Lopes who sees the space in-between as a resistance strategy, more than a place itself. Santiago’s space in-between feeds my anthropophagic needs in order to position all the abjected bodies\(^\text{40}\) that have been denied visibility in Brazil. Santiago’s space in-between is thus especially important for this work because it also puts the same-sex experience in a place of visibility. As Lopes explains:

También es a partir del entre-lugar que podemos incluir la experiencia gay en este redimensionamiento de la nación, tratando su invisibilidad histórica no solo como represión sino también de ambigua Resistencia a partir de una afectividad entre hombres como lugar del habla sobre el mundo. (“Por una crítica cosmopolita” 27)

Evelina Hoisel helps us understand Santiago’s anthropophagic moves by explaining Santiago’s contribution to critical thinking. According to Hoisel, Santiago

\(^{40}\) Even these days, such perspective seems important. In a recent Brazilian publication named Momento Inesquecível, the cover shows two white males getting married. The magazine is totally dedicated to gay weddings – parties, celebrations, what to wear and so on. Santiago’s ideas of a democratic socialism seems to fade away with such a magazine, marketed for the wealthy. The only homosexual person who is rendered visible is the white gay man who can afford such luxuries as getting married. See: http://mixbrasil.xpg.uol.com.br/celebridades/momento-inesquecivel-chega-a-segunda-edicao-ha-casamento-gay.html. Moreover the magazine’s website is a celebration of white male couples, who form the majority of couples depicted: http://www.portalinesquecivel.com.br/homoafetivo/.
propagates a foreign theory without complex or prejudice, and the author presupposes a dialogue with the local scholar and the exogenous. Hoisel adds, “não se trata portanto de um projeto estrangeirado, mas de uma proposta que busca inscrever o pensamento nacional na esfera das discussões internacionais” (47).

Therefore, the association of the concept of the space in-between with Antropofagia seems fruitful since it not only allows a continuum of visibility in terms of Brazilian literary and social practices, but also helps us rethink neo-colonial practices in terms of same-sex practices and European-American influences, as we saw in the first chapter. As Santiago himself says “A noção mal-intencionada da antropofagia cultural, brilhantemente inventada por Oswald de Andrade, num desejo de incorporar, criativamente, a sua produção dentro de um movimento universal” (Vale 21).

Silviano Santiago looks to the United States as a possible model of gay liberation, but at the same time he also looks to Brazil, searching for our own models of emancipation. Even when the United States works as the space for “desterritorializados” characters (as Silviano Santiago presents in Stella Manhattan), its model may not be useful or fruitful for the Brazilian experience, as he explained in “The Wily Homossexual.” In Santiago’s perspective the thought on identities tends to abolish binary oppositions situating itself in a space in-between in which paradox (through parody, escârnio and abjection for instance) would be a viable solution for the questions of dependency.

Even though other authors tend to disagree that there is not necessarily a connection between melancholia and homosexuality, and even between the death drive and men having sex with men, I do see a mark, a stigma on the homosexual body that is
put on it from the moment it becomes an interpellated body. Being a person that identifies oneself as someone whose sexual attraction, eroticism, or relationship inclinations tend towards a person from the same sex, even today places stigmas on bodies that are challenging to remove especially if you do not conform to the white middle class normativity. A body whose construction is built around marginality and abjection has to compromise in order to be socially visible, as we saw above. Anthropophagic queer to me, is then, the recuperation of portions of our abjection into something fruitful and visible.

In order to achieve that difficult goal, I would like to concentrate on what has been abjected by our constant devouring or our cannibalistic attempt to incorporate foreign theories. In the following chapters, I intend to trace back these bodies or corporeal remains in Brazil, in our literary and cultural production, searching for an anthropophagic abject queer body relocated into a space in-between.
Chapter 3

Disappearance, Failure, Loss (and Positivity?):

Abject Bodies in Contemporary Brazilian Literature

3.1 Introduction

As I have argued in the previous chapters, Antropofagia is a literary practice that proposes a particular strategy to reflect on Brazilian identity/experience. I demonstrated that Antropofagia was launched as a modernist term attempting to rescue Brazilian abject bodies and practices without losing perception of the external ideas that had been ‘traveling’ to Brazil. Such a perspective created a double movement between theory and practice that is precisely the movement between Antropofagia and abjection and also Brazilian practices and exogenous models of experience. If Antropofagia intends to incorporate – through swallowing – the external body (or theories), and, what Kristeva calls abjection is precisely the removal from the body of the other, how does one reconcile such conflicting modes of operation? As I showed in chapter two, even though, on the one hand, these practices may conflict with each other, on the other they have the advantage, I argue, of rendering queer bodies visible. Abjection, in other words, while not
free from ambiguity, is also productive: queer lives and concerns become visible and viable, albeit in an oftentimes liminal imaginary space, under the devouring anthropophagic gaze.

I return to ‘abjection’ and the liminal ‘space-in-between’ as critical terms to explore the various literary strategies Brazilian authors – Caio Fernando Abreu, André de Figueiredo and Herbert Daniel – in the 1970s and 1980s have adopted to explore queer lives, themes and subject matters. Thus, “queer” in chapter three, informs both my theoretical discussion and the literary representations I will analyze. As we will see, some authors will find ways to deal with abjection in different forms, from sublimation and disappearance to acceptance of their own abject bodies, as Herbert Daniel will demonstrate. In the selected novels, short stories and auto-fiction (a term used by Hebert Daniel to describe his work) by the authors mentioned above, I propose that theories of abjection, on the one hand illustrate the double movement of theory and practice that, I hold, is central to anthropophagic theory, and on the other offer a lens to analyze fictional and biographical accounts of queer experience. The idea of the anthropophagic queer, in other words, is based on literary texts from authors who feel socially marginalized (and in that sense “abject”) because of their non-normative (not heterosexual) identities and, imbued with Andrade’s influential modernist legacy, approach this question in an anthropophagic way (in the liminal, “abject” sense outlined before). If, as I have said before, a queer reading of Brazilian texts only makes sense when we perform a critical twist (as a queer practice that keeps twisting itself in order to avoid normalization), this chapter suggests it be an anthropophagic twist. The abject bodies under review in this chapter register the ambivalent possibilities of, what we might call, queer devouring as a
cultural practice which takes place, in Haroldo de Campos’s terms, “sob o signo da devoração” (published as “The Rule of Anthropophagy: Europe Under the Sign of Devoration” in 1986, in the *Latin American Review*).

Caio Fernando Abreu (1948–96), Herbert Daniel (1946–92), and André de Figueiredo (1931–) offer a case in point. Their stories challenge the constraints of social conventions. The protagonists of their fictions seem impervious or indifferent to the violence and repression that are exerted on their bodies, communities or society in general. While some of their characters do not seem to care or hide, others consider ways to approach freedom and gay liberation. However, I argue they all share a search for their scattered pieces in a world mediated by scattered discourses while trying to build (or re-construct) queer possibilities of living.

The characters in the analyzed stories attempt to deal with the disillusionment of a generation experiencing a loss of sexual freedom during the AIDS epidemic crisis in the midst of political turmoil during Brazil’s transition from dictatorship to democracy. The texts illustrate the contrasting political attitudes of Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s, varying from activism to a more detached *desbunde*. 41

Consequently, the goals of this chapter are threefold: first to analyze how the anthropophagic queer principle portrays abject bodies in contemporary Brazilian literature. Second, I aim to explore how the endogenous and exogenous informed *Antropofagia* and its manifestos. Finally, I propose to recuperate, as an anthropophagic gesture, Anglophone queer theory as, in Edward Said’s words, a “traveling theory” fit to

---

41 *Desbunde* is a term adopted by that generation in order to differentiate those who were involved with the *grupos guerrilheiros* and those who were not. As Flávia Peret defines in her book *Imprensa gay no Brasil*, “Os jovens encontravam-se divididos entre duas opções: o engajamento político (inclusive em ações guerrilheiras) ou o “desbunde”, atitude que se referia a aproveitar e viver a vida sem se preocupar com a política” (45).
analyze literary works that reveal oftentimes overlapping theoretical affinities. Those three goals will help me show how the three authors selected for this chapter represent three different, yet complementary, views on queer modes of life and their specific responses to the idea of abjection.

The selected works are: *Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso* by Caio Fernando Abreu, first published in 1988; *Labirinto* by André de Figueiredo, published in 1971 and *Passagem para o próximo sonho* by Herbert Daniel, first published in 1982.

### 3.2. Caio Fernando Abreu

Caio Fernando Abreu was a fiction writer, poet and journalist. Even though he achieved some fame while alive, only recently have major audiences recognized his work.\(^{42}\) Abreu was born in 1946, and his literary production is concentrated between the decades of 1970 and 1990, he passed away in 1996 due to complications related to HIV/AIDS. He was one of the first public figures to openly talk about the virus in Brazil by publishing in 1994 “Primeira carta para além do muro” in *O Estado de São Paulo*. His work has been studied in Brazil and abroad, not only for its literary quality but also because he discusses the transition from dictatorship to democracy and the effects on the population, as Jeane Callegari explains: “o retrato de uma geração, do desencanto de uma geração, que vira a revolução acabar antes mesmo de ter qualquer chance de dar certo”

\(^{42}\) Caio Fernando Abreu has been widely discussed in Brazil and mentioned in social media through the past years. In August of 2013, Folha de São Paulo published an article mentioning that Abreu is the “champion” of citations in social media websites: [http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2013/08/1334715-campeao-de-citacoes-em-redes-sociais-caio-fernando-abreu-tem-frases-reunidas-em-livro.shtml](http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2013/08/1334715-campeao-de-citacoes-em-redes-sociais-caio-fernando-abreu-tem-frases-reunidas-em-livro.shtml)
(93). Another point of interest in Abreu’s work is that he believed in interchangeable, plural and fluid sexualities as Fernando Arenas discusses in “Small Epiphanies In The Night Of The World: The Writing of Caio Fernando Abreu.” For example, Abreu mentions in one of his letters to his friends his concerns with the new sexual politics:

[...] aí ficou essa coisa dividida, ou você é heterossexual ou homossexual, ou é de esquerda ou de direita. E tudo está partido, fragmentado, e eu acho que a grande esperança seria a de voltarmos a ser um. Ou sermos todas as coisas numa só, que é o que não conseguimos. Então você se filia ao PT ou ao PSDB. Você é homossexual ou heterossexual. (Dip 95)

Abreu is not only part of a generation that faced military dictatorship and the loss of civil rights, but he was also a part of a group of people that shared various utopias and political views such as Marxism and free love. This generation celebrated the end of the dictatorship in 1984; on the other hand, it faced a great disillusionment due to the economic crisis in the 1980s and the AIDS epidemic. As Jeane Callegari points out in his biography:

A vida do pessoal egresso da contracultura estava mudada para sempre, a partir do momento em que se diagnosticou o vírus. Aqueles que tinham experimentado o amor livre, a vida em comunidades, as drogas, tudo a que tinham direito, estavam agora
As a result of all the factors mentioned above, Caio Fernando’s texts reflect a great sense of “loss, disorientation, and pessimism” (Arenas, *Utopias of Otherness* 45).

As was discussed in the first chapter, the term *trans*- has appeared in queer studies as a reflection for those who are in constant movement. Firstly, as a part of the transgender/transsexual movement, and secondly including different perspectives as transnational, transcultural etc. The contemporary gay movement encompasses this perspective creating a gay body (rather different than a queer body proposed by some authors) that, according to Fernando Arenas in *Utopias of Otherness* is part of a global gay culture that crosses borders through mass culture and a massive population movement and more recently also through the internet, tourism and literature.

Caio Fernando Abreu represents these perspectives, not only because he lived a personal experience of emigration, but also because he created a network of characters that circulate through big cosmopolitan cities searching for identities or disseminating a new global trans-identity. However, Abreu is also concerned with the *deglutição* of such perspectives and maintains a critical gaze on such global movements and the construction of a “homosexual society,” as he writes in a letter to a friend:

> O homossexualismo está sendo mais aceito, ou mais entendido, mas só de certa forma. Porque continua sendo um estigma, uma mancha. Antes, a pessoa homossexual era lama. Aí a coisa passou...
Abreu’s letters help us understand the author’s personal experiences that would be reflected in his fictional work. As Italo Moricone in the introduction to the collection of personal letters written by Abreu says, through his letters we can recover “o romance fragmentado de uma vida.” (10). Thus, through fiction and personal correspondence, Caio F. Abreu simultaneously embraces this cosmopolitan perspective and criticizes the internationalization of the homosexual body into a unique image that does not allow other queer sensibilities to be seen. Abreu believed, in his words, in sexuality, not homosexuality. To some, this could be seen as a denial of homosexuality, but Abreu allows for a clear possibility of affection between men. His critique relies on the fact that labels maintain power through exclusion.

Similar to what the Movimento Antropófago proposed, Abreu’s texts present references to the Brazilian culture creating, at the same time, a dialogue with exogenous references in a dynamic process in which cultural frontiers between the local and the trans-national mingle and converge. Abreu’s ideas resonate with what Silviano Santiago
discussed in “The Space In-Between,” presented in the previous chapter, in relation to questions of identity. Even though Caio F. Abreu rejects a possible liberationist perspective of the gay movement of his time, he makes claims for sexual freedom, for the possibility of expressing oneself sexually freely either with a man or with a woman. As Richard Parker states:

The incorporation and indigenization of external needs – that the symbols and meanings associated with gay life outside of Brazil have been appropriated and reworked within the organization of contemporary Brazilian life. It is within this interplay that the appropriation of local meanings as part of a global cultural economy has also taken place. *(Beneath 225)*

3.2.1 Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso

*Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso*[^42] is, according to critics, Abreu’s best book. To Abreu all the characters are dragons; a metaphor for what is outside the center, not visible. They coexist at the margins of social space but at the same time are powerful and tend to challenge the established rules of contemporary society. This metaphor tries to unify, even if in an unstructured way, a recently visible queer nation. As Arenas says, Abreu’s dragons, which are used “for the purpose of designating alternative subjectivities along a wide and fluid spectrum of genders and sexualities” have “certain parallels with

[^42]: *Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso* was published as *Dragons* in 1990 in English by Verulam Publishing Ltd in a series titled Boulevard Latin Americans.
the term queer” (*Utopias* 58). Caio Fernando Abreu, in a short text published post-mortem, best explains this feeling regarding the beings that coexist at the margin:

> O homem que sai fora do seu meio está condenado ao desajustamento. Se retornar ao meio onde foi gerado e criado, não conseguirá jamais readaptar-se. Se permanecer no meio onde está, sentir-se-á sempre cobrado pelos atos ou palavras que não supunha existirem. E de qualquer forma, seu destino é a solidão. Sua possibilidade de escapar-se é sensação de marginalidade e alheamento (ou estranheza) ao que o cerca seria voltar-se para a contemplação, procurando no encontro com o “divino” o que o “humano” não lhe concedeu. (*O essencial da década de 1980* 189)

By reading the book, one can better understand a nation facing simultaneous yet distinct transformations in many aspects of social life. These cosmopolitan dragons represent subjects that had been silenced through various periods. Simultaneously, they are the voice of those who survived dictatorship and they are also the voice for those who died during the regime or did not resist the virus. They represent the bodies that are at the margin, creating a discourse that in its own abjection brings the center closer to their own marginal position.

In the collection of short stories by Caio Fernando Abreu, besides the notion of abjection discussed in the previous chapter, Abreu’s characters deal with the two perspectives presented previously: the endogenous and exogenous movement. The former
is represented by the disillusionment of a generation lost in the midst of the democratic opening in Brazil and economic crisis. The exogenous is depicted by the AIDS epidemic that was perceived as coming from abroad and once in Brazil developed possibilities for a local understanding of it. The HIV virus affected big cities and part of the population that was either returning to the country after exile or trying to find spaces (rather than non-spaces) for a new way of organizing a new civil society. Abreu’s short stories reveal an account of a nation facing huge changes in many aspects of life: on the one hand, the return to democracy, on the other, an extremely high inflation due to an economic crisis unprecedented in contemporary history.

Abreu’s characters survived dictatorship; however, even though they are now politically free, they seem once again doomed. Yet, by facing this silence, they are at the same time, producing a new discourse at the margin that will be trying to find its way to the center or unravel possibilities of living at the margin, as the main character of “A dama da noite” says, “Eu tenho um sonho, eu tenho um destino… Fora da roda” (O melhor da década de 1980 88). Therefore, this group of people faced the end of various utopias. As Victor Adler Pereira says, it is at this moment that “alguns daqueles que conspiravam a vanguarda da construção de um mundo novo reconhecem a posição marginal que lhes foi destinada” (97).

Sexuality is also a constant theme in his work and in Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso, sexuality(ies) is, as mentioned earlier, something unstable or changeable. Notions such as homo, hetero, or bisexual are constantly questioned: “Abreu’s textual space is populated by subjectivities representing a wide and fluid spectrum of genders and sexualities that escape facile containment within dominant ideological frameworks”
Abreu’s fiction thus destabilizes heteronormativity while presenting non-hegemonic sexual practices. In Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso this notion appears in several short stories as in “A Dama da noite,” in which the character is presented in a diffuse manner, leaving it unclear if it is a woman, a travesti,44 or a man. In “Sapatinhos vermelhos,” the main character – a woman – meets three men and they all spend the night together in an orgy. In “O rapaz mais triste do mundo,” a young man and an older man meet at a bar, exchange glances, leading to a conversation and a kiss but they do not finish the night together even though their sexual drive and desire are implicit throughout the short story. Finally in “Mel & Girassóis,” a man and a woman spend days together attempting to have a sexual encounter that is never fulfilled. As Abreu himself described, Dragões is a mobile novel; it can be read as short stories or as a novel in pieces. The dragons are related to the mythological animals that do not seem to adapt to the bourgeois life which serves as a type of paradise where those dragons do not belong (Dip 302).

The short stories mentioned above are part of a body of work that deals with different manifestations of sexuality through a discussion of power, sex and discourse. Abreu’s narratives are intertwined with subjectivities and characters that challenge the ideological structures of the heteronormative rules. Abreu “deterritorializes” heteronormativity by opening spaces for a multitude of queer bodies, bringing them to the

44 Don Kulick in Travesti developed a research project in the 1990s with the Brazilian travestis. In his book, the author states that travestis do not conform to any Euro-American sexual typologies. They are not transsexuals and they are not transvestites either. They do not wish to remove their penis, and they do not consider themselves to be women. However, they go beyond the transvestite world, since they make body changes through surgery and hormones. In his words, “the specific combination of female physical attributes and male homosexual subjectivity makes travestis almost unique in the world” (6). Therefore, travestis represent a category of people that do not conform to any trans classification as yet proposed. For that reason, I use the term travesti since the Portuguese word has no equivalent in English.
center, affecting the territorial and corporeal space, and resisting the process of becoming normal. This is analogous to what Beatriz Preciado does in *Multitudes Queer* while dealing with *desterritorialización*. Therefore, although Abreu’s characters are at the margin, outside the Ferris wheel (an image used by him in a “A Dama da noite” which I will discuss later), the author “procura trazer à luz e analisar os mecanismos e as marcas da inclusão e exclusão mais corriqueiras, inerente às engrenagens do consumo e poder relacionadas à sexualidade” (Pereira 98).

Out of the thirteen short stories published in the book, I will focus my analysis in one of those stories: “A dama da noite,” because it is the one that best represents Abreu’s project of depicting the disillusionment of an era and this sense of *desterritorialização*. *Dama da noite* (“queen of the night”) embodies one of those subjects that are pervasive in Abreu’s literature. There is a sense of ambiguity that permeates the short story already from the title. In Portuguese *dama da noite* is a type of flower that blossoms only at night. Still, the term *dama da noite* is also used for the women and *travestis* who work as prostitutes in Brazil. As the main character in the short story says: “As damas da noite recolhem seu perfume com a luz do dia” (100). The short story is a dialogue between a character in her forties assumed to be a *travesti* and a younger boy in his twenties. The story is set at a bar, in an unknown city for one night. It is late night and the *Dama da noite* is sitting at a table, drunk, talking to the boy.

Nevertheless she is the only character who is given a voice in the story. The reader is aware of her 20-year-old boy interlocutor only through her interactions with him. She repeats the boy’s questions and then replies to him, as in the passage below:

“Como se eu estivesse fora do movimento da vida” is the first sentence of the short story. From the very beginning, it is thus possible to sense the feeling of disembodiment and detachment of the main character. She cannot participate in the circle of life and she cannot even understand the language spoken by the others:

A vida rolando por aí feito roda-gigante, com todo mundo dentro, e eu aqui parada, pateta, sentada no bar … você tem um passe para a roda-gigante, uma senha, um código, sei lá…. Você fala qualquer coisa tipo bá, por exemplo, então o cara deixa você entrar, sentar e rodar junto com os outros. Mas eu fico sempre do lado de fora. (84)

Her words represent what Casper and Moore suggest about visibility. According to the authors, to be visible one must be seen and recognized by those who have power (79). But the body of Abreu’s main character is one of those that are “often missed” (81). She is an example of the travesti social reality in Brazil. Travestis are only seen at a distance by those who are inside the wheel (Abreu’s metaphor for visibility and societal participation) or recognized only as entertainment, sex industry workers and bodies for pleasure. The visibility they gain during carnival, for instance, is associated with men that cross dress for the parties. Cross-dressers, people in costumes, travestis, all become one
during Carnival through the eyes of mass media. Hence the visibility *travestis* receive is not accurate, since they are not seen as *travestis*, transgenders or other minorities and they are still missing bodies. After the four days of Carnival, they will once more be seen only at night, in bars, and on the streets. They are not allowed entrance into the Ferris wheel that keeps spinning both politically and socially.

The *travesti*’s (in)visibility also raises the question of power. As is well known, for Foucault, power is not in the hands of institutions, but is rather diffuse and pervasive (*Microfísica do poder*). According to the French thinker power is everywhere, coming from different places. In a similar fashion we do not know who controls the Ferris wheel, but that does not seem to matter. What really matters for the *dama da noite* is that there is a man who controls it and will not give her the necessary words – speech – to have the right to spin in the wheel.

The question of power is also present in the short story in other ways. Since she is left out of the wheel, the main character tries to use what little power she has in whatever ways she can. One such way is controlling the boy, deciding what they talk about and how they do so:

Você não gosta? Ah, não me diga, garotinho. Mas se eu pago a bebida, eu digo o que eu quiser, entendeu? Eu digo meu-bem assim desse jeito, do que jeito que eu bem entender. Digo e repito: meu-bem-meu-bem. Pego no seu queixo a hora que eu quiser também, enquanto digo e repito meu-bem-meu-bem. (84)
She may not have access to the Ferris wheel, but she does have some power in her domains; and the night, since she is the lady of the night, is one of her domains. As Foucault also wrote, power is not possessed, but exercised (*Microfísica* 17). The *travesti* exercises power, saying that she decides if she wants something or not, whether she likes it or not. She has the experience, the money and knowledge; therefore, she is entitled to exercise power over the younger boy, reproducing on the boy the suppression done to her, even if she is out of the Ferris wheel.

The inability of communication between different generations is also central in Abreu’s story “A dama da noite,” which foregrounds generational difference as an obstruction to mutual understanding. The main character of “A dama da noite” is in her forties whilst the other character (whom she calls “boy”) is in his twenties, an age difference which in the Brazilian political context evokes the death of the utopias experienced by the ones who lived through dictatorship and the relative indifference of a younger generation achieving adulthood. Therefore, the story is permeated by a sense of disillusion and misunderstanding, since the older generation has lost the ability to believe in utopias whereas a younger one, who did not have to fight for freedom, is born in a world in which utopian thinking has lost urgency. As the *dama da noite* ironically points out, “[s]abe porra: você nasceu dentro de um apartamento vendo tevê (85).

While both generations were living through turbulent times in a 1980s Brazil marked by moral panic, the *dama da noite* and “the boy” represent two challenging yet co-existent national points of view. As Gilbert Herdt explains, these moral panics are characteristics of states that:
experience times of divided public opinion, changing social, economic and political circumstances, and a clash between state mechanisms of control and the free expression and individual elaboration of sexuality. (32)

As in the US and many other places, in Brazil AIDS/HIV was (and still is) a public health crisis in Brazil: “[E]veryone discussed [it]. It was a frightening epidemic that … generated changes in activism, public health practices, clinical research, funding streams and sexual politics” (Casper and Moore 85). Abreu talks about this panic during an interview in the 1980s:

Há coisas mais graves no ar. São Paulo atualmente é uma cidade tomada pela paranoia da AIDS. Pelo menos na faixa de gente como a gente….

Conheço pessoas que não se tocam mais. O que é que se faz quando aquilo que era possibilidade de prazer – o toque, o beijo, o mergulho no corpo alheio capaz de nos aliviar da sensação de finitude e incomunicabilidade – começa a se tornar possibilidade de horror? Quando amor vira risco de contaminação? (Bessa 82)

Abreu’s short stories are, therefore, a product of an era taken over by the panic over the body, fear of sex and sexuality, and AIDS (Arenas, “Paradise” 16). The short stories in Os dragões não conhecem o paraíso thus question the possibility of happiness at a time in which communal dreams ended and the vanguard bodies are consigned to marginality. In Silviano Santiago’s words, the characters in these short stories are people
that “[se] sustentam no isolamento cultural em que sobrevivem nas metrópoles pós-modernas” (Vale 54). And, immovable in the middle of this paranoia and disillusionment, are two generations: one about to start its sexual life already with a condom in her/his hands and the other one who practiced free love as a form of contestation. The *dama da noite* points out this difference:


The bodies in Abreu’s stories have become more vulnerable than ever. For some of them, the situation was even worse than what most witnessed during dictatorship, in which all the bodies were under extreme vigilance, anyone could be arrested for no reason and many went missing (due to government torture practices or because they went undercover in guerrilla tactics). The post-dictatorship moment in Brazil faced instead of the expected optimism a new dilemma. If during the dictatorship the Communists were to be feared and therefore exterminated, in the 1980s Brazil faced a new “enemy,” that is to say those who engaged in “non-traditional” sex practices and those who remained after
the free love generation. In a way, it is the same generation being ostracized or silenced but for different reasons; it is the generation of the *desbunde*.

Though somewhat dated, Sontag’s account of AIDS and its metaphors seems appropriate at this point because it deals with the same moment at which Abreu is writing. According to her, “to get AIDS is precisely to be revealed, in the majority of cases so far, as a member of a certain “risk group,” a community of pariahs.” (29). And this community of pariahs is the group of people the queen of the night represents in this short story contrasted by the generation represented by the boy. The two generations are now facing an impossibility of touching and communication. In the *dama da noite*’s point of view, the younger boy is allowed to be in the Ferris wheel, since he represents heteronormativity. Even though he is talking to her, an outsider or a person who does not belong in the Ferris wheel, he still holds the power to be inside the Ferris wheel. The *dama da noite*, on the other hand, remains out of the Ferris wheel because people like her are allowed to see it spinning only from the outside. They are allowed to look but not touch. In Sontag’s account, the *dama da noite* is being punished by her behavior and the boy is the innocent affected by that risky behavior. As Sontag says, AIDS “is a punishment for deviant behavior and that it threatens the innocent – these two notions about AIDS are hardly in contradiction” (64).

In this short story, AIDS and its possibility of contamination becomes a metaphor for control of bodies and vigilance. The new generation who is unaware of the dictatorship must be protected against those who came out of dictatorship alive. Different from the boy, the Dama da noite knows Death, and she has faced it in multiple occasions. Even though she does not like it and denies it, death is present in her life:
We are not sure if the bodies she has seen are people who died in the dictatorship or victims of AIDS. By not stating clearly who the bodies are, the *dama da noite* implicitly suggests to the reader that she represents two groups of people that in the end are the same: the ones that died during the dictatorship and the ones that survived the regime but died of AIDS related diseases. The boy, in contraposition to the *dama da noite*, represents thus the voice of a younger generation that insists upon returning to the heteronormative patterns or a modus operandi that creates a fake notion of comfort. According to Arenas the *dama da noite*’s monologue, as a performative act, “relativizes gender categories and points to their constructedness” (“Paradise” 16).

Her voice is thus an attempt to open the boy’s eyes to the disillusionment of Brazil’s moment. She is saying that she has survived dictatorship but may not survive the current economic crises and epidemic. She is also trying to alert the upcoming generation that the Ferris wheel – the eternal vigilance of heteronormativity – is providing a fake sense of comfort and that there are a lot of people outside of it, with no control over the discourse which issues from it. She is a voice to be feared, she is the representation of abjection:
Eu sou a dama da noite que vai te contaminar com seu perfume venenoso e mortal. Eu sou a flor carnívora e noturna que vai te entontecer e te arrastar para o fundo de seu jardim pestilento. Eu sou a dama maldita que, sem nenhuma piedade, vai te poluir com todos os líquidos, contaminar teu sangue com todos os vírus.

Cuidado comigo: eu sou a dama que mata, boy. (86)

The characters in Abreu’s book are thus affected by the political and social crisis represented by the dictatorship and the AIDS epidemic. These bodies are, therefore, a cosmopolitan manifestation trying to reconcile a local movement with a transnational displacement. Also, this critical gaze performed by Abreu brings us back to what Andrade’s *movimento antropófago* envisioned for their project of a modern nation, as we saw in chapter 2:

Contra a realidade social, vestida e opressora cadastrada por Freud – a realidade sem complexos, sem loucura, sem prostituições e sem penitenciárias do matriarcado de Pindorama (*Utopia* 180)

Abreu’s dragons lost their rights (or have never been granted any rights); they have been denied access to the Ferris wheel. However, even at the margins their discourses present some criticism of the condition that was forced on them and from their place of banishment they find ways to question the position of Ferris wheel. The *dama da noite*, along with the other characters, seems to keep up her hopes until the end.
As we saw earlier in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* Kristeva explains how abjection can be compensated for in different ways, such as sublimation and laughter. In Abreu’s short stories, the metaphors for abjection are clear: a peeling scab or bodily fluids that are not wanted and must be removed from the body, such as blood or semen. “A Dama da noite” embodies abjection when they compare themselves to body parts that are usually revolting, rejected and dejected or describe themselves as disgusting objects.

On the other hand, laughter is also important for an understanding of these stories. For Kristeva, “laughing is a way of placing and displacing abjection” (*Powers* 8). *A dama da noite*, for example, laughs at and with the boy as a way to deal with the pain of the abjection and *execração*. When she sees herself as the abject, bitter laughter comes as a possible solution for the others to understand her:

Ria de mim, mas estou aqui parada, bêbada, pateta e ridícula, só porque no meio desse lixo todo procuro O Verdadeiro Amor. (88)

Nevertheless Kristeva also writes that “from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master” (2). I would suggest that this concept is fundamental for understanding “A dama da noite” and it is worth citing once more but at greater length this passage from Kristeva:

The one by whom the abject exists is thus a deject who places (himself), separates (himself), situates (himself), and therefore strays instead of
getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing. Situationist in a sense, and not without laughter – since laughing is a way of placing or displacing abjection. (Kristeva, Powers 8)

As we have already seen, Abreu’s characters experience abjection in various forms: semen, blood and other bodily fluids cover their bodies from time to time. However, abjection does not lead necessarily to exclusion, but if it does, as in “A dama da noite,” it is a place that can be read as also being productive. The dama da noite represents this productive displacement in a more explicit way, because she realizes she is part of a visibility game and is aware that from her place of banishment she does not cease challenging her masters.

A dama da noite is thus aware of the Foucauldian notion in which the concept of power is dispersed and also of her ‘Kristevian’ abject position. To the dama da noite, being aware of this concept and making a choice of not being part of it are also part of the game, thus her abject body represents a constant challenge to the master. She understands what Audre Lorde states about the idea of power: “there are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise” (53). Abreu, therefore, presents a possibility of visibility through exclusion. From her marginal position, she exercises power.

The dama da noite is one of Abreu’s dragons. These mythological beings “trafegam impunes, deliciados, no limiar entre essa zona oculta e a mais mundana. O que não podemos compreender, ou pelo menos aceitar” (131). The dragons presented by the author walk at the margins affected by the fear of contamination and of the epidemic in the bodies and also overtaken by the disillusionment in the country. These dragons face
the reality of the post-dictatorship era: one in which books, movies and theories can now travel. However, epidemics, viruses and discontent are also traveling.

All of Abreu’s dragons, lead by the lady of the night who waits for true love while observing the movement of the Ferris wheel, are nameless and lost in a chaotic space, a space in-between, somewhere between disillusionment and hope, between the cure and the epidemic, a space that still resists and challenges the master while talking about love, as the *dama da noite* threatens the boy: “procuro o Verdadeiro Amor. Cuidado comigo: um dia encontro” (88). In the end, what the boy should fear is not her possibility of contamination, or destruction, it is the possibility of finding love. And it is in the prospect of loving that lies her real threat. Nonetheless, it is important to understand how this hope is articulated in Abreu’s story. As the anthropophagic queer suggests, positivity is not dissociated from negativity, while a *dama da noite* searches for true love, her surroundings are cold and she feels like a child:

Dá minha jaqueta, boy, que faz um puta frio lá fora e quando chega essa hora da noite eu me desencanto. Viro outra vez aquilo que sou todo dia, fechada sozinha perdida no meu quarto, longe da roda e de tudo: uma criança assustada. (111)

If Antropofagia is essentially queer in the sense of verbalizing loss and failure against a normative perspective, Abreu’s dragons are anthropophagic queers while finding productive spaces. As Halberstam puts it in *The Queer Art of Failure*, failure could be a style (87); and instead of resisting failure, alternative modes of living might be
already vibrating at the margins, exactly where a *dama da noite* claims to be. Halberstam says that “[q]ueer studies offer us one method for imagining, not some fantasy of an elsewhere, but existing alternatives to hegemonic systems” (89). Abreu’s character, therefore, presents a positive perspective in relation to abjection. The *dama da noite*, as much as *Antropofagia* is precisely the alternative to hegemonic systems Halberstam proposes. Her view from the outside – or the margins – of the Ferris wheel is not a fantasy or an improbable space, it is the space she inhabits and from that locality she exercises her failure as something positive. The *dama da noite* reminds us “that there is something powerful in being wrong, in failing, and that all our failures combined might just be enough, if we practice them well, to bring down the winner” (Halberstam, *Failure* 120).

The *dama da noite* has not given up. As she hopefully expresses in the end of the short story, she will find love and it will not be at the Ferris Wheel, but rather from her failed but productive positive. She will not embrace silence, unlike Figueiredo whose perspectives embrace abjection as the impossibility of life, as we shall see in the next section of this chapter.

3.3 André de Figueiredo

The works of André de Figueiredo have hardly received any critical attention. He is an author whose career was erased by the dictatorship, or as Gabriel Perissé says “carreira abortada pela ditadura.” While his first work, *Labirinto* was a best-selling novel and praised by various critics at the time of its release, due to its daring content – which
featured such themes as incest and homosexuality— the dictatorial government forbad its
distribution. The novel’s second edition in 1979 did not meet with the same critical
acclaim. In 1978 Figueiredo published a second novel and in 2002, *Arabesco* was
released, a novel that picks up and continues some of the themes of *Labirinto*. As the
author has stated, “[c]omecei a escrever 'Arabesco' durante o sucesso de 'Labirinto’”
(Perissé). Both novels deal with similar topics, and the tropicalist approach of *Labirinto*
is revisited in *Arabesco* in 2002. Figueiredo explained in an interview that he wrote the
first “romance tropicalista” in Brazil. His work, I argue, creates a direct dialogue with the
some of the ideas that in this chapter I have called an anthropophagic queer perspective.
Figueiredo’s family portraits are queer re-imaginings of traditional families. As such, his
novels propose a queer narrative representation in which asymmetric, non-normative
erotic couplings (often formed by three, rather than two) do not align with the hegemonic
normativity.

3.3.1 *Labirinto*

In *Labirinto* the protagonist, a writer named Alfredo, is searching both for his
family and his own story in the course of five days. The main character returns to his
hometown, Gramame, a small town near João Pessoa in Paraíba, in the northeast of
Brazil, to find inspiration for his novel, *O romance de uma região: Gramame*. *Labirinto*
transitions between consciousness and a state of elevated imagination, not necessarily in
an unconscious but rather a creative state of mind. In such states Alfredo is visited by
ghosts of his past such as his mother and grandmother: “os mortos pareciam querer
surpreendê-lo de todas as formas” (107). During such mind states, he visits Gramame,
his hometown and retells the story of his family, which could be compared to the story of the Brazilian abject body. During the five days of the novel, he revisits (and builds) his genealogical tree and his life. Finally, towards the end of the novel, images from a hospital suggest that he might be in surgery and that in the end he joins his family in death.

Figueiredo’s novel attempts to recreate a space of mobility for a conflicted body torn between the present and past, his sexuality and his origins. Through a series of experiences that deal with body fluids, death, and space, Alfredo builds his archetypical history as an attempt to rebuild his destroyed body in the hospital during surgery. In order to do that he returns to Gramame, the hometown he had left years before to become a writer.

According to early European sources, the name Gramame comes from the Tupi language and derives from Guará, the name of an indigenous person from the Tapuya tribe who was held captive by the Potiguares (another indigenous group). Eventually, the Potiguares planned to eat Guará, but a Potiguar woman fell in love with him, and in order to avoid such a relationship the Potiguares decided to kill Guará. When she finds out about the imminent death, the woman runs to his arms and says “oh guará ma ma” which means “they want to kill you.” The river where she held him in her arms from thereon became known as Gramame and, according to a Potiguar legend, the river was formed by the shedding of her tears.

The indigenous and mythological roots of the place name are important as an explanatory narrative that reveals not only the origins of this particular society in Paraíba,

---

45 The narrative that recounts the origin of the name of the river is told by Elias Herckman (1596–1644) in “Descrição Geral da Capitania da Parahyba” in http://biblio.etnolinguistica.org/herckman-1886-parahyba.
but also of Brazil as a whole. Indeed, anthropophagic roots permeate the indigenous mythology of the country. Alfredo’s narrative is thus built upon a myth of an impossible love story that took place on the bank of a river where his family built their house. Alfredo finds a space that is neither physical nor ethereal to reencounter his family and write the story of Gramame, the city where he comes from.

Another point of interest in Figueiredo’s novel is how internal conflicts – those relating to his inner self and his subjectivity – are mediated by the external conflicts in society. In order to understand his own story (his own sense of being), Alfredo must return to his hometown to investigate and retell the saga of his family. Therefore, the external and internal reflect not only the cultural aspects of the formation of Brazil, but also the interior aspects of Alfredo’s personality in which questions of national and personal identity overlap.

This double movement starts with Helena, his grandmother, who at the age of thirteen comes from the big city to live with João Miguel, an older man in a farm in Gramame. Helena represents the exogenous tradition, while João Miguel represent the local practices. Alfredo’s background is thus informed by cultural hybridity – the anthropophagic result of a Brazilian miscegenation between local and European influences: “… as cômodas de Espanha, as fruteiras de jardim vindos d’Itália e Portugal; as cadeiras de palhinha com desenhos quadriculados…” (36).

Moreover, the way in which the novel relates the erotic body with this culturally hybrid space also eroticizes the representation of the land (the landscape and its natural elements), which is suffused with desire. The natural elements become part of the character’s lovemaking: sexual acts take place on banana leaves or in the river. His
grandfather, for example, used to bathe himself in the lower parts of the river, so his body would receive the waters from the upper part of the river where his lover would be bathing. The bathing in the river, if not literally the sexual act, expresses the novel’s desire to connect and intermingle the natural environment with the human body.

Sexual acts are also combined with religious motifs and Biblical passages. At one point, Alfredo describes a sexual act with Zé Dou-Dou, a man from his adolescence who would sexually please the boys in town. Alfredo recollects that Zé Dou-Dou could please four boys at the same time, stretched out in a position reminiscent of the crucified Jesus:

\[\text{Zé Dou-Dou era pau para toda obra: inclinado, quase de quatro pés, chupava o jovem paraibano que estava à sua frente, dava o cu para o que estava a trás e masturbava os jovens que haviam se colocado, um a sua direita e outro a sua esquerda. Quem o visse do alto, diria que era um crucificado. (111)}\]

The narrator also makes a similar comparison with Saint Francis of Assisi: “Dar, dar, foi este o segredo de São Francisco de Assis. Dar sempre, seja o que for. Um beijo, um abraço, um pedaço de pão, um olhar, um sorriso, um gesto, o cu, a boceta, uma simples atenção” (159). The verb ‘to give’ (dar) in Portuguese has a sexual connotation that implies being penetrated, so, according to Alfredo, it does not matter what you give – parts of your body, affection or material things, as long as it is done with care and willingness to offer something to another being. The acts of giving and taking inform...
Alfredo’s idea of collectivity and are thus precisely where Tropicalismo and Antropofagia meet in this novel.

The novel not only actualizes the erotic body through religion but also unapologetically makes recurrent, detailed descriptions of its fluids: urine, feces, semen and blood are treated not as shameful, but natural. The novel also repeatedly foregrounds the body – Alfredo’s and others’ – as a marker of time, for instance in the rites of passage of manhood. Even Alfredo’s comatose state (the conscious-unconsciousness in which he finds himself) may be considered as another rite of passage.

In the same vein, the body marks parental relationships. Isaura, Alfredo’s paternal grandmother, would send her sons away as soon when they had their first erection. In an almost anti-Oedipal twist, before the boy could become man, the mother would expel the heir of her properties (her husband is described in the novel as a nobody, a useless man). Consider the passage below, which describes the boy’s discovery of manhood:

A mãe olhou e viu a rola do filho engrossando e endurecendo,
endurecendo e engrossando e subindo, subindo como se quisesse elevar
todos até o céu. (195)

In order to protect her sons from destruction (in her words), the mother expels them only after the bodily changes are visible. As Viveiros de Castro points out, among indigenous populations in Brazil, rites of passage (which indicate a transition from childhood to adulthood) are marked through a series of rituals that inflict their bodies
leaving, at times, permanent marks (qtd in Sztutman 102). Figueiredo draws from the country’s indigenous traditions to visual acknowledge adulthood.

Later in the novel, Alfredo relives the moment when he meets Martha, the girl who would become his best friend. They meet at a park in Rio de Janeiro where both were cruising. During their first conversation they talk about the taste of sperm. Martha enjoys it and to her, “esperma é vida.” She deepens her analysis saying that the taste of the fluid matches the person: a good taste usually means that she will get along with the person. It is through the taste of abject fluids that she constructs her social relationships. For Alfredo, the taste of sperm is related to breast milk, and Alfredo says that the one who “chupa pênis está mamando o seio da mãe. Gosto de esperma: leite materno.” From the fluids to body parts, they move on to talk about buttocks, nádegas and assholes, or as the main character says “uma pena que cada bunda esconda um cu” (158).

Anal sex is to Alfredo the highest form of abjection and as the passive partner he sees himself as a bicha and not a man. Alfredo is extremely reluctant to accept the pleasures anal sex provide, since he associates the act of being penetrated to emasculation; the penetrated man ceases “being a man” and instead becomes a bicha. This scenario illustrates the discussions I have presented in the first chapter. During the 1970s, the gay movement had just begun to develop and a gay identity was still in the making in 1971, when the novel was written and set. Hence to Alfredo, a love affair between two men would not be possible, only the sexual act between a bicha and a man. Throughout the novel he meets people who try to persuade him, telling him that it is possible to love another man, but he does not ever develop this type of affection.
However, halfway through the novel, Alfredo tries to be a *bicha* for the first time and let himself be penetrated by another man. The body fluids are a cause of critical concern and revaluation for the man who penetrates him: “deprimente é defecar e todo mundo defeca. Reis, rainhas, também. O que veado faz é dignificar o cu, dar-lhe função nobre” (179). The conflicts in Alfredo’s sexuality thus lie not in the fact of enjoying the company of another man but in that he likes to be penetrated by another man. His interior conflicts are mirrored in the face of a repressive, external reality in which there is no viable queer society in which men and women love each other regardless of their gender and identities. To Martha, for instance, identities are shattered in the name of fluid exchanges and pleasure. To the grandmother, however, the body fluids are part of her identity in rather inescapable ways:

Dona Loló, sentada em sua cadeira de palhinha, tendo um penico por baixo, à espero do mijo, foi logo dizendo que era caso de se pensar e soltou aquela mijada: chóóóó!” (192)

The grandmother sees no salvation or liberation in the body. She represents another vision, in which semen, urine, feces and blood are materialities of the land and the body that are expelled in form of abjection. Despite the fact that in Figueiredo’s novel the body’s fluids and ejections are treated in a frank and generally affirmative way, they do not (contrary to Caio Fernando Abreu’s fiction) consistently redeem the characters from their limitations and individual states of abjection. Alfredo is the personification of abjection in his own eyes:
Certa vez, Alfredo voltava da Avenida Rio Branco, onde quase tinha sido espancado e ouvido na cara: “Não se manca, seu veado sem vergonha?!”. (33)

Alfredo finds in homosexuality a particular way to deal with the loss of his father: “e ao se deitar com alguns homens, era um homem à procura do pai” (87). He wanders around the city looking for the father that had left him after murdering his mother for being unfaithful when he was a child. The combination of the search for the father and the search for his homosexual instincts creates an interesting aspect for queer experiences. His attempts to find his father could be related to the disgust in relation to anal sex. Alfredo’s fear corroborates Bersani’s observation that to be penetrated is to abdicate power (*Rectum* 19). In the novel, Alfredo’s penetration becomes the acknowledgment that he is a “filho de vagabunda com assassino” (73).

In *As raízes e o labirinto da América Latina* Silviano Santiago reads Sérgio Buarque de Holanda’s *Raízes do Brasil* and Octavio Paz’s *El laberinto de la soledad* as an attempt to find common routes and roots in relation to European colonialism and, later, North American neocolonialism. Santiago writes:

Ao se entregar, ao abrir-se ao conquistador europeu, a Malinche transgride os valores de seu povo, à semelhança do modo como agiu a nossa Iracema junto ao invasor português, Martim, como está na criação de José de Alencar. (140)
Alfredo is, thus, the son of the Malinche in her Brazilian manifestation. He is the fruit of such transgression, and his migratory movement reinforces his abjection. From his origins in the northeast of the country in Gramame to his life in the south, he represents an abject body in terms of space, relocation and sexuality. Labirinto represents or reduplicates (as Santiago affirms) the idea of constantly being desterrado.

At a young age, Alfredo wins a prize for writing a short story. He, then, moves to Rio de Janeiro to pursue a career as a writer. The short story that leads him to Rio de Janeiro is named “Rejeição.” In his story, the character screams “Lourença sou eu.” Lourença was Alfredo’s aunt that assumed the identity of a dog and hanged herself from a tree. His fiction, thus, reflects his aunt’s abjection as a metaphor for his own abjection that will become more evident in Rio de Janeiro: “filho de assassino com prostituta e ainda por cima fresco, era demais!” (150).

Alfredo’s abjection finds comfort however with Martha. She is a person that defies the logics of bourgeois morality and lives her life on her own terms:


Martha is thus the personification of the anthropophagic queer. She is aware of her temporality, aware of being a creation invented by god or by a writer and aware of the morals that have been imposed on her. She is willing to devour the other’s semen in order
to get to the core of the other’s being: “Com Martha, a vida de Alfredo se tornou uma loucura total, consciente” (166).

Alfredo is a queer body in the senses of abjection and failure as we have mentioned earlier. But Halberstam’s sense of failure as a queer style does not fit Alfredo’s negativity towards his sexuality. To Alfredo, his abjection has no place in society and therefore must be eliminated along with other queer lives presented in the book such as those of Marta and his aunt.

Alfredo’s father murdered his unfaithful mother and his grandmother gave up tradition to be with a *matuto*, a farmer with no education. He moves to Rio de Janeiro and is recognized as a *nordestino*, a source of abjection in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Abjection is thus the recurring topic of the family. His family history is permeated with Brazilian folklore and traditions mixed with the metropolitan influence. Therefore it is possible to read his family’s as an anthropophagic tradition in the molds proposed by Oswald de Andrade. As Lugarinho states in “Antropofagia crítica: para uma teoria queer crítica em português,” a queer reading is one that would allow one to understand what lies at the margins (107). Lugarinho’s proposition would help us understand Figueiredo’s story, as the character reconstitutes his past by retelling the story of those who were at the margin: at the margin of the *casarão* where his grandmother built her castle and at the margin of the physical space in which they all lived, the river, the *mata*, the natural elements of the country taken over by the external influence of the *casarão* which was built as a mirror of the European castles.

As we saw in the second chapter, in *Manifesto Antropófago* Oswald de Andrade proposes the recuperation of the margins and of its complex relationship with the center.
The metropolis or the external influence does not come as primordial to civilization, but the rather local becomes primordial for a new civilization. In *Labirinto*, local space and local tradition are constantly imposing themselves on the center represented by the *casarão* built by his grandparents.

Figueiredo provides Alfredo’s story with a clear anthropophagic twist. At the end of his third day in Gramame, Alfredo’s ancestors (Portuguese, Arabic, African…) come to visit him and ask him if God exists. At first sight, it may seem surprising that the dead return to implore the living with questions about Life and God. However, this is not implausible in the light of Brazil’s colonial past. The anthropologist Viveiros de Castro explains that when the Portuguese colonizers arrived in Brazil, they were curious to find out if the creatures they saw had souls, and therefore, if they were humans. The indigenous, on the other hand, wanted to understand if the spirits they could see had bodies, and therefore, if they were humans. In other words: “os primeiros se interrogavam sobre a presença ou não da alma no outro; os segundos sobre a materialidade ou não do corpo do outro” (Sztutman, *Encontros* 107). Castro points out that the experience of the mystical in the West is considered to take place outside of the body and that rites of passage (or the transitory space-in-between) are usually not marked on the body. According the anthropologist however, indigenous people find the body to be inextricably linked to, and part of, the mystical. In *Labirinto*, Figueiredo inverts the western tradition and recalls an indigenous worldview to mark Alfredo’s rite of passage. The centrality of the body in turn is identified as a source of stigma for Alfredo: “por onde passei fui deixando vida, o meu sangue” (189).
Figueiredo not only recognizes the idea, often heard in AIDS rallies, that “silence is death” but, more drastically and pessimistically, suggests that both silence and voice can signify death. That both Martha and Alfredo die suggests that they are too “queer” (too sexually non-conforming) for a society under a dictatorial regime. As Alexandre Brandão explains:

Martha é moderna até as tripas. É artista. É puta. E tem marido, de quem não esconde nada. É uma mulher que, vivendo sua época, está além dela e paga por isso. Pois Martha leva a Labirinto um pouco do clima inquieto do momento histórico em que André de Figueiredo o escrevia: os anos de chumbo, entre 1968 e 1971. (“O polimento das cores” 3)

In Martha, the novel offers a counterpoint to Alfredo’s self-reproving sense of abjection: she manages to embrace her abjection and tries to point the way for Alfredo to resist the oppressor. Nonetheless, neither Alfredo nor Martha can successfully resist oppression. They are both eliminated from society, and unlike Abreu’s “Dama da noite,” do not find a place to express their abject resistance.

In order to make Alfredo and Martha’s abjection visible, the novel’s narrator assumes the Foucauldian idea of reverse discourse and elects Gramame, the place from which he had been banished, to tell this (his) story. However, Alfredo is not able to fulfill his ambitions of becoming a storyteller and dies prematurely. Therefore, if in Caio Fernando Abreu, the Dama da noite understands her abjection sufficiently well to attempt to improve her marginal position, in Labirinto, much more pessimistically, there is no possibility for life once the characters acknowledge their abjection.
Next to the *dama da noite*’s challenging position to abjection and Alfredo’s death in *Labirinto*, I will discuss one more perspective on abjection, Herbert Daniel’s writing and activism. Daniel’s take on abjection, I argue, can be seen as both an impossibility and positivity, or rather, he proposes abjection as a strategy of resistance.

### 3.4 Herbert Daniel

Herbert Daniel was an active member of the guerrilla front against the dictatorial regime during the 1960s and 1970s, participating in the kidnapping of two ambassadors. He went into exile, first in Portugal and then in France, from 1974 to 1981. He tried to return from exile – as all the others had already done –, but he was not able to do so until 1981, two years after the amnesty was established. In 1979, Daniel wrote a letter explaining his situation, but *Lampião da Esquina* was the only media vehicle that published it in March of 1980: “[S]ou um dos poucos exilados que restam fora das margens que o governo quer impor entre anistiáveis e condenáveis” – he said in “O que é isso, companheiros” (10). The reasons why he was left in Paris were not clear. According to the author the consulate said he needed to finish his judicial sentence until 1981, which would not make sense since the 1979 amnesty was an “anistia ampla, geral e irrestrita,”\(^4\) as the government propagated. In his book, Daniel insinuates that his homosexuality was the reason for his not coming back to Brazil. In *Passagem para o próximo sonho*, Daniel mentions a meeting at the *Comitê Brasil pela Anistia* in which his letter was not read.

---

\(^4\) In August of 1979, General João Figueiredo, then president of Brazil, signed the bill that granted amnesty to all of those who were involved in political crimes. Controversially this bill also granted amnesty to all the government agents who tortured and killed political activists.
because he was “simplesmente uma bicha.” Thus homosexuality, and more importantly, his openness about his homosexuality and gay life in Paris were definitely issues that were obliquely addressed at the time. As Herbert Daniel himself explains in *Passagem para o próximo sonho*, “um homossexual calado é aceitável” (217).

Herbert Daniel wrote the account of his years in exile in *Passagem para o próximo sonho*, two novels and an essay on AIDS. During his years back in Brazil he worked around the debates on homosexuality, human rights and ecology. He worked with PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores and then founded PV – Partido Verde – the national green party. He ran for congress, but did not win. Towards the end of the 1980s he had become a vocal activist on AIDS and HIV. Like Caio Fernando Abreu, he too became one of the first public figures to openly declare his HIV status. In a 1988 television special, he declared:

> Eu sou escritor homossexual e estou doente de AIDS. Isso me torna um cidadão absolutamente comum, um brasileiro como quase todos os outros. Oprimido mas cheio de esperança. (“Viva a Vida”)

He died of complications related to HIV/AIDS in 1992 after years of activism.

---

47 The CBA sent a letter to *Lampião da Esquina* explaining that there would be no reason for the CBA to discriminate against Herbert Daniel and that he had been appointed a lawyer, a CBA board member: “Gostaríamos de esclarecer que quanto ao CBA não há nenhum motivo de ordem política ou pessoal para discriminar o companheiro Herbert, deixado do lado da mesquinha e odiosa anistia parcial dada pelo regime militar” (Ferreira, *Lampião* 14).
3.4.1 *Passagem para o próximo sonho*

*Passagem para o próximo sonho* was Daniel’s first publication after his exile. It was published after other accounts on the dictatorship written by former *guerrilheiros*.\(^{48}\) It came out as the account of the last exiles, but due to the extensive account of his homosexuality and life in Paris, the book did not gain as much circulation as other narratives dealing with the same topic. Henfil explains that the publishers wanted the title to be “O último exilado,” but Daniel insisted on the more poetic title *Passagem para o próximo sonho*.

*Passagem para o próximo sonho* is not a fictional story but a first person account of his life in exile. Nonetheless, as it is the case in most of his work, for example his later testimonial novel *Meu corpo daria um romance*, the thread of narrative construction is intertwined with history, testimony and sophisticated textual construction, or, as the author describes it, a “dizer autobiograficcional” and a “possível romance autocrítico,” which is in the subtitle of the book. It is through his writings that Herbert Daniel develops his political project, first related to homosexuality and visibility, later to AIDS and HIV.

The first half of Daniel’s story is about his years as an active member of the guerrilla movement. The second half, on the other hand, deals with his concerns about homosexuality and the left. The writer points out in the beginning of *Passagem para o sonho*:

\(^{48}\) Fernando Gabeira’s *O que é isso, companheiro* (1979) and Alfredo Sirkis’s *Os carbonários* (1980) are two of the renowned books published at the time.
Meus problemas pequeno-burgueses me preocupavam como tantos empecilhos que eu tivesse para poder me tornar um bom revolucionário. Entre eles a sexualidade, mais explicitamente, a homossexualidade. Desde que comecei a militar, senti que tinha uma opção a fazer: ou eu levaria uma vida sexual regular – e transtornada, secreta e absurda, isto é, puramente “pequeno-burguesa”, para não dizer “reacionária”, ou então faria a revolução. Eu queria fazer a revolução. Conclusão: deveria “esquecer” minha sexualidade. (96)

Daniel wanted to make a revolution and participate in the movement, and since sexuality was a matter for the bourgeoisie, he set his homosexuality aside and did not discuss it with anyone with the openness and clarity presented in the book. His body, during his work as a revolutionary participant of the guerrilla, became a political body totally dissociated of sexual practices. The only release he found during the guerrilla years was through masturbation: “[e]m verdade vos digo, incréus impenitentes: e pra que é que serve a punheta?” (97).

Just like Oswald de Andrade, Daniel thus spent some time outside of Brazil, but unlike Oswald de Andrade, he was forced into exile. His position towards the internal and external was far more complex than Andrade’s. First, he was fighting in Brazil in the name of exogenous ideals – for socialism and against the external influence of the U.S. government. Eventually, exile was the ultimate recourse for all of those who had been persecuted by the police during the 1960s and 1970s.
Herbert Daniel praised Oswald de Andrade’s intention of *devoração* and, with anthropophagic eyes, Daniel noticed a sense of racism in France in relation to the fascination towards Latin American guerrillas; as if the fascination with the cannibal had been reinvented:

A atitude da esquerda francesa nesse momento é uma das mais belas demonstrações de amor que conhecem. O que não exclui um ligeiro verniz de racismo em relação a um mundo (Terceiro), que fascina o francês de esquerda e que se lhe apresenta como incógnita. (150)

Daniel is thus aware of the double movement that abjection and acceptance can create among people. During his exile in France, he was also able to understand Brazilian practices and formulate a discourse that would explain Brazil’s problematic relationship with the abject. His critique of France is also a critique of Brazil, a country that, according to the author, masks conservatism with “ares de modernidade” (89).

In his second novel, *Meu corpo daria um romance*, Daniel describes a kiss between the narrator and his boyfriend on the streets of Copacabana before getting into a bus late at night. In the sublime moment of the kiss he describes, the passengers become the audience and transform the kiss into a scene of abjection and disgust. The abjection – from the left to the right – is clear when he describes the passengers in details to the point of specifying one of the members of the ‘audience’ wearing a red star – the symbol of the PT. Daniel had already formulated the concept of the abject body in his first book where he explained that, “ser bicha era uma acusação. Crime cujo castigo está nele e no rótulo”
In this second novel he furthers this formulation by narrating the transformation that external conflicts cause internally into the marked body. As Daniel said, homosexuality is always something external – marginal – a “problema médico, jurídico, ideológico, o que o valha” (215). However the externality of homosexuality would affect internally the homosexual body, as demonstrated in the opening scene of Meu corpo daria um romance.

In terms of sexuality and homosexuality, Herbert Daniel’s discourse is relevant today, since we still face issues of silence and coming out inside gay communities:

A forma mais sutil de censura consiste na imposição da autocensura. Um homossexual calado é aceitável. Talvez até útil. Porque educado, comportadinho, tranquilizante. Uma bicha louca que se apresenta, é o escândalo e o despautério. (Passagem 217)

Daniel articulates the notion of the abject in ways that amplifies what it is inside us that makes us invisible. If the LGBT community in Brazil gains visibility, what are the tools necessary to be given respect? As the author stated in the quote above, the idea that prevailed when he wrote the book as well as in present day may still be relevant. A homosexual, while quiet and with normatively straight behavior, is accepted, whereas a bicha louca is despautério. Andrade and Santiago help us understand ways to deal with such silencing, or, as Daniel says, “[s]er bicha, quando se sabe, não se descobre: se encobre” (230).
During his years with the armed leftist organizations, Daniel never mentioned his homosexuality to his peers because, according to him, “para os companheiros que se desconfiavam, calavam” (96). The silence that permeated his guerrilla years was so significant that Daniel opens his book talking about his sexuality:

Sexo – masculino

(sem nenhuma dúvida, nem vacilação. Embora entre os outros masculinos seja peculiar, minoritário: homossexual.) (23)

By expressing the transition from the imposed silence during the guerrilla to the open homosexuality in Paris and the subsequent refusal by the Brazilian government as well as the silence of the amnesty committees to have him back, Herbert Daniel explores the varied forms of the concept of the silence towards homosexuality in his book. Silence is, then, a productive form of revealing abjection towards his sexuality. This is how the author explains the relationship between silence and homosexuality, “[a] forma mais geral de se falar sobre a homossexualidade é o silêncio” (215). Paradoxically, then, Daniel saw in this manifestation of silence, the possibility of visibility for his homosexuality.

In the realm of fiction, Abreu’s and Figueiredo’s characters are constantly dealing with their internal conflicts of abjection and the external conflicts of acceptance – silenced or vocal. Abreu’s characters deal with the stigma of bodies marked by homosexuality and AIDS. Alfredo in Labirinto cannot seem to find peace with his own sexuality and the search for his father. Passagem para o próximo sonho ends the analyses
proposed in this chapter because it proposes a synthesis of both the possibility presented by Abreu and the impossibility presented by Figueiredo. Daniel’s personal account of sexuality brings to bear on Brazilian everyday practices what those fictional characters have been struggling with. Using Daniel’s words, Alfredo in *Labirinto* decides to “cover” himself—*encobrir-se*, or hide oneself from the others, while *a dama da noite*, even though she is not covered, is at the margins and tries to find productivity from that position. This notion of secrecy is related to the idea of privacy, and also to the ideas of internal and external I discussed in the previous paragraphs. As Alfredo says, being a homosexual is not the problem, as long as he is not a “flaming queen.” Along similar lines Silviano Santiago has argued that:

> privacy, introduced into Brazilian social practice, is a class conceit. As we shall see, popular classes in Brazil have found more spontaneous ways of transparent social relations that are not based on the clash of marginality and norm. (“Wily” 16)

For Santiago, the popular classes in Brazil deal with homosexuality and queer subjectivity in ways other groups have not yet applied. Alfredo, for instance, is the representation of urban middle class individuals whose social lives are dependent on the idea of privacy. Sexuality, therefore, is part of the private sphere.

The anthropophagic queer intends to rescue these notions of rejection and abjection and transform them into something locally productive. If Santiago is accurate when he affirms that Brazil has its own practices in regard to the politics of coming out,
albeit only in the context of the popular class, then Herbert Daniel also has a point in claiming the importance of *encobrir-se*; that is, of letting the private sphere interact with the public sphere. Silence, in this case, is as productive as coming out since it since this notion of *encobrir-se* avoids:

> un tipo de visibilidad que, aunque impuesta y gestionada por las instancias normativas (lo cual implica su construcción en términos negativos), ha supuesto la posibilidad de la reapropiación y rearticulación de sus significados por parte de los sujetos marcados por esas imágenes. (Córdoba García, “Teoría Queer” 51)

The *encobrir-se* discussed by Daniel gives visibility to the homosexual body at the same time it avoids the medicated visibility that Foucault discussed in *History of Sexuality*. So, unlike the negativity presented by Figueiredo or the verbalized marginal position proposed by Abreu, Daniel brings a third way in which both negativity and positivity resume in a dialectal perspective that gives space to both silence and visibility. As Susan Sontag says in “Aesthetics of Silence,” “silence exists as a decision” and it also “exists as a punishment” (4). To Daniel, the decision of silence would avoid the existence of punishment that Figueiredo saw as the only possibility.
3.5 Conclusion

If we return to the stories analyzed here, it is possible to see how the body plays an important role in these books. If, as various theorists have suggested, abjection is situated at the limit of the body, the writers I treated in this chapter seem to agree that it is neither internal nor external, but both. Abjection simultaneously marks our physical bodies and what is external to it. Thus, abjection is formulated neither in nor out, but rather through the body. Brazilian intellectuals discussed such ideas at the time the stories I analyzed were being written. For instance, in 1984, Marilena Chauí, philosopher and professor at USP, asserted that “em muitas sociedades, e particularmente na nossa, o corpo é uma das entidades privilegiadas para o exercício da dominação” (176). Even though, such statement seems rather obvious nowadays, Chauí’s book on sexual repression was seminal and a reference for many of the writers I have analyzed in this chapter (Abreu, for instance, quotes her more than once in his letters).49

In addition to these literary responses to abjection, Abreu’s stories set its author apart from the others by the way in which they shed light on the added stigma of AIDS to the homosexual body. As Caetano Veloso sings, “veados – tendo sido o grupo-vítima preferencial.” Even thirty years later, the epidemic still marks the homosexual body, especially of the gay male (two of the authors discussed here died of complications due to AIDS). Another point these texts have in common is their intertextuality and exploration

---

49 See Abreu Cartas (especially page 78).
of textuality. In their writings, the authors are playing not only with the limits (or lack of) of sexuality, but also with the limits of the texts. Herbert Daniel refuses to write a straightforward account of his experience in Paris and in the guerrilla group, and he is constantly combining different genres. In the first pages of his book, the author writes:

Vamos brincar de faz de conta: imaginemos a possibilidade da existência de um personagem-autor de um romance imperfeito… (22)

André de Figueiredo, on the other hand, meditates on the nature of fiction and the distinction between text and history:

- O Ponto final ainda está muito longe.
- Como você sabe?
- Eu sou escritor.
- É o que pensa. Você está sendo escrito como eu estou sendo escrita. Mas não falemos disto. Falemos da vida. Corramos. (78)

The three of them also put a particularly “queer” spatial and temporal imagination into play that appears to anticipate a point later made by Judith Halberstam:

Queer time is a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance. “Queer Space” refers to the place-making practices within postmodernism in
which queer people engage and it also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics. *(Queer Time 6)*

Perhaps Figueiredo’s fiction is most keen to break with bourgeois values: the matriarch of his family leaves her “doctor” father to live in the woods, near the river, creating a space that is neither bourgeois nor indigenous, but rather an imagined place in which non-normative forms of living are respected and nurtured. Caio Fernando Abreu’s urban landscapes formulate queer spaces in which different generations can create dialogue and understand their abjection and social rejection. Herbert Daniel too invents and probes new understandings of space, drawing on his personal experiences with queer spaces in Paris and Brazil.

In their respective ways, theorists like Michael Warner, Julia Kristeva and Leo Bersani deal with abjection and its double movement to the point that the conflict between the internal and the external is revealed. The stories I analyzed in this chapter also deal with the characters’ abjection in similar ways. Figueiredo’s shame, Daniel’s description of his time working in Paris, and Abreu’s disillusioned characters illustrate this perspective.

Oswald de Andrade suggests that what is most abject for us is actually the most productive sense of our identity. Thus, the anthropophagic queer attempts to rescue and make visible this abject part and to see it as productive – in the case of my writers, through art or activism. The books discussed in this chapter have dealt with abjection in different ways: from the elevated and the sublime to the utterly profane and concrete
depiction of body fluids. Queer representation in Brazilian literature might thus illuminate the ways in which humans carry abjection in or on their bodies. Acknowledgment of abjection points the way to a renewed understanding of the body, one that avoids the empty silence of normative practices and instead opens up in-between spaces where queer times and abjection (as Halberstam recently has argued, a space of “failure” that is full of critical possibilities)⁵⁰ are visible.

⁵⁰ See Halberstam, The Queer Art of Failure.
Chapter 4

Silenced Bodies Made Visible: Abject Bodies in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema

4.1 Introduction

From its early beginnings, Brazilian Cinema, like most Latin American national cinemas, faced competition with the American industry, notably Hollywood. As Randal Johnson and Robert Stam explain, “[w]hile American films are seen daily throughout Brazil, Brazilian films do not reach their potential audience in the United States or even within Brazil itself” (19). Nonetheless, throughout the twentieth century Brazil produced a great number of movies. For example, the studio systems of Atlântida Cinematográfica and Vera Cruz created a large national audience for Brazilian cinema in the 1940s and 50s, of which the Cinema Novo movement of the 1960s further reaped the benefits and even received international recognition by critics. According to David William Foster, Cinema Novo “became probably the only truly international movement in Latin American filmmaking” (Gender & Society in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema 2). More recently, after the redemocratização, Brazilian cinema had another boost in the period commonly known as the retomada, or resurgence of local productions. According to Lucia Nagib, this retomada was enabled by the Audio-Visual Law promulgated in 1993 “prompting a boom in film production” (New Brazilian Cinema xvii). In terms of audience, the retomada so far successfully created new markets and found new publics. Among the recent productions, some movies obtained both critical and commercial success. For instance, Cidade de Deus (City of God), Central do Brasil (Central Station),
*O Quatrilho*, and *Tropa de Elite I and II (Elite Squad)* won both local and international awards.

Most recently, *Globo Filmes* (a sister company from the giant media and entertainment company *Globo*) has produced with tremendous commercial success films for a mass audience eager to watch local movies, mainly comedies and TV related movies (movies that derive from soap operas and TV series aired on TV Globo). The current list of the most watched movies in the country besides American productions consists mostly of *Globo Filmes* movies. Even though the current scenario does not seem propitious for independent film making, at the margins of Hollywood and Globo some filmmakers have been able to release smaller budget movies with positive critical acclaim. In the past two years, numerous Brazilian productions have received awards, mentions and recognition in international festivals. For instance, to name a few, in 2012, *Sons ao redor (Neighboring Sounds)* by Kléber Mendonça Filho was in the New York Times list of best movies of the year, in 2013, *O lobo atrás da porta (The Wolf at the Door)* by Fernando Coimbra won more than five awards in different festivals, and in 2014, *Praia do Futuro (Futuro Beach)* by Karim Aïnouz won the Horizons Awards at the San Sebastián Film Festival and the gay-themed *Hoje eu quero voltar sozinho (The Way He Looks)* by Daniel Ribeiro has also won the Teddy Bear at Berlin Film Festival and in 2015, the Brazilian movie *Que horas ela volta (Second Mother)* by Anna Muylaert has just received an award at Sundance Movie Festival and an audience award at the Berlin Festival.

Along with the rise in the movie production, there has been a gradually increasing scholarly attention. In particular movies that focus on the country’s complicated class and
race issues (for instance the *favela movie* genre which deals with life in the slums of the country’s big cities) have often been “big hits” on the international festival circuit and, generally speaking, have accordingly received the bulk of recent academic attention.

In regards to dealing with topics of gender and sexuality, however, criticism of national cinema may appear to lag behind. This is unfortunate, especially since, as Antônio Márcio da Silva argues about Brazilian cinema, “many of the films repeat the gender roles and identities dictated by patriarchal society that have been reinforced since Portuguese colonialism, especially the ideal binary gender that propagate heteronormativity” (83). However, there has been limited yet significant work on the stereotypical image of the homosexual (Foster, Subero, Moreno, Albuquerque and Ribeiro for instance) in different artistic and media productions. These authors generally concur that in most cultural productions, LGBTQ presence is either virtually absent (or as Albuquerque in *Tentative Transgressions* states, defined as “an embodiment of absence,” 60) or is expressed in crudely clichéd stereotypes. While I generally agree with their findings, I do to some extent question the overriding tendency to portray LGBTQ visibility in a solely negative light. Gustavo Subero, for instance says that:

> [i]n the majority of gay Latin American fiction cinema that addresses homosexuality, although not necessarily made by gays for gays, the figure of the *maricón* as the ultimate form of gay typification is commonly employed whether to pathologise or demonise this sexual orientation or to demonstrate the perils of going against (hetero)normativity. (51)
There is danger, I think, of perpetuating certain prejudices against the actual queer bodies that these critics believe to be defending. Stereotypical or not, it is important to keep in mind that some queer bodies, in movies and in real life, do not conform to normative (and in that sense equally stereotypical) representations of gender. These authors, in other words, seem often blind to their idealized notions of homosexual (and in that sense not “queer”) identity, thus reinforcing what queer critics have started to call homonormativity.

In “The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism,” Lisa Duggan bases her understanding of the term ‘homonormativity’ on Michael Warner’s term ‘heteronormativity.’ According to Duggan, homonormativity:

is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption. (179)

Following Duggan, other scholars such as Jack J. Halberstam, Jasbir Puar, and Roderick Ferguson have used the notion of homonormativity in order to criticize contemporary gay politics. I take my cue from these scholars as a way to show how critics like Subero tend to undermine the representation of effeminate and gay characters in favor of homosexual characters that fulfill normative images.

Antônio Moreno’s pioneering study *A personagem homossexual no cinema brasileiro* (1990) perpetuates this idea of negative portrayal of homosexuality. Moreno’s
work is important because he presents a brief history of same-sex experience in Brazilian cinema. He gives an overview of all movies produced in Brazil in the twentieth century that portray same-sex desire and classifies them in three groups: “filmes com teor pejorativo, filmes com teor não-pejorativo” and “filmes com teor dúbio.” The movies with pejorative content are precisely those whose characters are depicted with more effeminate ways. For example, while analyzing *Toda nudez será castigada* (1972), a movie with “teor não-pejorativo,” Moreno says:

*Toda nudez será castigada* não possui estes adereços, apresentando a personagem Serginho como um rapaz de modos normais como qualquer outro que, após uma prisão, se envolve com um truculento ladrão boliviano. (emphasis added, 95)

The characters with ‘normal characteristics’ are listed under the non-pejorative category. His analysis, therefore, focus on the manners and expressions of the characters separating ‘normal’ and, therefore ‘abnormal’ behavior. The fact that effeminate characteristics are part of the negative expression of sexuality reinforces the normativity and homonormativity the LGBTQ individuals face in our daily lives.

Homonormativity, of course, arguably is symptomatic of a country struggling with widespread homophobia when it comes to recognizing same-sex desire in the public sphere. As David William Foster notes:
And there should be little surprise that, in a country like Brazil where homophobia continues to be firmly entrenched, especially as regards the visibility of same-sex desire, there should be so few films in which homoeroticism is dealt with in any significant measure. (*Gender and Society in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema 7*)

Nonetheless, there has been a significant amount of movies that portray same-sex desire in Brazilian cinema recently. Moreover, some of these show queer characters that do not represent or conform to the heteronormative roles of sexuality, and such present a different perspective on queer lives in Brazil. This chapter aims to discuss selected examples of such queer-themed recent audio-visual media from the anthropophagic queer perspective proposed throughout this dissertation. The movies selected for this chapter aim at showing that certain silences and bodies can be both productive and disruptive, even when they do not adhere to expectations of an assimilationist, liberal white politics of ‘homonormativity.’ Ironically, in some of these movies, the silent queer lives at the margin are not necessarily silenced at all, but instead propose another form of queer (anthropophagite) visibility, or, as I argued about Herbert Daniel, a model of ‘productive silence.’

These characters do not necessarily vindicate ‘coming out’ (often regarded as a US model of identity politics) yet neither are they invisible. Their productive silence could actually be a political statement of resistance. After all, in the critical context of these movies, not saying ‘Eu sou gay’ does not mean being “in the closet” but rather not subscribing to either a certain political status quo or to a ready-made (American) model
of homosexual visibility that some artists and scholars have discussed.

Silence and abjection, in the specific sense I explained and applied before in the previous chapters, are two sides of the same conflict for homosexual bodies in the films analyzed here. It is worthwhile to recall that in the first chapter I presented an overview of the queer movement in Brazil, followed, in the second chapter, by an analysis of an anthropophagic queer sensibility that I used, in the third chapter, to explore three different literary perspectives on the politics of queer visibility. In this fourth, and final, chapter I rely on both the theoretical issues and historical landscape I have mapped out so far, in order to therein situate the particular characters and issues my selection of films raise. Their stories and concerns resonate with some of the central ideas I have explored since the beginning of this dissertation.

The four films analyzed in this chapter portray effeminate men, *travestis*, men who lived before any gay/lesbian classification were possible among others possibilities of expressions. Far from being negative or a ‘disservice’ to the gay community, such characters can help us understand something: instead of denying their abjection or silencing their being, they have found ways to express their sexuality in a more liberated way.

The selected films, of which little to nothing has been written, will be chronologically presented according to their narrative time (that is the time in which the fictional world of each film is set). First, I will deal with *Madame Satã*, directed by Karim Aïnouz in 2002; second the documentary *Dzi Croquetes* by Tatiana Issa and Rafael Alvarez in 2010; then *Tatuagem* directed by Hilton Lacerda in 2013; and finally *Romance* by Sergio Bianchi in 1988. The first three films are very different from Sergio
Bianchi’s due to the fact that the latter does not see a possibility of liberation after the AIDS crisis. Nonetheless, the representation of the notion of a creative silence seems more productive in Brazilian reality. The anthropophagic queer will demonstrate alternatives modes of voice through the paradox of silence and homophobia they face in these films.

From Madame Satã who lived in the first half of the century to Sergio Bianchi’s characters in the 1980s passing through Dzi Croquetes in pre-AIDS, dictatorial Brazil in the 1970s, these characters claim alternative possibilities that on the one hand seem silenced and have their rights violated, and on the other hand, find in their very silenced abjection a productive mode of sexual authority. If in the third chapter, I presented three perspectives in relation to abjection and visibility, in this chapter I intend to present, through a chronological view (as in the first chapter), not four different perspectives but four alternative modes of experience that would lead to Herbert Daniel’s positions in terms of abjected productive silence. “Queer” in that sense thus:

enables a productive intervention into the visual representation of same-sex desire and the history of cinema. ‘Queer’ encapsulates ‘perverse’ sexualities without fixing them into specific identities and can therefore capture different configurations of cinematic representation and non-normative desire. (Mennel 3)
4.2 Madame Satã and the Fictionalized Reality

Satã representa a verdadeira contracultura brasileira … Satã emergiu do asfalto, deste clima, deste ragu cultural brasileiro, que tentamos negar inutilmente…
-- Paulo Francis

In the first chapter, I suggested that during the modernist years there was little to no attention for homosexual desire in Brazilian letras, besides in the writing of João do Rio and in medical records. However, the much-commented life of Madame Satã, the pseudonym of João Francisco dos Santos, is an interesting exception.

Madame Satã (“Madame Satan”) or João Francisco dos Santos (1900–76) was born in the northeast part of Brazil the child of black former slaves. By the age of thirteen his mother sold him to a commerce trader. He eventually ran away to Rio de Janeiro where he lived until his death. He was famously known for being a rogue – malandro –, a performer and a street fighter. He was arrested more than ten times, spending more than twenty years in prison throughout his life. He was also a known homosexual (in a 1971 interview, when asked if he was a homosexual, he says “sempre fui, sou e serei”). The nickname, Madame Satã, came after a carnival costume competition in which he won the first place.

Madame Satã lived in tenement slums (Aluísio de Azevedo’s novel discussed by Silviano Santiago in “The Wily Homosexual” is translated into English as “The Slum”) in the bohemian neighborhood of Lapa in Rio de Janeiro among prostitutes, and other lower class workers. Therefore, the life and persona of Madame Satã might help us understand Silviano Santiago’s argument proposed in “The Wily Homosexual” (a text I
discussed in chapter 3) that in Brazil, homosexual men have found ways of affirming their identities among different social groups:

[T]he conceit of privacy made patently visible how gay and lesbian marginality did not exist among the lower classes, since lesbians and gays were there accepted as they were by their social peers. (16)

The cultural response to Madame Satã, I argue, is a case in point. The film affirms her/his identity as a “homosexual” along various axes: gender, social class, and both racial and sexual categories. As B. Ruby Rich writes in *New Queer Cinema: Director’s Cut* in regard to the film, “[r]ace and class are often too incidental to queer narratives. In this tale of Brazil’s unlikely hero/heroine, such omissions were impossible, for they are the core of Madame Satã’s life and narrative” (176). His flamboyant life style can help us undermine the prejudice against effeminate men that has been so prevalent in Brazilian social and academic life as we have seen in the introduction of the current chapter. Subero observes that:

As Murray (1995) and Montero (1996) point out, Latino society does not punish the attraction to people form one’s own sex, but punishes effeminate behaviour in men or masculine behaviour in women; in other words, it punishes any deviation from traditional male/female sexual roles. (Subero 57)
Madame Satã in his performances and public persona challenges this traditional view of the dichotomy *homem/bicha*. As Satã himself explained in an interview in the 1970s to the *Pasquim*, a counter-culture journal that circulated from 1969 to 1991, he decided to be a *bicha* by the age of 13, when he was invited to orgies:

Ele [Madame Satã] contava que, quando tinha seus 13 anos e era moleque de rua da Lapa, as putas chamavam a ele e a outros guris para bacanais nas pensões. Ele, então, experimentara transar como homem e como bicha gostou mais como bicha e resolveu continuar assim. (Durst 30)

As a street fighter and performer, Madame Satã has consciously complicated the meanings traditionally ascribed to effeminacy, in particular by adapting the attitude of a *malandro*. As James Green, in *Além do carnaval* points out, “Satã orgulhava-se da sua habilidade de manejar uma navalha e vencer uma luta, duas marcas da bravura e virilidade de um malandro” (155). He was known as a violent man, even killing other people and was repeatedly arrested for fighting with other men. Yet he was also considered a deviant, because he performed in feminine (or feminized) attire (at the time, and maybe still, an indelible sign of homosexuality), a fact he possibly overcompensated by adapting an exaggerated version of the traditional macho role. Albuquerque explains that:

the performative nature of Satã’s life could be read as a critique of traditional gendered behavior in Brazil. This is apparent in his sometimes
exaggeratedly macho behavior and his close ties with the underworld of crime, on the one hand, and his patently camp ways and enjoyment of homosexuality, on the other. Satã’s ability to combine macho bravado and uninhibited campiness reveals much about cultural definitions of masculinity in Brazil. (23-24)

*Madame Satã*, the film by Karim Aïnouz precisely captures this dichotomy that dos Santos/Madame Satã represented in his life. The film, I argue, defies the logics of sexuality and normativity as much as Satã himself did at his time. Aïnouz understands how Satã’s persona in fact became a myth that exceeded the actual public figure. The film, then, plays with both the history and the myth and João dos Santos’s story.

Geisa Rodrigues recently published one of the few and most recent monographs on this figure: *As múltiplas faces de Madame Satã: Estéticas e políticas do corpo* (2013). To Rodrigues the “multiple faces of Madame Satã” are not merely the various characteristics in which João dos Santos has been portrayed but in a sense, they are “mythological” images that made Madame Satã into a legend. Geisa Rodrigues says that:

> [Q]ualquer estratégia política contemporânea precisa se situar, portanto, num duplo compromisso: identificar desterritorializações que não funcionem ao “sabor da moda” e ao mesmo tempo perceber em que momentos … é necessária uma articulação de máscaras e um jogo com a própria lógica do mercado. (191)
Karim Aïnouz’s film too insists that besides the person João dos Santos, there is the myth of Madame Satã and that consequently, this story cannot be a simple biopic but will inevitably be a recreation and reinterpretation of Madame Satã’s legend. In order to do so, the film follows Madame Satã’s life during his adulthood in Lapa, a bohemian neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro. Based on actual police records, interviews with João dos Santos and other historical sources, the screenplay recreates a possible chronology and narrative that depicts Satã’s life during the 1930s in Rio de Janeiro.

Aïnouz explains in an interview that he wanted to “capture, through an intimate cinematography, the enthusiasm and contradictions of the experiences of a malandro hustler, a black and a homosexual in Brazil at the beginning of the last century” (Shaw 88). He captures this intimate atmosphere through the frequent use of close-ups and the constantly vigilant presence of the camera in the small spaces of the cortiços (slum tenements), bars and clubs where the characters live. Aïnouz also takes advantage of dark light and shadowy settings that resemble the atmosphere and aesthetic of 1940s and 50s noir movies. The close-ups in turn, according to Lisa Shaw present the body as “strategy of resistance to authority and social conventions” (98).

The film’s opening and closing sequences are the same (fig. 4). They consist of a close-up of Madame Satã’s beaten face with a voice-over reading his sentence in prison (these are actual police records); however in the last sequence, the police officer’s voice is interposed with Madame Satã’s voice telling a fictional story of an imprisoned princess that is released during Carnival. These sequences reveal part of Satã’s life; he spent more than twenty years in prison for multiple crimes. His famous persona made him also a target for the police, not only for his malandragem but also for his homosexuality.
Satã’s voice in the end adds his own persona (or the voice of the myth) to the film. In the beginning, João dos Santos is arrested; in the end, Madame Satã had already become a legend and his voice, even in prison, would not be silenced any longer.

As if with the intent of contextualizing the legend around Madame Satã, it is no coincidence that in the beginning we see Madame Satã watching a performance by a female artist reciting excerpts from *A Thousand and One Nights*. We see Satã for the first time in a close-up behind a curtain of sequins imitating the artist for whom he works as a helper. At this point we are not sure if it is his show, consequently this visual technique establishes a game between Satã’s desire, the film and the play in the film (Rodrigues 194). The camera moves around Satã and we see he is behind the scenes watching the performance. The next sequence presents Satã in a suit and a panama hat, traditional image of the *malandro carioca*, and then in the streetcar that was made famous the region of Lapa in Rio de Janeiro where the film is set.

The first sequences of the film help the audience understand that Madame Satã incorporates multiple sides (*faces*): the artist, the homosexual, the feminine, the
masculine, but most importantly, the *malandro*. He incorporated the image of the
*malandro* as few other men were able to do in Brazil. This image of the *malandro* has
been perpetuated in music, television and cinema as a virile, womanizer, uneducated but
smart and philandering man. Madame Satã combined all these characteristics with also
his desire for people from the same sex, complicating, then, the traditional macho role
portrayal. In Karim Aïnouz’s film, Lázaro Ramos, the actor who plays Madame Satã is
able to characterize all these features in his portrayal of the character, playing this
femininity/masculinity dichotomy that has always appeared in his biographies. As Satã
himself explains:

Eles não se conformavam com a minha valentia, porque eu era
homossexual conhecido. Achavam que não podiam perder para mim e por
isso estavam sempre querendo me provocar e me bater. Por outro lado, os
jornais davam muito mais destaque para as minhas façanhas exatamente
pelo mesmo motivo de eu ser homossexual. (*Carnaval*, Green 155)

Madame Satã, despite his love for feminizing dress, nonetheless refused to be
labeled as a passive object of erotic pursuance, that is to say, conform to the dichotomy of
the top/bottom and *homem/bicha* tradition. When asked, in an interview for *Pasquim* if he
was the *caça* or *caçador*, he categorically answered *caçador*. In the film, this conflict
between sexual behavior and ascribed gender roles manifests itself in aggressive ways.
For instance, Madame Satã aggressively pursues Renatinho, a much younger man
(someone who can more easily be forced into the passive role) in a public restroom,
grabbing him tightly, groping him all over and domineeringly slapping him in the face.

Later in the film, when they finally meet in Satã’s room, Satã says:

Senta. Tu também tá querendo *uma moça* assim como eu, da minha altitude, *escurinha*? Sente aqui os coxões *da preta*, sente. (emphasis added)

![fig. 5 Madame Satã and Renatinho in bed.](image)

It is clear from the start that Renatinho will be penetrated. The extremely close-up of the camera at the same time it involves the audience, it does not allow to clearly see their bodies until the moment the camera retracts and we see Satã penetrating Renatinho. After Satã’s orgasm, the camera focuses on Renatinho licking Satã’s hand. The scene ends with a recurring technique in the film in which we see the action through open doors, transitioning from the extremely participative close-ups to a voyeuristic gaze once they have reached climax. This image – though doors – reinforces the lack of privacy in such accommodations (fig. 5).
Gustavo Subero (154–55) writes a critique of Aïnouz’s *Madame Satã* saying that the film refuses to show Satã’s femininity and the sex scene between Satã and Renatinho, a white male lover, Satã is not penetrated, does not act as a bicha (and he starts the conversation with “uma moça como eu?”). However I would like to point out that this depiction of hyper masculinity and *travestismo* would fit Satã’s modes of operation. He saw himself as a *bicha*, or the only category available at the time to express his desires. Subero’s critique reduces Satã’s performativity and the importance of his behavior to the expression of sexuality outside the standards of normativity. Moreover, while the film does not refuse to show the character’s femininity, on the other hand, it explores it in many different ways, through travestism, the use of feminine pronouns when speaking of himself and the exploration of his performances. As Aïnouz explained, he wanted to depict an “enigmatic figure that plays with both masculinity and femininity” (Shaw 96).

The main problem with such criticism is that it reinforces the prejudice against the effeminate man or sexual passivity as I have demonstrated in the beginning of this chapter. The fact that Madame Satã identified himself as a *bicha* does not necessarily link his sexual practices to passivity, or that in the film he uses the feminine pronouns and adjectives to talk about himself – herself – does not make him a passive sexual object. Karim Aïnouz intended to depict a character whose “identity could not be defined in conventional terms” (Shaw 96) and this is precisely what such scenes do, they complicate our normative views of sexuality and identity, something that Madame Satã did at his time. The final scenes show precisely the director’s view for the film. Satã presents a show in which he dances and sings for a large audience. His outfit resembles Carmen.
Miranda and Josephine baker from the waist down. However he has his naked torso exposing his virility (fig. 6)

![Image](image.jpg)

Fig. 6. Madame Satã’s final performance

While singing, he alternates between low and high-pitched voices with a dance that resembles Josephine Baker in the 1935 *Princesse Tam Tam* (the movie he had watched prior to his show) and *Candomblé* rhythms. Moreover, he sings a samba that according to biographers Noel Rosa wrote for Madame Satã:

E quando tira um samba é novidade,
Quer no morro ou na cidade,
Ele sempre foi o bamba
As morenas do lugar vivem a se lamentar
Por saber que ele não quer se apaixonar por mulher.

Madame Satã’s image and portrayal in the film would thus precisely break with the dichotomy between *bicha/macho*, active/passive that I presented in the first chapter.
Satã plays at the same time the *mulato forte*, the *malandro* and the *bicha*. The either/or possibility that such binaries allow is restructured by the idea of both/and in Madame Satã’s persona. In *The “Femme” Fatale in Brazilian Cinema. Challenging Hollywood Norms* Antônio Márcio da Silva presents Madame Satã as a femme-fatale in the mode of film noir. To Silva, even though Madame Satã is a man, his role in the film would fit the femme-fatale category since it “is a construct that causes anxieties because of her challenges to hegemonic gender and sexual roles” (16). Silva’s analysis is noteworthy because he sees the femme fatale as “independent of the biological body” (61). Both male and female (and non-identifying gender individuals) could play this role and therefore represent “challenges to patriarchy” (61). Through the representation of Madame Satã in the film, it is visible that the creators incorporated not only the noir aesthetics but also the femme fatale imagery in order to compose the character.

Satã’s nickname comes from a 1930 Cecil B. De Mille motion picture named *Madame Satan*. The American movie tells the story of a woman played by Kay Johnson who disguises herself as Madame Satan at a costume ball in order to take revenge on her cheating husband (fig. 7). As Aïnouz’s film shows, João dos Santos was fascinated by movie stars. In one scene we see João dos Santos watching Josephine Baker and her iconic scene in which she takes her shoes off and eloquently dances. The choice of Josephine Baker is not accidental in the film. Baker’s career (like Carmen Miranda’s) was punctuated by the new world exoticism and challenge to normative practices. As Madame Satã says in the film, “eu sou filho de Iansã e Ogum e de Josephine Baker, sou devoto.” By watching her movie, João dos Santos is inspired to perform as the “mulata do balacoxê.”
Right before his final performance, Madame Satã tells a story about Janaci and a furious shark. In Andrade’s anthropophagic mode, he recreates a story mixing up local and international elements, in order to recount his own story, as an entity with both animal and human, male and female, passiveness and aggressiveness:

Vivia na maravilhosa China um bicho tubarão bruto e cruel
Que mordia tudo e virava tudo em carvão
Pra acalmar a fera, o Chinês fazia todo dia uma oferenda com sete gatos maracajá
Que ele mordia antes do pôr-do-sol
No intento de por fim em tal ciclo de barbaridades
Chegou Janaci uma entidade da floresta da Tijuca
Ela corria pelos mato e avoava pelos morro
E Janaci virou uma onça dourada
de jeito macio e de gosto delicioso
e começou a brigar com o tubarão por mil e uma noites
no final a glorioso Janaci e o furioso tubarão
já estavam tão machucado que ninguém mais sabia quem era um e quem era outro
E assim, eles viraram uma coisa só.

Even though this is a long quote, it is important because it brings together many of the elements that make this film and this character/individual such an important person for our anthropophagic queer perspective. The story cites One Thousand and One Nights transformed into the local natural and mystical elements of Brazil: Janaci, forests and also queer elements of both male and female, animal and human in one body: “e assim viraram uma coisa só.” Satã’s narration brings us back to the initial moments of the film when he watched, mesmerized, an actress narrating Scheherazade’s story. Nevertheless Janaci replaces Scheherazade by the end of the film. Madame Satã’s version of the story is his own queer narrative.

By alternating these notions of fantasy and reality, his crimes and his homosexuality, without opposing these characteristics but seeing them as complementary, the film helps us understand not necessarily who the person João dos Santos was, but the persona and the image that have been created around him. Madame Satã thus portrays an alternative mode of life that resists both hetero- and
homonormativity. At the very least, an anthropophagic queer perspective would help us understand that sexuality should not be represented as a fixed model and this is exactly what the film does. Criticism (like Subero’s article) that implicitly defines the film as one-dimensional or unrealistic view of Satã’s sexuality simplifies the importance of such portrayal.

Most analysis of Madame Satã, both the persona and the film, focus on the multiple façades of the character and on his transitioning between two worlds – male and female. In a country whose definition of sexuality has been simplified into dichotomous views of what one must be (as I have pointed out in the first chapter through the readings of Green, Trevisan, and Mott among others), Madame Satã, the film, tries to complicate these assumptions of passive/active, homosexuality/heterosexuality, aggressiveness/passiveness into possible modes of understanding our sexual experiences, trying, as we have seen, to go beyond the possibility of only two sides. Furthermore, neither side can finally define Satã, for it is this contradiction that precisely maintains the indefiniteness of his persona. Madame Satã, like the story between the shark and Janaci he recites in the film, does not transition between sides, but *anthropophagically queerly* (mis)represents both aspects in one body.

4.3 Dzi Croquetes and The Documentary Tradition

*Borboletas sangram*
*Sofrem choram*
*E se desesperam*
*Mas nunca desistem de voar...*

-- Bayard Tonelli
Brazil has a lively tradition of documentary filmmaking that explores, and sometimes blurs, the distinction between documentary and fiction. As Amir Labaki explains, “Brazil already boasts a rigorous tradition of documentary filmmaking, proof of which can be seen in the excursions made into this medium by every great Brazilian filmmaker” (97). After Madame Satã’s fictionalizing account of historical records, I now turn to Dzi Croquetes, the prize-winning 2009 documentary by Tatiana Issa and Rafael Alvarez —until today the most awarded documentary made in Brazil. The film portrays the theater group Dzi Croquetes who performed from 1972 to 197651 in the midst of the dictatorial regime in Brazil. Dzi Croquetes was a theater group originally formed by thirteen men who created a show that challenged the normative gender and social barriers of the time. The name Dzi Croquetes comes from the combination of the word croquete in Portuguese, a salty snack made of meat, and the Brazilian pronunciation of the English article ‘the’. As Wagner Ribeiro (one of the original members) explained: “Eu sempre curti muito o pronomé inglês the, também poderia ser o zê português. E como a gente no bar comia croquetes, porque não batizar o grupo Dzi Croquettes” (Lobert 3). And, even though it is not clear in their interviews, one can also trace a genealogy to The Cockettes, the San Francisco based drag-queen group of the same era.

Through a series of interviews and footage from the only remaining show of the group to be caught on film, the documentary reconstructs the theater troupe’s trajectory and argues for its importance to Brazilian performance history. Interestingly, Issa and Alvarez also cite conventions and techniques from other Brazilian documentaries to tell the story of Dzi Croquetes. They use archival material in ways that call to mind other

---
51 After their 1976 break-up due to creative divergences as seen in the film, they staged a come back in the early 1980s with similar success and recently in 2011, after the repercussion of the film. This last time they did not achieve the same success as before, though. After a few performances, the show was cancelled.
1990s productions, such as Aurélio Michiles’s *O cineasta da selva* and *Baile Perfumado* by Lírio Ferreira and Paulo Caldas.

In his well-known *Introduction to Documentary* Bill Nichols proposes six different categories or “modes” to analyze the documentary genre, depending on how the film in question is made. Issa and Alvarez’s feature fits in more than one of those categories. For example, Dzi Croquetes calls to mind the “Poetic Mode” since the film “emphasizes visual associations, tonal or rhythmic qualities, descriptive passages, and formal organization” (32). On the other hand, the film also resembles the “Expository Mode” because it “emphasizes verbal commentary and an argumentative logic” (33) through a series of interviews in which we only hear the interviewee’s voice. And finally it could also fit the “Participatory Mode” because it “emphasizes the interaction between filmmaker and subject” (33). The combination of all these contradictory aspects make *Dzi Croquetes* a compelling and innovative documentary that sheds light on an important episode in Brazilian (and queer) performance history.

In addition, *Dzi Croquetes* portrays the search of co-producer Tatiana Issa for her father, who was a member of the theater group. (In that sense, this documentary brings to mind – and extends – Paul Julian Smith’s observation in a review about the Brazilian movie *Linha de passe* (2008) that “Brazilian boys just can’t seem to hold on to their fathers.”) Besides an attempt to rescue footage and the history of a cultural moment that “revolucionou o Brasil” as many interviewees affirm, the film is a poetic search for personal belonging. As Issa explains in the beginning of the documentary, “eu fui nasci em janeiro de 1974, quando eu nasci não poderia imaginar que o movimento que havia começado dois anos antes iria mudar minha vida e revolucionar o Brasil.” A quest for
private and public history, the documentary thus reflects both on the importance of this theater group and on the political and cultural changes in Brazil since the 1970s.

In its double search for the father and for the revitalization of the cultural heritage of this theater group, Dzi Croquetes blends the personal and the historical, the fictional and the non-fictional in unusual ways. In “The Scene and the Inscription of the Real” César Guimarães suggests that “the relations between documentary and fiction have taken on a configuration in which several things stand out: the use of theatrical proceedings in the composition of the filmed scene; the staging of lived events and experiences” (87). Dzi Croquetes complicates this view in that it proposes two forms of staging. On the one hand, “the staging of lived events” consists entirely of real (historical) footage from the group. On the other hand, the director’s daughter “plays the director” as a child in the scenes where she (Issa) narrates her past experiences with the theater group as a child. Jean-Claude Bernardet, a Brazilian film critic and professor, calls this a “voz do saber” (known in English-language film studies as ‘voice of God’). To the scholar, it means “the voice of experts or voice-over commentators that gives ‘technical’ or ‘official’ information, in conflict with the ‘voice of experience’ of the ones directly involved in the facts. (Dias 112). Dzi Croquetes thus overlaps and associates Issa’s personal search with an argument about the cultural importance of the group.

Unlike many other documentaries in which the interviewees look at the camera as if speaking “directly to the spectator, without interference from the cinematic mechanism” (Smith, Vision Machines 60), in Dzi Croquetes, the interviewees do not look straight at the camera; instead, they speak indirectly, to a third person, Issa, who can be briefly seen three times throughout the film. Suggestively, the directors thus create
proximity between the (implied) audience and the interviewees.

The film opens with Issa’s narration (through her voice and subtitles) presenting a historical over-view of Brazil in the 1960s and 70s and her personal relationship with the theme. After this brief introduction, her voice disappears from the film giving space to the ‘voice of experience’. At this point, the viewer will learn about Dzi Croquetes. The director’s voice is only heard again towards the end, when she narrates her past experience as a child with the group and her relationship with the father. The “voz do saber” plays an interesting role in this documentary since the shared knowledge in this film is her personal experience: “meu pai me colocava pra dormir entre as cadeiras do teatro, eu ficava ali olhando o espetáculo no escuro. Tudo era como uma fantasia, um sonho.” Towards the end of the film, this is also the only moment the viewer can see the documentary crew, cameramen, directors, assistants among others are seen through a crane shot. “Since the crew is visible and they talk about their documentary, the film artifice is revealed” (Dias 112). Hence, both perspectives – personal and political – are intertwined based on the directors final editing. The director’s personal search is also the viewer’s discovery of a forgotten moment of Brazilian recent history. Henceforth, these perspectives confirm Bill Nichols’s definitions and how the directors blend these categories into one film. Her personal search relates to the “participatory mode” and the political aspect of the documentary merge the “expository mode” and the “poetic search” as we shall see in the following paragraphs.

The opening sequences are a clear intention of associating the body and politics. The film alternates images of Caco Barcelos (one of the original members) dancing on a stage (fig. 8) and images of citizens being arrested with subtitles explaining key moments
of the dictatorial government, specially the AIs – Atos Institucionais – government measures that restricted individuals liberties, focusing on artistic and political aspects of social life.

Alongside with the crosscuts between Barcelos and archive footage, sound plays an important role here as well. While Barcelos dances to Lou Reed’s “Goodnight, Ladies,” the footage from the 1960s anti-dictatorial protests are heard with sirens, screams and bombs. At first such an editing technique seems to give an idea of alienation, since the sexy dance does not match with the violent images seen. But once the film turns to Dzi Croquetes’s real footage, the violent sounds continue mixed, now, with lively music while the actors apply make-up. In this second moment, both sirens and music are juxtaposed in crosscutting images. Hence, from the beginning of the film, all the images from the group are consistently associated with politics.

Following the initial historical background, Issa and Alvarez work with superposition of images of the artists (in color) and political historical footage (in black
and white). The succession of images foreshows what most of the commentaries will say (fig 9). At first, the testimonies explain the dictatorship and the AI-5\(^{52}\) in the eyes of the artistic class, following the testimony about the importance of the theater group. Thus, the first ten minutes of the film work as the historical foundation prior to the acknowledgment of Dzi Croquetes. Ney Matogrosso’s testimony will lead to the first full footage of the group: “paradoxalmente foi o momento em que surgiram os Dzi Croquetes.”

![Fig. 9. Superimposition of images. Dzi Croquetes and historical footage](image)

Dzi Croquetes “trouzeram para o Brasil o que de mais contemporâneo e questionador havia no movimento homossexual internacional, sobretudo americano,” affirms João Silvério Trevisan in Devassos no Paraiso (288). Dzi Croquetes can be seen as the epitome of the anthropophagic queer, since through parody, mockery and music and dance, they exposed the boundaries of sexuality, gender identity(ies) and sexual orientation without leaving aside the political aspect of the country at the moment they

\(^{52}\) Ato Institucional – 5 closed the senate among other restrictions and from that point on, it initiated the anos de chumbo, the hardest moment of Brazilian dictatorship.
performed. If there is one point on which most interviewees agree it is the transgressive aspect of the group. They say, among other things, that the group found a way to contest dictatorship through mockery. As Nelson Motta says in his interview, “então era uma forma de você contestar a ditadura pelo escracho, pelo sarcasmo. Não dava mais para contestar a sério.” They were masculine, feminine, and androgynous, all in one body. Finally, the interviewees say that they expressed a positive sexuality on stage, or what they call an absolute exercise of our sexuality.

Like Madame Satã, the documentary Dzi Croquetes has a clear intention of associating the group with neither masculinity nor femininity, but with the possibility of a queer imagining for repressed bodies beyond Anglo-American definitions. In one short exert of their show, the actors say on stage:

Not ladies, not even gentlemen. Not even.

Sorry people, we are not men. Got the wrong show. We are not men (laughs)

Ah e nós não somos mulheres também, não.

Exactly, if you are looking for a girlie girlie show we are not women either, so you got the wrong show.

Outro papo. Nós somos gente.

Exactly.
We put it together. We become just one thing. People. Just like you. You are people too.\textsuperscript{53}

Dzi Croquetes thus made clear their notion of sexuality. By dressing in what were traditionally women’s clothes, they were not intending to perform as drag queens or \textit{transformistas}, but their intention was rather to break with the notions of gender binaries – man/woman, \textit{macho/bicha}. Their muscular bodies in tiny thongs were not intended to depict a feminine body but rather an artistic rendition of sexuality. Dzi Croquetes, thus, make a strategic appeal to universal humanism while transgressing gender norms. Their act does not necessarily relate to homosexual bodies but to sexual bodies (as one of actors interviewed said “sexualidade gostosa, nem homossexual, nem heterossexual”).

In \textit{O que é a homossexualidade} Peter Fry and Edward MacRae also describe their show as an “apotheosis of debauchery” neither masculine nor feminine but both:

O show, um imenso sucesso, começava com a declaração: “Nós não somos homens, nem somos mulheres. Nós somos gente, computada igual a vocês!”, e continuava entre trejeitos e micagens nem viris nem femininas (ou, se preferir, tão viris quanto femininas) num deboche apoteótico dos papéis sexuais convencionais. (10)

\textsuperscript{53} The dialogue above directed to the audience is originally in English and Portuguese. Lennie Dale, the creator and choreographer of the group was an American expatriate who adopted Brazil as his homeland in the 1960s.
This idea of breaking with normativity would refer us back, once again, to *Madame Satã*. Issa and Alvarez’s documentary, like Aïnouz’s fiction feature, is thus able to play with the male/female dichotomy, but in this case through the alliance of image and testimony. All the artists interviewed in the documentary agree that Dzi Croquetes portrayed a new way of experiencing sexuality, as Pedro Cardoso said, “havia uma sexualidade boa. Masculina, feminino, homossexual. Havia uma possibilidade absoluta do exercício da sexualidade.” As in *Madame Satã*, Dzi Croquetes, through their dance and performance showed the audience that the boundaries of the body (not to mention our abjected homosexual bodies) can be much more fluid and fruitful than one could expect. Their act relates, then, to queer possibilities of imagining bodies and lives.

One emblematic performance of the group is the “Borboleta.”

Fig. 10. Actor performing “Borboleta,” the colorful pieces of cloth represent the wings of the butterflies
Rosemary Lobert in her 1979 dissertation about the group (published as a book in 2010 after the documentary and so far the only monograph on them) describes their dance as following: “abrindo as suas asas, asas de retalhos, listadas, estampadas, floridas, evocando todas as cores, na plataforma do meio, dançam as ‘borboletas’” (46). To the sounds of Richard Strauss’s Also sprach Zarathustra, the actors dance as butterflies (borboleta – a feminine noun in Portuguese). To the group, the butterfly signifies the rebirth of a new time, neither male, nor female:

E eis que surge o novo renascimento, e com ele um novo ser trazendo toda a força do macho e toda a graça da fêmea. É fácil com ele viver e atendê-lo, eu só não sei explicá-lo e o faço com um grito. (Lobert 46)

The group’s performance seems to incorporate a post-identity politics in which bodies are marked not by either masculinity or femininity but by both. Dzi Croquetes, then, refers us back to the discussion I presented in the first chapter. Their activism is not the identitarian type but rather a post-identity engagement similar to the modes the scholars have been recently proposing in Brazil (as I discussed in the first chapter).

This exercise of sexuality also represents Dzi Croquetes own family arrangements. According to the documentary, Dzi Croquetes formed a family among themselves in which each of them had a specific role: the father, the mother, the aunt and even the fans were part of this family. Tatiana Issa, while restoring the image of her father, is also reconstructing a queer familiar arrangement that she previously belonged to.
Moreover the documentary plays an interesting role in creating and activating memories. Actors, singers, and directors are invited to talk about the group. Among these Liza Minelli, Miguel Falabela, Pedro Cardoso, Beth Faria, and Ney Matogrosso give their testimonies, retelling what they remember from Dzi Croquetes. Issa and Alvarez intersperse their informants’ current statements with the remaining images of the group from the 1970s. There is crosscutting between the interviews and the footage of the group creating a powerful technique used by the directors, since the alternation between images and testimonies gives the viewer the impression that the interviewees had recently watched Dzi Croquetes’s footage while narrating it. This juxtaposition of voice and archive reinforces the cultural relevance the group has had among current actors, directors and musicians in Brazil. Likewise all the interviews reinforce how the group has left an indelible mark on Brazilian popular culture (“foi um trabalho único,” “avant-garde”…). Besides activating memories, this film technique also works as a recreation of memories that seem forgotten and need to be reinstated. Moreover, since Issa and Alvarez’s editing highlights the repetition of what is being said (in a succession of shots, different interviewees repeat the same statement, thus creating a list of key-words that refer to the group), the interviews also reinforce this idea of veracity and of stimulating memories.

As mentioned earlier, through these interviews the documentary creates a chronological narrative that aligns Issa’s personal search with the objective of reconstructing collective memory. The film is implicitly divided into several blocks of interviews, each focusing on one specific topic that probably had been initiated by a question (although we do not hear the director asking these questions). One can imagine
the topics included: 1) the historical period in which the group is inserted; 2) the sexual revolution that the group initiated in Brazil; 3) Dzi Croquetes as a family (“uma comunidade que deu certo”); 4) the fan base and the relationship with public; 5) censorship; 6) the European ‘tour’; 7) the break up of the group; 8) the story of Issa’s father and herself; 9) AIDS and the death of eight of the members, and finally 10) her father’s death. Even though this structure is entirely implicit, it nonetheless provides a sense of progressive coherence to the documentary: for Issa to discover what happened to her father, she first has to uncover the lost history of the group in which he performed.

Most film critics agree that the documentary loses its power when it ceases to superimpose images of “grim-faced soldiers marching down the street, serving as muscle for the dictatorship then running Brazil” and the “half-nude androgynous men dancing up a storm onstage – faces slathered in makeup” (Hardy, Dzi Croquetes) and turns to repetitive interviews with famous actors, singers, dancers and theater directors who have witnessed the group’s work. However, I would argue that the way in which the directors structured the interviews alongside the documentary material in this repetitious way is to insist on the group’s social and political importance.

On the political and social levels, then, the documentary rescues Dzi Croquetes’s performance and shows how influential they have become to a great deal of the political and artistic work produced in Brazil. As Issa describes in the first minutes of the film, a “movimento que iria revolucionar o Brasil.” José Possi Neto, a renowned theater director says that he witnessed the revolution in the theater Dzi Croquetes developed in Brazil. Issa and Possi Neto’s comments are backed up by the other interviewees that among
other things, say that the group helped launch the gay movement liberation in Brazil. In a magazine review for the film, Julia Moreira explains the influence of the group:

Com o passar do tempo, se tornaram influência para outros artistas, inclusive para o teatro de humor que ficou conhecido como besteirol, e se consagrou com programas de televisão como Armação Ilimitada e TV Pirata. Além disso, eles foram a semente para a criação do grupo musical 'As Frenéticas'.

The group helped consolidate a new genre of theater in Brazil, known as Besteirol (debauchery). This genre would influence a large number of television shows and artists during the following decades. Moreover, As Frenéticas was probably one of the most successful all-female group in Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s. They released a number of singles reaching the top position in the local charts (some of the former members say in the documentary that they even released songs written by Dzi Croquettes members).

Dzi Croquetes is also reminiscent of Oswald de Andrade and the Manifesto Antropófago. When discussing the modernist movement, one aspect that seemed a common point among different critics and scholars was Antropofagia’s notions of mockery and debauchery. David Jackson, borrowing Richard Morse’s words, (“Receitas” 279) describes the manifesto as “brincadeira séria,” meaning that even though the manifesto is full of humor and jokes, there is a serious project underneath it, trying to “ajustar a experiência brasileira da vida com a tradição que herdamos” (Luís Costa Lima
qtd in Jackson, “Receitas” 278). Using such a technique – “brincaderia séria” – Dzi Croquetes’s theater was able to criticize the patriarchal institutions through scorn.

Finally Dzi Croquetes helps us imagine different family arrangements and different possibilities. By opening up about the sexuality of the director’s father, it also presents, outside the realm of fiction, the possibility of queer arrangements in Brazilian society. Such arrangements take rather the form of fiction in the next film, *Tatuagem*.

4.4 *Tatuagem* and the Uses of Naturalism

*Tatuagem* (2013) is Hilton Lacerda’s directorial debut. Prior to his first full-length film, he worked as a scriptwriter for several award-winning movies, such as *Amarelo-manga* (*Mango-Yellow*, 2002), *Baixio das Bestas* (*Bog of Beasts*, 2006), *A festa da menina morta* (*The Dead Girl’s Feast*, 2008), and *A febre do rato* (*Rat Fever*, 2011). *Tatuagem* tells the story of a short-lived, romantic entanglement between Clécio, an exuberant queer performer and theater director, and Arlindo Araújo, an eighteen-year-old cadet in the military, an encounter set in 1978 in Recife. Clécio is the director of a theater group in the mode of Dzi Croquetes and runs an avant-garde queer theater/bar called *Chão de Estrelas* (“Floor of Stars”), where one night he meets the young Arlindo. *Chão*

---

54 The name of the theater/bar is not accidental. *Chão de Estrelas* refers to a song composed by Silvio Caldas (1908–98) in 1937. Caldas’s song has been recorded by a great number of artists. Most importantly, Silvio Caldas is one of the artists that were revitalized and rediscovered during the *Tropicália* movement.
de Estrelas is a place of creative and artistic resistance against the government and its support for a rigid (implicitly middle class-, and hetero-) normativity. Soldado Araújo, (also called Fininha in the film) on the other hand, serves the regime as a soldier. The film is set during the final years of the dictatorship (the ‘opening’ process would start in 1979). The film thus attempts to recreate the creative and political resistance of queer communities against the dictatorship at time before the AIDS epidemic. In addition, by focusing on a (fictional) theater troupe modeled on the tradition of Dzi Croquetes that is situated in Recife, Tatuagem moves the ‘revolution’ out of the traditional urban and political centers (Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo) and brings visibility to regions that have often been culturally isolated.  

Right in the beginning of the film, the first thing we hear, even before we see the actors, is a voice announcing “a nossa arma é o deboche.” Mockery is thus the way the characters have found to fight the system or to pursue alternatives modes of sexuality and life. Deboche is also a common word in the interviews in Dzi Croquetes. Thus, by creating a theater group that focuses on mockery, Hilton Lacerda uses Dzi Croquetes’ technique in order to tell this story.

The film begins with a 360º pan from the camera, still with no actors, showing only the image of an empty Chão de Estrelas, with Clécio’s voice over presenting their show. Then, there is a cut to Soldado Arlindo Araújo at the military headquarters, sitting in bed, waiting for the morning bell. The sonic contrast in these first scenes of the film is

---

55 Recife has recently been nominated as the current capital of cinema in Brazil. Local directors have produced most recent Brazilian movies. Including Tatuagem, a number of other movies that have traveled the international festival circuit were produced in the region. For more on the topic: http://cultura.estadao.com.br/noticias/cinema,o-cinema-fertil-do-recife-em-novas-producoes,553972 or http://www.revistaforum.com.br/blog/2013/05/recife-e-a-reinvencao-do-cinema-politico/.
relevant as it contrasts the loudness and lively sounds of *Chão de Estrelas* with the quietness of the military headquarters.

This is the first moment in which the film contrasts Clécio and Arlindo in sonic and visual terms. *Chão de Estrelas* is loud and colorful. Arlindo’s space is quiet and monochromatic. From the beginning, the film thus employs different elements of visual imagery to make clear the distinction between the two main characters. During the first twenty minutes of the film, the director crosscuts between *Chão de Estrelas* and Arlindo’s life in the military headquarters. As just mentioned, the color palette at *Chão de Estrelas* is contrasted with the monochromatic scheme of the military in Arlindo’s life. For instance all the soldiers in the scene wear the same white briefs.

Clécio and Arlindo thus live very different lives. While at *Chão de Estrelas*, the artists stage a sarcastic and orgiastic performance with songs like the one below:

```
O pai eu quero me casar
Oh minha filha diga com quem
Eu quero me casar com o travesti
Com o travesti você se casa bem
Por quê?
O travesti pode servir como homem e depois serve como mulher também.
```

Arlindo, on the other hand, has to ‘sing’ along with his other fellow soldiers, chants that describe the life of a soldier:
Vi guerrilheiros na selva tomar
E para casa nunca mais voltar.

The characters’ sexuality is also revealed in these initial minutes. Arlindo’s colleagues call him “queridinho do sargento” implying that he is having an affair with the sergeant (this is later confirmed by Arlindo himself). Clécio and his best friend, Paulete, are at the beach and when a vendor calls them ‘homosexual,’ they defiantly ask the vendor if he was really trying to offend them. This is one important point that the film makes clear since the beginning. While Clécio seems both assertive and combative with his sexuality, Arlindo is discreet, and does not say anything back to his colleagues at the headquarters.

Still using the crosscutting technique of alternating images, we watch as the characters present their families, their jobs, their routine and their life style. We learn that Araújo has a girlfriend and a pregnant sister and that Clécio has a son and a good relationship with the boy’s mother. Tatuagem (like Madame Satã and Dzi Croquetes) thus considers the possibility of queer family arrangements at the margins.

This alternation between Clécio and Soldado Araújo continues until the moment they meet at Chão de Estrelas. Arlindo goes to the theater/bar to meet his girlfriend’s brother, Paulete and decides to stay to watch the performance. The camera focuses on Arlindo’s curious look around the place until it comes to rest on the stage where we see Clécio.
Fig. 11. Clécio and Arlindo exchange looks.

The actor starts singing Caetano Veloso’s “Esse cara” (“This Man”). At this point, the camera cuts back to Clécio, who has been looking into the audience, and has his eyes fixed on somebody in the crowd of spectators.

Meanwhile, the song’s lyrics describe a man “com seus olhinhos infantis, com os olhos de um bandido” – “the kind of man,” in other words, like Arlindo. The camera, never losing sight of Clécio, moves through the audience till it pauses behind Arlindo. At this point, our view of Clécio lines up with Arlindo’s view of the performer (in fact, it feels as if Clécio were looking straight at him in what is known technically as ‘eye line match’– fig. 11). Crosscutting between these different points-of-view, the camera thus recreates the cabaret’s seductive atmosphere of song and spectacle encouraging the spectator to adopt the perspective of the characters through subjective shooting and cutting.

After Clécio’s song a documentary-style hand held camera is used in some scenes as if to follow them more easily. This moving camera also follows Clécio and Arlindo later while they dance together. Arlindo seems at ease with the situation even it being the
first time he has ever danced with a man. He says: “nunca tinha dançado assim com outro homem.” Clécio responds saying that he had never danced like that with a soldier. The distinction for both of them is important. Clécio finds the novelty in dancing with an “agente da ditadura” as he calls his companion. Arlindo is enjoying his first dance with another man.

In terms of sexuality, this film also tries to break with the boundaries of feminine and masculine, top and bottom dichotomies. Arlindo is in the army and thus supposedly virile. Clécio is the artistic type, singing with a female voice and dressed in colorful and feminine ways (during his performance, he sings “eu sou apenas uma mulher”). Yet, as in the case of Madame Satã, Tatuagem does not conform to the gender norms that people would expect in the stereotypical portrayals of masculinity and femininity. When Clécio and Arlindo have sexual intercourse Arlindo is penetrated by Clécio. If scholars have been concerned about the image or the portrayal of homosexual characters in the films, Tatuagem is then an important example of alternative possibilities for the depiction of queer lives. As much as Madame Satã, Tatuagem goes beyond traditional views of sexuality and images of the queer male body. The dichotomy between the passive and the active has been one point of ongoing discussion as we saw in the first chapter (Green among others), these film explores the possibility of a masculine-identified man who adopts the so-called passive role in sex reverting traditional roles associated with femininity and passivity.

This unaccustomed relationship between a soldier and a performer aims to discuss an important issue that we have already seen in Dzi Croquetes and Herbert Daniel’s writings, namely how does one reconcile private and public lives? In Tatuagem, Deusa,
Clécio’s co-parent says that during a repressive act by the police she saw Arlindo with the army. She goes on to say that she does not want to see her son with people that work for the repressive regime. Arlindo is part of the military, but is now also part of the theater and counter-culture group. While not in action with the military brigade his life does not seem to be in conflict with his new milieu. However how does one reconcile the repressive regime and the liberationists?

The film answers that question definitively with Arlindo’s leaving the army. In the end of the film, when the army is preparing to break into the theater, we see Arlindo dancing with the group. In times of dictatorship, there seems to be no alternative life inside the army. In order to resist the regime, one needs to be out of it.

The final show at Chão de Estrelas is the summation of their perspective as a revolutionary group. Significantly, their idea of transcending norms is explained by their song “Ode ao cu” (“Ode to the asshole”). Following the 1970s liberationist movements and utopias discussed by Caio Fernando Abreu and Herbert Daniel, Chão de Estrelas proposes a view of the ‘asshole’ as the one part of the body that signifies liberation for everybody – men and women. If the phallocentric society (in the film represented by the army and its guns) creates a hierarchy in social relations, a society in which the asshole is the center would redefine all our social relations. The song, and the performance thus intend to socialize the anus. As Hocquenghem argued “si el falo es esencialmente social, el ano es esencialmente privado… No hay otro lugar social para el ano que la sublimación” (72). Therefore Chão de estrelas proposes the total liberation and revision of the sublimated and marginalized status of the anus. Also, the theater troupe’s performance proposes “el uso deseoso del ano” (Hocquenghem 74), not only for the
homosexual body, but also for everybody as Hocquenghem suggested.

The performance space thus becomes part of the utopian project of the theater group since it is there that the audience and the performers become one in their elegy to the anus. Clécio opens the Ode ao cu with a monologue asking if democracy and liberty are equated, using a phallic crucifix inserted in his anus. He ends his monologue saying that, “o símbolo da liberdade é o cu que é democrático e todo mundo tem.” The crosscutting technique prevails here in order to show that while they present the show military trucks are on their way to the theater. Also, the camera insists on close-ups of the audience in the theater showing their happy and vibrant energy, while inside the trucks, the camera closes in on apprehensive faces of the young men serving the dictatorial government.

Cutting from the truck to the theater, the camera focuses on the naked actors who are entering the stage to perform Ode ao cu. One of the last is Arlindo, confirming that, as we mentioned earlier, he is no longer part of the army and has joined the group. The actors dance with the audience in a total celebration of the cu. The crosscutting between the theater and the military trucks continues until the moment we hear glasses breaking. There is a fade to black and for some seconds we only hear people screaming. Silence takes over and we cut to a long shot of the theater during sunrise held for some time. At this moment the film returns to parallel shots of Clécio and Arlindo. The latter is now back in the same scene where we first see him, sitting on his bed at the headquarters, this time with a bag next to him. Clécio is with his son and his co-parent, Deusa, in a car going to the theater. Once again, the discrepancy in both lives is clear.
The opposition between queer possibility and impossibility is reinforced by the dialogue in the car: Clécio’s son says that he has received a letter from Arlindo who is now in São Paulo trying to find a job. In the letter Arlindo says that he has not been able to find a job due to the fact that he has a tattoo. This fact leads us back to the moment in the film in which we see Arlindo having his tattoo made by his colleagues at the headquarters. As in the beginning and in the end of the film, scenes at *Chão de Estrelas* and the headquarters alternate. Loudness and cheerful comments from the audience are contrasted with the darkness and silence of Arlindo’s space. The title of the film, *Tatuagem* (“Tattoo”), is probably a reference to Chico Buarque’s song with the same name in which Buarque sings:

```
Quero ficar no seu corpo feito tatuagem/que é pra te dar coragem pra
seguir viagem quando a noite vem/E também pra me perpetuar em tua
escrava/que você pega esfrega nega mas não lava…
```

In an earlier sequence Arlindo had tattooed the letter “C” surrounded by a heart on his chest. The moment Clécio sees it, he cries and they kiss. The body is, then, permanently marked by their relationship. Arlindo’s tattoo become a visible mark of that relationship at the same time it is an impossibility of life in a normative society since he cannot find a job in São Paulo.

Another important element in *Tatuagem*, which I have not yet mentioned, is the filming of a documentary inside the film. Professor Joubert, a *Chão de estrelas* enthusiast, is making a movie about and with the theater troupe. Throughout the film, the
digital camera is alternated with a super-8, a medium used throughout the 1970s. By the end of *Tatuagem*, we understand that the alternation between the super-8 shots and digital camera is intended to show the audience the movie inside the film. Thus, Professor Joubert’s shots are made with traditional technique contrasting with the modern filming. In home video style, Professor Joubert shoots scenes of the theater troupe at Chão de Estrela’s daily life combined with his own piece named “Ficção e Filosofia,” a tropicalist rendition that illustrates Indians, Carmen Miranda, robots and music. “Ficção e Filosofia” is an avant-garde film that intends to portray the possibility for a future with no boundaries in terms of sexuality and the idea of a new “paradise” (“e só restará um símbolo que representará a igualdade: Paraíso.”) in which all humans are free to express their libido.

We do not have the chance to see Joubert’s whole film. Nonetheless *Tatuagem* actually ends with Professor Joubert’s supposed movie, in which he predicts a future with no gender: “Com quantos olhos vamos nos desvigar depois de abolido o sexo? … E aqui no olho do futuro começa a não-história. Aqui começamos a fazer a pintura rupestre de um novo tempo.” Joubert’s film contrasts with the conventionality of *Tatuagem* in terms of technique and linearity and even though *Tatuagem* does not “blur the barrier between art cinema and popular film” as Paul Julian Smith (*Mexican Screen Fiction* 2) has suggested about the films by recent young Mexican directors, Hilton Lacerda’s film attempts to portray same-sex desire with a naturalistic perspective that helps the audience see a love affair between two men and its social and political connotations without the idea of failed and tragic relationships, like some traditional stories we have mentioned in the first chapter. The conventionality of Lacerda’s movie serves as a way to portray this
naturalist perspective of the same-sex desire without putting aside the possibility of freedom represented by Professor Joubert’s unconventional piece.

Along with Madame Satã and Dzi Croquetes, Tatuagem also tries to show possible alternatives to traditional dichotomies commonly seen in Brazilian society throughout the twentieth century. The film plays an important role by presenting multiple queer characters with different life styles and features. More importantly, the images in these films are not negative or pejorative, but are merely representations of queer possibilities. The homosexual (and passive) soldier, the queer artist, the effeminate actor, the accepting mother, the young boy whose father is a performer, the philosophy professor, all these characters join this queer familiar arrangement in order to portray possible visibilities.

These three films thus look into the past in order to pave the way toward a possible queer future. The next and last feature, however, looks into its own present in order to understand its time and its (im)possibilities.

4.5 Romance and the Future in the Past

Romance is Sérgio Bianchi’s second feature length film. It was released in 1988 and ended up winning several awards and being released in different countries. Sergio Bianchi has been directing movies for more than forty years now and as João Luis Vieira says, Bianchi is “one of the very few independent filmmakers in Brazil who have succeeded in producing feature films on a regular basis, despite the political upheavals and economic crisis that have marked the post-dictatorial 1980s” (86).
The original idea for Romance is by Sergio Bianchi and Eduardo Albuquerque. The final script was written by Fernando Coni Campos, Mario Carneiro, Cristina Santeiro, Claudia Maradei, Suzana Semedo and Caio Fernando Abreu. It is not a coincidence that Caio Fernando Abreu collaborated with Sergio Bianchi. In the 1980s they shared a house in São Paulo and were close friends. Also, the film shares some of the disillusionment that I discussed in the third chapter when dealing with Abreu’s work.

The film tells the story of three people, Maria Regina, Fernanda and André whose lives had been affected by Antonio César, a leftist intellectual who has died in a car accident. The opening sequence of the film is a speech by César in which he talks of political and sexual liberation. This speech is followed by his funeral. The circumstances of his death are suspicious since, according to Antonio César’s testimony, he had written a book with accusations against politicians, corporations and multinationals. César is the representation of the charismatic intellectual and the audience gets to know of him through images from home videos and TV interviews that are shown throughout the film, thus creating a sense of the reconstruction of the past. His death affects the three main characters in different ways. Maria Regina follows César’s political path, Fernanda follows his libertarian views and André is apparently infected by a virus (an allusion to the HIV virus). The film, then, tells their search for a possible life after Antonio César’s death.

Throughout his career Bianchi has developed a unique style that can be seen since his first films. Editing and soundtrack are intrinsically part of the narrative and help the audience grasp his critique of Brazilian contemporary society. When analyzing Cronicamente Inviável (2000), Bianchi’s most acclaimed and commercially successful
film, João Vieira dos Santos uses the metaphor of a knife to explain his editing style (88). The transitions between scenes are not smooth and are not meant to be, as they are cut as if with a knife, switching characters and spaces but still telling stories that can hardly be separated from each other.

Sound too is crucial to Romance’s experimental aesthetic. With a score that blends synthetized sound effects with dissonant chords and fragments of classical and folkloric music, the musical group Chance contributed to the film’s suspenseful, at times alienating and broody atmosphere. Even the sound and rhythm of samba, perhaps the quintessential Brazilian musical tradition, is distorted with dissonant chords that create a sense of estrangement and disorientation. This happens, for instance, when Fernanda prepares her suicide to the tune of the song “Samba do morro.” After first recording her voice on tape saying “não muda nada, não muda nada. Vai continuar tudo como está,” she proceeds to put a speaker on the balcony of her apartment, turns up the volume of her sound installation and plays at a high volume both the tape and a record of the samba song. The song’s lyrics resonate with the message of her tape:

Morro. Morro cedo.

Morro. Morro cedo.

Levo embora um segredo.
There is a significant wordplay at work in the song’s usage of the term morro. In Brazil, morro refers to the slums, calling to mind a division between asfalto and morro and its concomitant class and racial associations. Those who live in the morro (on the “hill” or the “mountain”) are from the lower classes. Also, the word morro is the first person singular of the verbo morrer (to die). While the song plays, the camera first adopts Fernanda’s point of view, looking down from the balcony into the street, where a group of people have gathered. The camera then shows her sitting on the edge of the balcony, preparing to jump, while the roaring crowd downstairs screams “Pula, pula” (fig. 12). During these shots, the double meaning of morro (first, as the opposite asfalto and second, as the first person conjugation of morrer) is crudely illustrated. Those gathered on “the asphalt” moments earlier have followed her home from the street market, begging for food and comforts she cannot provide. Arriving exhausted and exasperated through the gates of her apartment building, Fernanda realizes that she alone cannot redress the social inequalities and problems of her country. Her good intentions not withstanding, she
is the one that has gone up the hill, “subindo o morro,” in a twisted allegory of Brazilian social inequality. At the same time she does not belong up there, her life (her devotion to Antônio César’s utopias of liberation) does not belong on the asphalt either. As there is no place for her ideological commitments, however, she must fall to her death below.

According to Carlos Augusto Calil (qtd. in Soler 51), in Romance, Sérgio Bianchi realized that the main problem at the moment of shooting was AIDS. However, to Bianchi the AIDS epidemics and the silence and marginalization that those affected by it are forced into reinforces the idea of the destructive and corrupted state. Politics, ecology and sexuality are thus intertwined in the lives of the three main characters:

Embaralhando as trajetórias desses quarto protagonistas – um, Antônio César, morto desde o início do filme, três, vivos –, Bianchi toca em três preocupações básicas do momento: a degeneração moral, da qual a corrupção política é o sintoma mais explícito na área política, a degradação da qualidade de vida (isto é, a sistemática violação da ecologia) e o verdadeiro “macartismo” sexual que se fortaleceu na esteira da Aids. (Labaki, qtd in Moreno 153)

Hence sexuality in the film is also a political act. André, Fernanda and Antônio César seem to live a romance in which their pleasure goes beyond sexual identities. Such a relationship is denoted by the fact that same dialogues are reproduced among them interspersing the characters.
Antônio César’s death marks the end of their relationship. Fernanda and André cannot be together as a couple since they only functioned with the intermediation of César. Antônio César’s death is also represented as the death of any possibility of liberation, be it sexual or political. Capitalist exploitation and material and ecological disaster are all sponsored by the state, which is represented in the character of Congressman Tavares, a corrupt politician, possibly responsible for Antônio César’s death.

For the first time in Brazilian cinema (and one of the few up to this day) Bianchi portrayed AIDS capturing a unique moment in recent history, the first years of the epidemic. As João Silvério Trevisan says:

*De execrado, o homossexualismo se tornou maldito. Uma pesquisa realizada pelo Datafolha em 1988 acusava que 60% dos paulistanos entrevistados desaprovava cenas de relacionamentos homossexuais.* (449)

*Maldito* [cursed or damned] is an important word. The scenes in which André has sex in the bathroom or in the dark alleys show the condemnation that those practices were doomed at the time and by reproducing them, Bianchi calls attention to the position André occupies in society in order to criticize and combat it. Group sex, gay sex or any non-normative practices are thus shown to have been exiled to the dark sides of society. Antônio César’s discourse of liberation has died and since then, André is left only with masturbation due to the fear of contamination. As André says to Fernanda:
Continuo com tesão, mas não posso mais trepar. Às vezes, me sinto como um assassino das pessoas.

André’s words would agree with Caio Fernando Abreu who stated that it did not really matter if gay men had the virus or not, they were all already infected by the fear of contamination (Callegari 103). This fear, therefore, constitutes the death of liberation and the death of non-normative practices. As Antônio César affirms in one of the flashbacks, “há um novo moralismo no ar.” Sergio Bianchi finds it more difficult to live as an abject and death is thus the answer for the characters. As mentioned earlier, AIDS thus reinforces the rise of a stronger sense of heterosexism and normativity. Antônio César’s ideas can now find no place of liberation in a society that has embraced a new moralism. As Karl Posso says of this time:

In short, the arrival of AIDS and the keen assimilation of medical concepts into religious and moral discourses in Brazil rearticulated national heterosexism into a reinforced and coherent onslaught. (Artful Seduction 11)

The combination of Bianchi’s editing, score and lighting brings a sense of loss and disorientation to the film. The dissonant chords, the darkness of André’s apartment and the black plastic in Fernanda’s apartment (indicating that it is under construction) represent Antônio César’s death and the way they are dealing with their own imminent death.
Of all the four films analyzed in this chapter, *Romance* employs the closest to an avant-garde technique due to its jarring cuts and non-linear narrative that alternates between past and present. Bianchi also includes Brechtian-like didactic interludes that explain Brazilian socio-economic policies. In the most clear cut, while Regina is in a taxi going from Curitiba to São Paulo, a narrator explains all the levels of misery and poverty that have afflicted the population of the area in which her car is passing by. Bianchi adds an ironic perspective: while the narrator explores the topic in voiceover in the background we hear an instrumental version of *Aquarela do Brasil* by Ary Barroso, a classic nationalistic anthem.

Unlike *Tatuagem*, where the use of crosscutting clearly marks a distinction between the two lifestyles of the main characters, in *Romance*, the editing style is not so obviously marked, cutting at some points in disorientating style between fiction and documentary scenes. Beyond this formal technique, on an ideological plane, if the first three films showed possible queer representations and places of resistance, *Romance* shows the impossibility of such utopias. Queer imaginings, to Sérgio Bianchi, are all incorporated by the normative regime. Nonetheless, the ideas remain in the air and Antonio Cesar’s videos still represent a queer voice.

4.6 Conclusion

The four films I discussed reflect each in their own way on alternative, queer modes of viewing (and being in) the world. Even though Madame Satã (as much in fiction as in real life) gets arrested multiple times, Dzi Croquetes are censored, André and
Antônio César in *Romance* die, and Araújo and Clécio in *Tatuagem* do not remain together, their (his)stories have a great deal to offer for queer criticism in the Brazilian context. In particular, cinema in Brazil may be an exemplary medium to touch on our contemporary sensibilities, for as Julio Bezerra notes, “cinema (que começa a dar as caras em finais da década de 90) narra um estado de coisas à flor da pele e chama o espectador para mais perto” (02). The use of close-up, the fluidity of genre, and the choice of stories that represent alternative modes of experience invite the audience to take a closer (and in that sense privileged) look at the sphere of the body and of personal intimacy, which are crucial to queer critique. Moreover bodies deemed to be culturally abject can through cinema be made visible, accepted and even desired. Bezerra continues:

> o que mais desejamos explorar desse cinema é seu interesse pela pele, por um realismo mais centrado no fenômeno da experiência, e por uma relação mais física com a câmera. Pois uma das maiores pulsões desse cinema é o encantamento físico do corpo. (03)

The body – or rather *a pele* (“the skin”) – is closer to the camera, therefore closer to the audience. The naked, hairy bodies of the *Dzi Croquetes* dancers, the naked bodies and their *Ode ao cu* in *Tatuagem*, the sculpted body in a Carmen Miranda-outfit in *Madame Satã* and the body in pain in *Romance* – all these bodies make their state of abjection visible by drawing the camera close to them.

An anthropophagic queer reading (as explained in chapter two) might help us read these portrayals of the representation of abjection in a critical way, despite Bianchi’s understandable pessimism. Although at that time bodies were most visibly marked “as
queer” (as non-normative and abject), I believe that the representation of marginality in the films I discussed should not be equated with despair. These films use “[a]bjection or transvestism” as “two techniques (strategies) to render the invisible visible” (Smith, Vision Machines 34). From within the margins, these characters manage to plot and live alternative forms of existence, beyond “the Ferris Wheel” so central to Caio Fernando Abreu’s “A Dame da Noite.”

Interestingly, these films not only portray non-heteronormative practices and identities that defy easy categorization, but rather extend conventional cinema by adding meta-historical commentary or using self-referential techniques. Madame Satã is a docudrama, Tatuagem weaves (fictional) performance footage through its story and Romance explicitly alternates self-referential storytelling with archival footage and Brechtian-like didactic voice-overs. Fiction, in all the cases, blurs the boundaries with documentary, bringing to mind Fernão Pessoa Ramos’s observation that:

[u]m dos pontos na diferenciação entre documentário e docdrama deve ser estabelecido na forma de recepção. Docdramas são ficções, e, como tais, interpretadas pelo espectador dentro do universo do faz-de-conta.... A expectativa espectorial (carregada de emoções) sobre a conduta de entes com personalidade, a verossimilhança das reviravoltas, a catarse nos reconhecimentos são elementos que constituem a fruição da ficção, baseada no acordo tácito que funda o faz-de-conta ficcional. (Afinal... o que é um documentário 52)
Finally the feature films analyzed in this chapter resonate with the categories proposed by Pessoa. In *Dzi Croquetes*, Tatiana Issa says “tudo era uma fantasia, um sonho.” If fantasy and dreams are part of the fictional realm, as Ramos says, the documentary not only builds a forgotten collective memory but also appeals to our emotions with “elementos que constituem a fruição da ficção.” The fiction films, on the other hand, besides the “faz-de-conta ficcional,” deploy documentary elements in order to convey their stories.

Judith Halberstam in *The Queer Art of Failure* argues that “before queer representation can offer a view of queer culture it must first repudiate the charge of inauthenticity and inappropriateness” (95). She goes on to criticize the American TV show *The L Word* because of its attempt to ‘clean up’ the lesbian image. For Halberstam the TV show repudiates the butch (manly-looking lesbian) in order to represent lesbians as successful. The critics I have presented in the beginning of this chapter fall into a similar ‘repudiation trap’ by deeming the effeminate man (the *bicha*) as a merely stereotypical image of gay men and hence as irrevocably demeaning. The films I have analyzed, rather than overtly denouncing effeminacy as “bad,” take an inquisitive, at times even celebratory stance to gender plasticity and sexual diversity. The effeminate man is not merely a stereotype; s/he is also a citizen who, by necessity, creatively exercises his/her pleasure in an oftentimes hostile cultural environment. These characters’ daily struggles and ways of being suggest subtle forms of activism that are similar to Santiago’s proposals in “The Wily Homosexual”: 
I ask whether the homosexual couldn’t and shouldn’t be more wily. Whether subtler forms of activism are not more profitable than aggressive ones. Whether subversion through the courageous anonymity of subjectivities in play – a slower process of consciousness-raising, I admit – doesn’t provide better conditions for future dialogue between homosexuals and heterosexuals than the open confrontation on the part of a group that marginalizes itself, proposed by North American culture as more rapid and efficient. More rapid and efficient, yes, but certainly less wily. (18)

Madame Satã, Dzi Croquetes, Clécio, Arlindo and even André Antônio César are in that sense “wily.” They do not fully conform to either normativity or to what Santiago describes as an “aggressive” Anglo-American model of coming-out. Strictly speaking, they do not even conform to the idea of ‘being gay,’ since the term ‘gay’ is not explicitly proposed in any of the films to express same-sex desire.

Finally, it is perhaps not accidental that Romance is the only film that does not portray a possibility for queer lives (interestingly enough it is a film that Antonio Moreno classifies as não-pejorativo); it was produced in 1988, in the midst of one of the worst economic and social crisis of Brazil (I discussed this briefly in the third chapter). In contrast, the more recently produced films (Madame Satã, Dzi Croquetes and Tatuagem) show that queer lives in the past—even in dire circumstances—have always been possible and perhaps as such, following Santiago, that “subtler forms of activism” can be more “profitable than aggressive ones” (“Wily” 18). Borrowing and extending
Halberstam’s argument, I conclude, then, that the anthropophagic queer offers us methods for “imagining, not some fantasy of an elsewhere, but existing alternatives to hegemonic systems” (*Failure* 89) and that the films I have analyzed are examples of critical “spaces-in-between” hegemony and homonormativity.
Conclusion

In this dissertation, when I analyzed queer representation in a selection of Brazilian literary texts and films – Madame Satã, Caio Fernando Abreu’s dragons, Clécio and Fininha in *Tatuagem* or André in *Labirinto* for instance – I was able to encounter depictions of same-sex and queer desire that did not conform to the oppression imposed by both homo- and heteronormativity.

Yet, while I prepare this conclusion, Russell Tovey, an openly gay actor currently performing in a gay-themed US premium cable TV series, said in an interview that he is “thankful he is not an effeminate man” (Rivas). Along similar lines Luiz Mott, a Brazilian scholar has recently affirmed (Lima, “Tabu”) that there is a misrepresentation of homosexual characters in Brazilian soap operas because in “reality” most gay men are masculine looking, whereas the majority of characters on television are exaggeratedly effeminate. While it is important to acknowledge the specific (melodramatic) genre expectations of soap operas with the popular appeal of stock characters vis-à-vis the (high-brow) expectations of literary texts and ‘serious’ author-centered cinema (or indeed the ‘quality TV’ of HBO), these comments reveal the explicit prejudice against effeminate men and propagate the cultural visibility of what I called ‘homonormative’ plots and persons more generally.

One can easily find fault with such statements, which present a number of problematical assumptions. First, they project with certainty that one can somehow ‘measure’ masculinity and assert with unwarranted insistence that most homosexual men ‘in reality’ are masculine-looking. Second, this masculine-looking man becomes an ideal
to be emulated, so that third, by extension, the effeminate character necessarily

misrepresents ‘reality.’ Finally, the statements conclude that for gay men (not

surprisingly, as it is indeed for all men) being/acting masculine is better than being/acting

effeminate. Hence the seduction (and social pressure) to behave and be perceived as

‘normal’ (and normative) by society at large operates with full force even inside the

LGBTQ community. The statement by Mott (nonetheless a pioneer scholar in his effort to
demand visibility) lacks self-conscious interrogation into what that desired visibility

might mean for a diverse ‘queer’ (and not merely ‘gay’ or ‘homonormative’) community.
His unquestioned desire for gay men to be read as masculine (that is, as masculine is
defined by a normative majority) easily merges with old-fashioned machismo and

insidious forms of intra-communal homophobia. Moreover, by discarding representations

of effeminate man as inaccurate and negative, Mott denies visibility to effeminate queers

who are once more relegated to the margins.

Mott and Tovey’s arguments are contemporary examples of what Eve Sedgwick

has called effeminophobia (“How to bring your kids up gay” 20). Their comments also

confirm Thomas Piontek’s words: “this preoccupation with the image of the masculine
gay man left gay theory and gay politics ill-equipped to intervene in the war ‘against

effeminate boys’” (“Sissy Boy” 54). Mott and Tovey further illustrate the kind of stigma

I described in the fourth chapter and reassert the supremacy of an idealized masculine

looking, and probably middle-class gay man. In “La Guerra declarada contra el niño

afeminado: Una autoetnografía ‘queer,’” Giacarlo Cornejo calls attention to the

phenomenon of effeminophobia in the context of the noticeable presence that the term

‘gay’ has gained in Latin America. The author observes “[n]os dicen “pero no eres
marica, eres gay” o no te pongas en la posición de víctima” (92). The combination of the denial of effeminate queer people with the denial of local vernacular creates a sense of displacement for those who do not conform to the ‘ideal’ (middle-class Anglo-American) masculine view.

The Brazilian works I analyzed, however, show configurations of same-sex desire and queer experience that exceed the narrow mold of ‘gay.’ Moreover, while these works are not in and of themselves free of a deep-seated cultural effeminophobia, I argued they at least show forms of resistance to such phobias and prejudice. First of all, the texts I discussed show a great diversity of queer bodies. Second, they move various forms of social and psychic abjection – exemplified in a sense of passivity, promiscuity and effeminacy for instance – from the margins to a specific place of visibility, which I called the ‘never innocent’ space in-between.

In the third chapter I argued that abjection offers a different model of self-understanding that is less reliant on (or even defined against) majority normativity. In the fourth chapter, I argued that the four films I analyzed reflect queer modes of living that do not conform to an Anglo-American model of identity politics. Like the characters of the literary texts of chapter three, they show an alternative to the American way of coming out and are thus in Santiago’s words “wily.” My readings of twentieth-century Brazilian cultural production show that there are many ways to express one’s sexuality (including through abjection or failure). Brazilian models of affirmation show that the American model of coming out is just one possibility among many others; between silence and verbalized ‘coming out’ there is more than one way to express one’s
identit(ies), even if, as this dissertation suggests, some identities resist and complicate classification.

More recently, in fact last year, another commercially successful fiction feature film *Hoje eu quero voltar sozinho* (**The Way He Looks**, 2014) directed by Daniel Ribeiro is probably the first of its kind in Brazil to present queer identities in a non-abject way which reflects a noticeable change in cultural attitudes. In this coming-of-age story, a blind boy, Leonardo, falls in love with his classmate Gabriel in a fairly uncomplicated and reciprocated manner. What is striking is that neither Leonardo nor Gabriel express their feelings for each other through fixed identity categories, not even when they form a couple at the end of the movie. While in the last scene some other students try to bully them, they simply hold hands and keep walking. The bullies look at each other with a defeated look on their faces while the couple walks out of school together. Perhaps this final scene shows what Silviano Santiago has explained decades ago as the silent affirmation of being a homosexual in “The Wily Homosexual,” a text we examined in previous chapters. The movie shows us that beyond identity-based affirmation there might be another productive way, a ‘silent’ affirmation that does not necessarily align with the centrality of naming in the Anglo-American model of coming out.

In fact, that this is a story about a blind boy falling in love with a person without having recourse to the realm of the visual – on which social representation of gay identity is founded – troubles a great deal more than I can analyze here. Crucial, however, is that unlike the stories analyzed in this dissertation, Ribeiro’s movie imagines an unproblematic resolution. Both boys are white, middle class teenagers who reside in a major urban center. The abjection and “shame” that are central to my readings of the
novels and movies in this dissertation are removed from the boys’ bodies and steer toward a positive conclusion.

The happy ending of *Hoje eu quero voltar sozinho* is a narrative resolution that is more in line with recent political events that have celebrated in many places around the world (including partially in Brazil) progressive LGBTQ legal reform—including rights to marriage and adoption—that invites queers to gradually embrace a new-found (and decidedly less ‘abject’) identity as respectable national subjects. Conversely the novels and films I analyzed in this dissertation never end on such an affirmative note. They do, however, provide alternative modes of existence at the margins, or, as I have called it, the ‘space in-between.’ If for some, the lack of a happy ending is deemed as failure, to the anthropophagic queer, failure could be seen as a distinct form of representation, as we saw in the fourth chapter.

Failure, in other words, need not merely be understood negatively; it may be part of the trial-and-error on the journey of queer world-making. Or, even more provocatively, as Quentin Crisp once said “failure might be your style.” (qtd in Halbertam, *The Queer Art of Failure* 110). And this is the importance of the anthropophagic mode: like queer theory, it was born in and out of adverse and limited conditions, yet it has made the best of this adversity. As Halberstam says, “failure presents an opportunity rather than a dead end; in a true camp fashion, the queer artist works with rather than against failure” (*Queer Art of Failure* 96). Antropofagia, then, resonates with queer theory in this sense also.

Antropofagia and queer can help us shed light each on the other. Both have a story to tell about the making of culture and the limited, provisional nature of categories
or ideas that are used to express new ideas about gender, sexuality, culture or the nation.

This is the moment when queer and Antropofagia align, in the acknowledgment that failure is not a problem but a tool or an opportunity. If one is failing in accordance to how the majority (and homonormativity) views it, then this could mean more than just failure; it could be a “style” (in Crisp’s terms). It is this failure, then, that is the final, paradoxical confirmation of the existence of possible visibilities outside the Ferris wheel, visibilities which we have explored throughout the length of this dissertation.


Print.


Campos, Haroldo de. “Da razão antropofágica: a Europa sob o signo da devoração.”


Carvalho, Flávio de. Experiência n°. 2 realizada sobre uma procissão de corpus christi. 


Córdoba Garcia, David. “Teoria Queer: reflexiones sobre sexo, sexualidad e identidad. Hacia una politización de la sexualidad.” Teoria Queer: políticas bolleras,


*Dzi Croquetes*. Dir. Tatiana Issa and Rafael Alvarez, 2010. Film.


Print.


---. "Queer and then?" The Chronicle of Higher Education. 01 Jan 2012. ProQuest. Web. 7 May 2014.