

The Birth of Brazilianism

The Stereotypical Representation of Brazil in the Context of Cultural Imperialism and Media Concentration

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Abstract

The representation of Brazil in American mainstream cinema disseminates stereotypes that have their roots in narratives produced by European explorers during the colonial era. Films and other media from Brazil portray the country's cultural and ethnic diversity more accurately, but due to media concentration and the global supremacy of the US-based film and television industry, only a few manage to reach international audiences and challenge widespread stereotypes. A critical examination of writings of Portuguese explorers produced in the centuries following the arrival of Pedro Álvares Cabral in Brazil provides the basis for the analysis of contemporary representations of Brazil in American cinema and reveals how early descriptions of Brazil have influenced these representations. In order to identify the main Brazilian stereotypes disseminated by feature films produced in the United States, a number of films released between 1984 and 2011 are analyzed. The results of the analysis allow for the identification of an ethnocentric regime of representation that is often employed by the world's leading film and television industry to portray Otherness, reinforcing stereotypical ideas about racial difference and the culture and people of developing countries.

The analysis is followed by a discussion of cultural imperialism, media concentration and its impact on cultural diversity and media pluralism. The investigation of the concentrated ownership of media, which raises concerns regarding cultural homogenization, the advancement of corporate interests over the public interest and loss of cultural diversity, indicates how media concentration contributes to the perpetuation of cultural, ethnic and national stereotypes that reinforce colonialist and reductionist ideas about developing countries. The results of the film analysis, combined with issues related to the increasing concentration of media ownership, confirm the proposition to revive the debate about a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), which emerged within UNESCO in the 1970s as a reaction of Third World nations to colonialism and the economic and cultural influence of Western nations. Finally, it is argued that, despite the failure of NWICO in the past, the concept has not lost relevance and it would be reasonable to bring it back to the international agenda.

Kurzzusammenfassung

Die Darstellung Brasiliens im amerikanischen Mainstream-Kino verbreitet Stereotypen, die ihre Wurzeln in den von europäischen Kolonialherren verbreiteten Narrativen haben. In Brasilien produzierte Filme und andere Medien, welche die Diversität des Landes mit mehr Genauigkeit und Authentizität darstellen, werden selten auf der internationalen Ebene verbreitet. Medienkonzentration und die Überlegenheit der amerikanischen Filmindustrie sind mögliche Erklärungen dafür. Um diese Behauptung zu begründen, werden gegenwärtige Darstellungen von Brasilien im amerikanischen Kino kritisch untersucht und mit Aufzeichnungen portugiesischer Entdecker verglichen, was die Identifikation von Ähnlichkeiten zwischen beiden Diskursen ermöglicht. Die wichtigsten brasilianischen Stereotype im Hollywood-Kino werden durch die Untersuchung von zwischen 1984 und 2011 herausgebrachten Filmen erkannt und ausgewertet. Die Untersuchungsergebnisse bringen ein ethnozentrisches Darstellungssystem zum Vorschein, welches regelmäßig von der amerikanischen Film- und Fernsehindustrie verwendet wird, um Anderssein darzustellen. Dieses Darstellungssystem untermauert stereotypische Vorstellungen über die Kultur und die Bevölkerung von Entwicklungsländern.

Die Filmanalyse wird mit einer Diskussion über Kulturimperialismus, Medienkonzentration und deren Auswirkung auf kulturelle Vielfalt und Medienpluralismus ergänzt. Eine Untersuchung der globalen Medienkonzentration, welche Bedenken über kulturelle Homogenisierung, die Bevorzugung von geschäftlichen Interessen gegenüber dem öffentlichen Interesse und den Verlust von kultureller Vielfalt aufkommen lässt, zeigt wie Medienkonzentration zum Fortbestehen von kulturellen, ethnischen und nationalen Stereotypen beiträgt. Die Ergebnisse der Filmanalyse, ergänzt mit den Schlüssen gezogen aus der Diskussion über die Auswirkung von Medienkonzentration auf Entwicklungsländer, unterstützen den Vorschlag über die Wiederbelebung der New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)-Debatte, welche in den 1970ern bei der UNESCO entstanden ist, als eine Antwort von Drittweltländern auf den Kolonialismus und die kulturelle und wirtschaftliche Herrschaft westlicher Nationen. Obwohl die NWICO-Bewegung bei ihrem ersten Anlauf gescheitert ist, wird schlussendlich argumentiert, dass das Konzept einer neuen und fairen Weltordnung im Kommunikationsbereich immer noch relevant ist und es sinnvoll wäre, die NWICO-Debatte wieder in die internationale Tagesordnung einzuführen.

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1 Introduction

In his letter to the King of Portugal, Dom Manuel I, Pero Vaz de Caminha, scrivener of the expedition commanded by Pedro Álvarez Cabral that arrived in Brazil in 1500, describes the exuberant landscapes, mentions evidence of the abundance of natural resources and tries to explain the nature of the natives that inhabited the land, painting a picture of Brazil that would grow deep roots in Western collective memory. Caminha's letter, containing vivid impressions of the fateful encounter between Portuguese explorers and the New World, full of promises, dangers and possibilities, was the first narrative about Brazil to reach Europe, and the first attempt to elucidate and classify the difference found in the new territory. The letter was the first of a series of texts that tried to translate the striking Otherness of Brazil to a language and narrative form understandable to Europeans in the centuries following the "discovery". These texts have originated a body of knowledge that has strongly influenced representations of Brazil in Western popular culture in the 20th century and that continues to dictate the basic rules of representation today. This idea of continuity is discussed and defended in the next three chapters by combining different approaches and theoretical perspectives. The main object of study is a selection of fiction films about Brazil produced by American studios. The film analysis illustrates ideas about representation, ethnocentrism and colonialism introduced in Chapter 2, complements the analysis of texts written during the Portuguese colonial rule in Brazil and lays the basis for critical considerations on media concentration and cultural diversity presented in Chapter 4.

The main hypothesis that guides this work suggests that the current regime of representation upon which the portrayal of Brazil in Western popular culture is based has not created its own rules, but rather borrows several elements from representation practices employed by European narrators who studied, analyzed and classified Brazil during the Portuguese colonial rule. It does not make sense, therefore, to talk about the establishment of an own regime of representation, but rather about the continuation and adaptation of a regime initiated in the context of colonialism. This affirmation is better visualized in the juxtaposition of

texts produced in the early colonial period with representations found in Western popular culture in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The medium chosen to illustrate this correspondence is mainstream cinema from the United States. The choice is justified by the fact that American cinema has assumed a prominent position in global media, becoming the main representative of a global popular culture produced in the United States and distributed through various media worldwide.

Another focus of the discussions carried out in the following pages is the idea that the ethnocentric regime of representation that generates stereotypical images of Brazil and other developing countries supports the perpetuation of global economic, social and political inequalities and justifies the subordinate position of several countries in relation to developed industrial nations. By borrowing elements from the colonial discourse to portray developing nations, the producers of inaccurate representations deny the autonomy acquired by Third World countries over centuries of independence struggles and reduce them to the former status of colony. The main producers of conservative representations that reflect the foreign understanding and judgment of Brazilian culture, while neglecting the insider perspective, are large media conglomerates based in the United States and operating on the global level. The increasing power and influence of these corporations, resulting in the predominance of homogenized representations made solely for profit, are symptomatic of a global communications structure controlled by corporate capital and characterized by a reduced participation of developing nations in the production and distribution of messages. The implications of media concentration for developing countries and the efforts undertaken by UNESCO in order to promote a more balanced international communication and information system are discussed in Chapter 4 as an attempt to expose the connection between symbolic and economic domination.

The examination of the portrayal of Brazil in American mainstream films released between 1984 and 2011 aims at delineating the predominating discourse about Brazil produced by the world's leading film industry. By comparing the outline of this discourse with the colonial narratives presented in Chapter 2, a basis for the identification of the general discourse about the Third World produced by developed nations for profit is created. The appropriation of Third World cultures and peoples by the culture industries of countries like the United States, which enjoys a privileged position in the global political and economic hierarchy, is analyzed from a critical perspective in connection with the issue of

the nature of media products. Based on the examples and associations presented, we endeavor to answer the following questions: why should media not be treated as ordinary commodities subject to the law of offer and demand, which is the basic principle of the free market economy? What aspects of the nature of media products justify special treatment? The arguments developed in the context of this discussion are based on a comparative analysis of the current prevailing communication model, based on free market, and a possible global communication structure based on the public sphere model described by Habermas [1998].

In order to provide a more exact overview of the basic structure of this work, a short description of the main topics and theoretical approaches dealt with in each chapter will be presented, indicating how the chapters are built and complement each other.

In Chapter 2, a selection of texts about Brazil written by Portuguese explorers is presented to demonstrate where the roots of the regime of representation employed by global media lay. These texts reflect the initial attempts of Europe to explain and classify the New World and to describe its economic potentialities. The authors of these narratives did not settle in Brazil; their representations are based on impressions gathered during excursions in Brazilian territory, thus constituting an outsider's view of the land and its people, in opposition to the perception of settlers, who have cut the ties to Portugal and assumed a new identity, and natives, the authentic Brazilians. By focusing on narratives about Brazil produced by outsiders who could only apprehend and describe it from a symbolic distance, an attempt was made to facilitate a comparison with the representations discussed in the film analysis.

In the last part of Chapter 2, the issue of colonialism and its consequences for the development and autonomy of the Third World is discussed. The main reference in this section is *Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano. The selection of authors that complement the discussions carried out in the following pages was not fortuitous. On the contrary, many of the authors quoted in this work are critical of the status quo and formulate their objection to certain structures and hierarchies of our globalized world in a clear and sometimes provocative way. Some of the main references are Edward Said, Naomi Klein, Robert W. McChesney, Eduardo Galeano, Herbert I. Schiller, and bell hooks¹. The perspective from

¹bell hooks is the pen name of American feminist author Gloria Jean Watkins. It is written in lower case because Watkins argues that what matters is the substance of her books, not her identity.

which this work was developed was influenced by the ideas and the writing style of these authors, and although we have regarded the objectivity and precision that are basic prerequisites of academic writing, we took the liberty to employ a more critical approach in some passages in order to express particular thoughts and ideas in a more intelligible and meaningful way.

Chapter 3 expands the discussion undertaken in the previous chapter with the analysis of 15 American films located in Brazil or with Brazilian-related themes. The analysis is based on the model of semantic spaces described by Renner [1983]. In each film, the structural division of the represented world is described, allowing for the identification of a well-defined regime of representation upon which the portrayal of Brazil in American mainstream cinema is based. The analysis is qualitative, not quantitative. Although preliminary research has indicated that a significant number of fiction films about Brazil were produced in the second half of the 20th century and the interest of Hollywood for Brazil continues increasing in the 21st century, the objective pursued in this work is not to measure the amount of Brazilian-themed films produced in the United States, but to study the content and the symbolic structure of these films in order to identify similarities that allow for a meaningful discussion about representational practices of the US-based film industry. The selected films comprise a period of nearly three decades (1984 - 2011) and represent a variety of genres: action, adventure, comedy, drama, and thriller.

Finally, the film analysis is followed by a discussion about media concentration and the global omnipresence of the US-based culture industry, and why their domination is critical for the preservation and dissemination of the world's cultural diversity. The thematic focus of Chapter 4 lays on the debate about a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and the MacBride Report. The main demands of Third World countries in the communication field are examined, as well as their relevance for an increased participation in the global exchange of cultural goods and messages and the role of UNESCO in promoting a more democratic and balanced global media system. This chapter also includes a brief analysis of the programming of public and commercial broadcasters in Germany and Brazil, which illustrates and complements the discussion about the market and the public sphere models of communication.

2 The Stereotypification of Otherness

The ideas and reflections presented in the next pages lay the basis for the film analysis carried out in Chapter 3, where the discourse about Brazil in American mainstream cinema from the last 30 years is dissected and the main elements of the discourse about Brazil in this particular medium are identified. The present chapter serves as an introduction to the film analysis by discussing traditional representation practices, ethnocentrism, and power relations between developed and developing countries. The historical background of the establishment of a regime of representation for the Third World is also analyzed. After an introduction to the main topics dealt with in the chapter, different aspects of the relationship between representation and inequality are investigated: first, the work of hooks, Hall and Said, among others, is discussed to give an overview of Western ethnocentric representations of the Other; this discussion is followed by a selection of historical texts that influenced the Western collective image of Brazil. Finally, the connection between stereotypical images of Third World peoples and real-life situations of economic inequality and exploitation is explained, establishing the link with Chapter 4, which investigates the association between media concentration, cultural imperialism and economic and political power.

American feminist author bell hooks [2009, 221] argues during an interview with black filmmaker Arthur Jaffa that representation is a “hot” issue because “it’s a major realm of power for any system of domination”. For hooks, most cultural and ethnic representations offered by the mass media contribute to maintain the systems of domination we live under, e.g. racism, sexism, and cultural and economic imperialism. All these systems have been established by the “white supremacist capitalist patriarchal culture” that rules Western societies: “Mind you, domination is always and only patriarchal – a dick thing” [hooks, 2009, 60]. Although hooks’ work focuses mainly on racism within American society and on representations of African-Americans in US media, her reflections on the nature and dynamics of ethnic and cultural stereotypes can be rightfully applied to the larger issue of the representation of Third World peoples in mainstream global media.

The white supremacist imperialist “phallic power” described by hooks [2009, 82] is present in the realm of the symbolic, in modern representations of black people in America and of Third World cultures and peoples. Just like the stereotypical portrayal of African-Americans has not evolved significantly since the abolition of slavery and the African-American Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, so has the depiction of former colonies, their people and cultural traditions remained attached to the colonialist imagination. The traditional colonialist discourse has developed into a discourse that presents ethnicity as exotic, mysterious and exciting, offering mainstream viewers images that transport them from a predictable world to the world of the unknown, which is full of dangers and surprises. Ethnicity and color are commodified in order to satisfy the consumption appetite of consumers from the ruling race and class, a practice that perpetuates stereotypes from colonial times and prevents more authentic and alternative representations of ethnicity from reaching the mainstream. About the tendency of media producers to offer stereotypical and uncritical representations with the aim to please white audiences, hooks [2009, 286] writes:

“But it is this current trend in producing colorful ethnicity for the white consumer appetite that makes it possible for blackness to be commodified in unprecedented ways, and for whites to appropriate black culture without interrogating whiteness or showing concern for the displeasure of blacks. Just as white cultural imperialism informed and affirmed the adventurous journeys of colonizing whites into the countries and cultures of ‘dark others’, it allows white audiences to applaud representations of black culture, if they are satisfied with the images and habits being represented.”

hooks [2009, 224] adds that “white supremacy will continue to shape all cultural production” as long as this production continues to take only the taste and consumption habits of white audiences, understood here as the majority of audiences in Europe and the United States, into consideration. We can argue that mainstream films are in general produced for an audience that is mostly uncritical and fails to establish a connection between the images on the screen and the historical background of the country being represented. Made solely for profit and entertainment, mainstream productions tend to follow an ahistorical approach, avoiding questioning power relations, inciting critical thinking and criticizing imperialist practices seriously. This disregard for historicity is, as Debord [1992,

15-17] argues, characteristic of Western societies centered on spectacle. The systems of domination represented by the State and the capital have outlawed history in order to conceal their plan to dominate the world. This way, power hierarchies seem “familiar”, as if they were a natural, current social and economic phenomenon and not an updated expression of a global system of exploitation and domination that can be traced back to the Age of Discovery. Since history is knowledge that contributes to understanding current developments in society, politics and economy, it can be understood as “the measure of genuine novelty”. Therefore those who sell novelty are very concerned in eliminating the means to measure it. The consequence of this “destruction of history” is that media discourses enter the realm of “unverifiable stories, uncheckable statistics, unlikely explanations and untenable reasoning”. Only media professionals are able to offer answers, and their impartiality and commitment to the truth are flawed because they depend on wages and are subject to the will of bosses and other authorities occupying a higher position in the social and economic hierarchy. It is not surprising, therefore, that independent voices are continuously silenced by the capitalist mode of media production.

For Debord [1998, 9-10], it is impossible to escape spectacle today, because it has been so widely disseminated that it now permeates all reality. The result is the “globalisation of the false” as well as the “falsification of the globe”. The former refers to the globalization of media and communications and the global reach of leading media industries, e.g. the US-based cinema industry. If one takes the main object of study analyzed in this work, it becomes evident that Debord’s assumption corresponds to the current situation in the global media scenario. The representation of developing countries in mainstream American cinema tends to be stereotypical, prejudicial, distorted and, therefore, “false”. The picture of Brazil exported by this industry to all continents tends to focus on particular aspects of the Brazilian social, cultural and ethnic reality and to ignore the larger picture. It is a synecdochic, *pars pro toto* system of representation that reduces the complexity of a multicultural and multifaceted country to a few marketable features that correspond to stereotypical ideas already present in the collective memory of several societies. A film that reduces cultural, social and ethnic complexities is likely to be well-received and easily understood by consumers all around the globe.

The same principle applies to films that avoid a change of perspective and deeper political examinations of conflicts in the Middle East. Even an Oscar-winning

production like *The Hurt Locker* (Kathryn Bigelow 2008, USA), praised by *Der Spiegel* as “the most vivid film about the Iraq war that Hollywood has produced so far”¹ [Beier, 2009], does not manage to trespass the surface of dominant media discourses and prefers to go with the flow, focusing on the American view of the Iraq war. It is the experience of American soldiers in the war-torn country that is important, not the impressions of the people whose land has been invaded by American troops. The bomb squad portrayed in Bigelow’s film faces danger in every corner and must also deal with suicidal bombers. In a particular scene, Sergeant William James tries to disarm a bomb attached to the body of a regretful Iraqi bomber. The mission fails and the man dies without ever revealing his background and his reasons to the spectator. A different approach can be seen in *Paradise Now* (Hany Abu-Assad 2005, Occupied Palestinian Territory/Germany/France/Netherlands/Israel), where the story is told from the perspective of two Palestinian suicidal bombers about to explode bombs in Israel. In *Paradise Now*, the bombers have a family, relationships and a history that helps to explain the decision to sacrifice their lives for a cause. The film resists the temptation of moral judgments to focus on the development of the characters, their beliefs and doubts. In films like *The Hurt Locker*, there is no space for the development of characters that are not American. It must be said, however, that the film belongs to a category of productions that are rather critical about the war in Iraq, expressing - yet subtly - rejection to the belligerent policies of George W. Bush. The argument here is that, as long as the voices on the other side of the fence continue to be ignored, global media discourses will remain tainted by falsity.

The scarcity of alternative discourses and the proliferation of biased ones about countries with little participation in the global media market are symptoms of what Debord calls “falsification of the globe”. We cannot come to know the world in its complexity because it has been falsified by spectacle, by partial representations that fail to establish historical relations and to dive beyond the surface of certain ideas and discourses that are deeply rooted in the collective consciousness. Representations that do not serve the economic and ideological interests of the spectacle industry are rejected. The preferred representations are stereotypical because they are profitable, corresponding to the expectations of the average global consumer who tends to rely on mainstream media discourses to build his own picture of the world.

¹“Nie zuvor hat sich Hollywood so packend mit dem Krieg im Nahen Osten beschäftigt.” (Translated from the German by Andreza André da Rocha)

If it seems too radical to argue that the globe has been falsified, it might be more reasonable to argue that it has been polarized. Although history shows that the modern world has always been polarized, divided in rich and poor, powerful and powerless, exploiter and exploited, media discourses have turned historical polarizations into spectacle. Films that portray encounters between the First and the Third World illustrate this appropriately. They exemplify the spectacularization of such encounters, showing the clash between representatives of opposite poles. The practice of emphasizing the characteristics of a different Other that stand in direct opposition to those of the main subjects of the narrative, in order to make a narrative more captivating, was not invented by the masters of spectacle in the 21st century. On the contrary: this practice borrows elements from the colonialist, ethnocentric tradition that has been advancing global polarization for centuries.

If one repudiates the spectacular/postmodern tendency to take representations out of their historical context and tries to locate the link between modern and old representations of Otherness, one will find evidence that is centuries old. The cultural and ethnic stereotypes commonly associated with Brazil, for example, go back to its “discovery” by Pedro Álvares Cabral and his companions on 22 April 1500. The first portrayal of Brazil can be found in the letter of Portuguese scrivener Pero Vaz de Caminha to the King of Portugal. In this letter Caminha describes his first impressions of the land just claimed by European explorers and lays the foundations for a set of collective ideas about the myth “Brazil” that remain rooted in the Western collective consciousness until today. When describing the features of the people they met in the land, Caminha emphasizes the sensuality and liberal behavior of native Brazilians:

“Among the natives were four or five young women, naked like the men, who looked very pretty. One of them had her thighs, hip and buttocks painted in black; the rest of the body showed her natural color. Another one had painted her knees and feet but left her intimate parts uncovered, and behaved so innocently as if there was no reason to be ashamed. There was yet another woman, also very young, with a child tied to her breast with a piece of fabric, so that you could only see the child’s legs. But there was no fabric covering the mother’s body.”² [Castro, 2010, 102]

²“Também andavam entre eles quatro ou cinco mulheres moças, nuas como os homens, que

As the film analysis will attempt to illustrate in the next chapter, it is possible to find reproductions of this first encounter, described by a European in 1500, in texts of popular culture produced in the late 20th century. The shock of cultures that characterizes the interaction between natives and colonizers is also present in texts produced centuries after the first contact between the two worlds. The idea of Brazil as an earthly paradise full of treasures and sensual possibilities, introduced by writings of European explorers in the years after the arrival of Portuguese conquerors in Brazil, has successfully established itself in the global collective memory. It has been reproduced, reinvented and recycled throughout the centuries, assuming a prominent position in popular culture and, especially in the second half of the 20th century, when communications acquired a global character and cinema became a popular and very profitable global business, in mainstream cinema from Europe and the United States. Caminha's letter offers a vivid description of this lost paradise unspoiled by civilization and inhabited by gentle and innocent natives. The inherent innocence of the natives is stressed by Caminha in the part of the letter where he describes the preparations for the mass organized by the priest who accompanied the explorers in the journey:

“They seem to be people of such innocence that, if we could understand their language and they ours, they would soon become Christians, since they apparently do not know any belief. It will be easy to shape them according to our will (...). I believe the Lord has brought us here for a reason. And therefore you, Your Majesty, who wants so eagerly to propagate the Catholic faith, must take care of their salvation.”³
[Castro, 2010, 111]

This particular excerpt of Caminha's 27-page letter is a gem of Eurocentric essentialism. The Portuguese scrivener is also innocent when he argues that the

não se apresentavam mal. Uma delas andava toda tingida daquela tintura preta, numa coxa, do joelho até o quadril e a nádega; e todo o resto, de sua cor natural. Uma outra trazia ambos os joelhos com as curvas assim igualmente tintos de preto, bem como os colos dos pés, e suas vergonhas tão nuas e com tanta inocência descobertas, que não havia nisso vergonha alguma. Também andava por lá uma outra mulher, ela também nova, com um menino ou menina atada com um pano – não se de quê – aos peitos de modo que lhe apareciam somente as perninhas. Mas nas pernas da mãe, e no resto de seu corpo, não havia pano algum.” (Translated from the Portuguese by Andreza André da Rocha)

³“Parece-me gente de tal inocência que, se nós entendêssemos a sua fala e eles a nossa, seriam logo cristãos, visto que não têm nem entendem crença alguma, segundo as aparências. (...) E imprimir-se-á facilmente neles todo e qualquer cunho que lhes quiserem dar (...). E o fato de Ele nos haver até aqui trazido, creio que não o foi sem causa. E portanto Vossa Alteza, que tanto deseja acrescentar à santa fé católica, deve cuidar da salvação deles.” (Ibid.)

natives will not oppose conversion to Christianity because they have no faith. Native Brazilians had their own rituals and systems of belief, which did not correspond to European models of religiosity. Moreover, not all natives were keen to accept the new religion imposed by the colonizers. The assumption that one will find no resistance to domination because the natives are inherently gentle and innocent, while the colonizers are intellectually and morally superior, follows the same logic that makes the symbolic domination of the Third by the First World possible. According to the Eurocentric logic, groups that have not yet achieved a certain degree of civilization deserve to be exploited for the profit of the civilized. This basic idea has been used to justify invasion, genocide, plunder and slavery in European colonies around the globe, and it has been adapted to fit in times of political correctness. Although they might be called by other names, domination, colonization and exploitation as idealized by early European explorers are still a reality in our globalized world. The symbolic domination that contributes to the perpetuation of cultural, ethnic and national stereotypes through mass media is one of the facets of a global system where former colonies, inhabited by the poor and under-represented, are continuously depleted from their natural resources and used to feed the insatiable appetite of Western capitalist greed.

The greed that fueled the colonialist machine for centuries and motivated companies to transfer their production units to the Third World in the late 20th century – a practice known as “outsourcing” – is a favorite target of critique by Canadian journalist Naomi Klein. In her book *No Logo*, Klein analyzes the economic and social changes behind the commodification of public space and identifies the connection between issues of media ownership, cultural identity and representation. The globalization critique presented in *No Logo* resulted from the realization that there were serious and damaging transformations taking place in the economic sphere while Klein and other activists were concerned about representation. Klein argues that her generation wanted to change the world through pop culture, and since media-perpetuated stereotypes reinforced white supremacy, progress could only take place if imaginations were “decolonized”:

“Asians and lesbians were made to feel ‘invisible’, gays were stereotyped as deviants, blacks as criminals and women as weak and inferior: a self-fulfilling prophecy responsible for almost all real-world inequalities. (...) We convinced ourselves that if the typecast images and loaded language changed, so too would the reality.” [Klein, 2001, 108]

The focus on representation, argues Klein, left her generation unprepared to deal with the more urgent issue of ownership, which has a decisive influence on the mediated images so harshly criticized in representation battles. As the author points out, in the new context of concentrated media ownership and cultural and economic globalization, it is not enough to resist and challenge stereotypical representations; the images on screen are just the tip of an iceberg, a reflection of complex power relations characterized by cultural and economic domination. Asians might indeed be invisible in US mainstream media, but if one wants to go beyond the realm of representations and deal with a hard economic and social issue, one should turn the focus to the invisibility of workers in Asian sweatshops. Earning a couple of cents an hour to manufacture brand products for wealthy consumers in the developed world, the sweatshop workers are an uncomfortable but necessary reality according to the logic of savage capitalism. But just because they are very real it does not mean they must have a voice. Unlike the expensive brand products they make, sweatshop workers rarely make it to the mainstream. They remain a faceless and nameless mass of Third World proletarians whose existence is ignored by mainstream media discourses and whose rights and basic needs are denied by the corporations they work for.

It would be naive to believe that Asian sweatshop workers are not represented in mainstream white culture merely because there is not a “market” for such representations. It would also be wrong to argue that Asians are not represented in this culture at all. It is possible to find references to the culture and people of Asian countries in several texts of mainstream Western popular culture - what is questionable is the perspective from which such references are made. The main assumption that underlies this work is that the representation of Brazil in mainstream American cinema follows an ethnocentric colonialist tradition that identifies the former Portuguese colony with characteristics such as primitivism and lawlessness. Films set in Africa tend to focus on poverty, ethnic conflicts and political corruption. The exotic nature that characterizes the black continent is an additional ingredient that helps to sell films: from *Out of Africa* (Sydney Pollack 1985, USA) over *The Ghost and the Darkness* (Stephen Hopkins 1996, USA) to *I Dreamed of Africa* (Hugh Hudson 2000, USA). Asia also has a particular set of cultural and natural features that are exotic and exciting in the eyes of Western viewers, thus the popularity of countries like Thailand and Vietnam as film locations. Sex tourism in Thailand is an issue present in “serious” documentaries and news broadcasting and also in feature films made in Hollywood that tend to

give light treatment to a dramatic reality in many Third World countries: according to a BBC investigation, Thailand and Brazil are the favorite destinations for sex tourism, but Brazil is currently on the lead because of successful prosecutions in Asia [BBC News, 2010].

In *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (Beeban Kidron 2004, UK/France/Germany/Ireland/USA), the clumsy British journalist Bridget Jones goes to Thailand with her colleague and ex-boyfriend Daniel Cleaver to film a travel documentary. Cleaver not only enjoys the company of Thai prostitutes but, while reporting on tourist activities in Thailand, emphasizes the possibilities of sexual encounters with locals. Jones gets arrested by drug possession and is kept in a cell with several Thai female convicts. In this environment Jones is no longer the misfit, the confused and insecure woman she used to be, but a Western role model whom the convicts are eager to respect and obey. During her stay in prison Jones becomes a leader, teaches her cell mates Madonna's lyrics and distributes "miracle goods" from the Western world, e.g., Wonderbras, chocolate bars, and relationship guidebooks (Fig. 2.1). The distribution of gifts takes place to the sound of "Material Girl" and screams of excitement from the Thai women, suggesting that the consumption of Western products is the common denominator that unites people from different cultures. However, unlike her Thai cell mates, Jones has a British lawyer who ensures that the charges against her are dropped so she can return to London. While Cleaver used Thai women for sex, Jones used them to reassure herself. After listening to personal stories of women who have been abused by her partners, Jones realizes how happy she was in her previous relationship. This realization gives her new energy and determination to fulfill her romantic dreams. Once their "mission" is accomplished, the Thai women are forgotten. Their participation in the film was justified by their contribution in defining the personality, attitudes and desires of the main characters. The women Cleaver ordered to his hotel room and those Jones met in prison had no name, no history and no future, being discarded and forgotten as soon as they have fulfilled their secondary duty in the development of the plot.

If one leaves the symbolic level and looks for real-life situations that reproduce this system of "no name, no history, no future", one might end up in a free-trade zone in the Philippines, where Klein has collected evidence of the negative consequences of outsourcing. At the Cavite Export Processing Zone in Rosario, Klein met garment workers involved in the struggle for basic rights at the workplace. The oppression of workers by their contractors, the long working hours, low



Figure 2.1: Bridget Jones (Renée Zellweger) distributes gifts to her Thai cellmates.
Source: *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*.

wages and poor safety conditions are characteristic of an economic system that perpetuates centuries of imperialist domination in the Philippines and other Third World nations. As Klein [2001, 439-440] points out, now that the Spanish colonial rule (1565-1898) and the military occupation of US forces in the Philippines is officially over, the Western bosses have traded in their uniforms for designer suits. For most Filipinos, globalization is not a modern phenomenon, but a domination practice that has been in vogue for centuries. If once it was imposed by feudal landlords and military dictators, today it is presented as a natural and desirable economic development by foreign factory owners who insist in depleting natural resources and using cheap labor from the Third World to maximize profits.

Globalization would not be considered a synonym to domination and exploitation if modern colonial bosses would care to respect basic human rights. One of the items in the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights that could bring some balance to this power relation is the right to freedom of association. Klein [2001, 436] argues that if free-trade zone workers could bargain for their rights without fearing a “government crackdown” (the free-trade export zones are a fundamental source of revenue for local governments in the Philippines, for example) and layoffs, a global code of conduct could be agreed upon that would make private codes and independent monitors superfluous. However, as Klein [2001, 36] points out, the corporate sector has been fighting rigid labor regulations since the introduction of free trade “by yanking the teeth out of

the UN's declarations and treaties, and by steadfastly opposing all proposals to link trade deals to enforceable labor and environmental codes". Attempts by the corporate sector, represented in the United Nations by wealthy countries, to disempower UN treaties and conventions will be discussed in Chapter 4. The chapter deals with initiatives within UNESCO to promote a more balanced global flow of information and with the progressive undermining by developed countries of attempts to bring about a New World Information and Communication Order with an increased participation of Third World nations in global media.

The perpetuation of the economic exploitation of Third World people by wealthy nations is not the only striking feature of a globalized world increasingly dominated by powerful corporations. Klein [2001, 39] explains that corporations are not only suppliers of products, but also "the most powerful political forces of our time". This also applies to companies like Nike and Shell but is especially critical when it comes to media corporations:

"We are losing the spaces in which the noncorporate-minded can flourish - those spaces (...) are shrinking as the captains of the culture industry become more enraptured by the dream of global cross-promotions. (...) There are limited numbers of movies, books, magazine articles and programming hours that can be economically produced, published, broadcast etc., and the window for the ones that don't fit into the reigning corporate strategy narrows with every merger and consolidation." [Klein, 2001, 188]

Media concentration has reinforced the illusion of variety and choice created by the large quantity of media products available in the market. However, having a large array of products to choose from does not necessarily mean having real choice. In fact, the possibility to choose and to escape from dominant discourses has shrunken together with the public sphere. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas [1998] describes the gradual transition from a civil society that comprised a public sphere characterized by the free exchange of ideas in public spaces such as salons, associations and coffee houses to a society where citizenship is no longer defined by the capacity of rational argumentation but by private property. In opposition to the hierarchical feudal system that excluded those without property, the public sphere was a space where social and economic status was not a precondition for inclusion. As a realm where the aspect of "common humanity" (*bloss Menschliche*) was more important than property,

the public sphere represented a collective resistance to economic restraints and political domination. With the accumulation of capital and the increasing division between property owners and wage workers, a public sphere based on critical debate and equality was no longer possible; it became “refeudalized”, being replaced by a sphere of collective passivity and consumption that, for Habermas, does not deserve being called “public”.

The existence of a public sphere presupposed a clear separation between private and public affairs, but the takeover of the public sphere by consumption combined elements from both worlds, resulting in a “pseudo-public or sham-private world of culture consumption” that lacks the egalitarian and critical character of the public sphere: “When the laws of the market (...) also pervaded the sphere reserved for private people as public, (...) the web of public communication unravelled into acts of individuated reception, however uniform in mode” [Habermas, 1998, 160-161]. The public sphere was constituted by private people who engaged in critical debate about topics of common concern; once critical debate was substituted by passive consumption of cultural goods, the public sphere became depoliticized, turning into another space where the domination of multinational corporations and media oligopolies takes place. This depoliticization also led to the reduction of “entrance requirements into leisure” [Meyersohn in: Habermas, 1998, 166]. In order to reach a larger public, constituted mainly by people lacking the necessary training to appreciate complex discourses, the market has adapted the content of its products accordingly. The laws of the market define not only the production and distribution of goods, but also their content:

“Indeed, mass culture has earned its rather dubious name precisely by achieving increased sales by adapting to the need for relaxation and entertainment on the part of consumer strata with relatively little education, rather than through the guidance of an enlarged public toward the appreciation of a culture undamaged in its substance.”
[Habermas, 1998, 165]

Although Habermas emphasizes the separation between high and low culture that also guided the work of fellow members of the Frankfurt School, expressing a rather elitist understanding of culture and ignoring the democratization aspect, his perception of the “dumb down” character of cultural production is appropriate and up-to-date. Several productions mentioned in this and in the next chapter illustrate this tendency. In an attempt to capture and portray the essence of

Brazil, several mainstream films made by developed countries succumb to the temptation of reproducing pre-conceived ideas and associations related to the country. The film industry alone cannot be deemed responsible for the international misrepresentation of Third World countries, although it does contribute significantly to the perpetuation of biased ideas about them. It is, however, part of a centuries-old, ethnocentric and imperialist regime of representation that insists in relegating Third World nations (or former European colonies) to a subaltern position in a global symbolic hierarchy that reflects existing hierarchical structures in politics and economy. Countries like Brazil, historically classified as providers of raw materials for Western industrialized nations, continue to be appointed to inferior positions in global cultural, economic and political hierarchies.

The power to make decisions that influence the directions of international economy and politics is concentrated in the hands of a few developed nations. A good example is the “Group of Eight”, constituted by France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States and Russia and fiercely criticized by opponents of globalization. Despite being the world’s seventh largest economy [The Economist, 2011], Brazil is not a major player in international economic and political forums. From precious metals and wood over coffee to sugar and rubber, Brazil has built a solid and competitive economy based on the export of raw materials. However, the collective memory remains attached to the image of an earthly paradise populated by noble savages and libertines. In order to subvert the system of representation that keeps Brazil in the category of “colony”, it is not necessary to deny its colonial past or to artificially equate it with developed nations, but to achieve a degree of flexibility and openness that allows alternative representations and discourses. As long as symbolic and economic domination keep working closely together, imperialism disguised as globalization will continue to rule the world, increasing the cultural, economic and political gap between developed and developing nations, rich and poor, over-represented and under-represented cultures.

This work focuses on particular imbalances that characterize our globalized world in order to emphasize the need to find solutions to reduce inequalities. Despite the optimistic discourse that usually shapes reports on globalization, the supposed weakening of borders and democratization of economic benefits that allegedly accompanies market expansion, the globalization movement has also contributed to the aggravation of global inequalities, poverty, famine and depletion of natural resources in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the cultural field, the

threats posed by globalization have motivated the international community, represented by UNESCO and other organizations, to establish regulations for the protection of cultural, natural and intangible heritage, as well as to develop programs to foster cultural production and provide media infra-structure in the Third World. Many countries simply do not have the necessary expertise and equipment to produce their own media products and participate in the global media exchange. This is a factor that contributes to the imbalance in the global communication and information flow and consequently to the persistence of misconceptions and prejudices regarding under-represented countries.

Nevertheless, even countries that are often represented in global media are a target of biases and misrepresentations, since regular representations do not imply accuracy. Despite the regularity with which Brazil is portrayed in American mainstream cinema, the system of representation employed to generate a particular image of the country has not changed or evolved significantly in the last three decades. Furthermore, the same system reproduces a set of pre-fabricated ideas whose origin can be traced back to writings about the “discovery” of Brazil in the 16th century. The regularity with which such ideas and images appear in mainstream media discourses does not contribute to expand collective knowledge about the country or to challenge preconceived ideas, but it reinforces certain ethnic and cultural stereotypes instead. Stereotypes that tend to ridicule, simplify or generalize certain characteristics of a people, an ethnic group or a culture are a tradition in Western popular culture. In the following section, this tradition will be discussed based on writings by Hall, hooks, Said and other authors who deal with the representation of non-white peoples by the West.

The previous introduction and the following analysis combine different schools of thought and theoretical approaches to discuss the chronological evolution and implications of the ethnocentric tradition. The ideas of a number of influential theorists and scholars are presented together with those of journalists Walter Lippmann, Eduardo Galeano and Naomi Klein, who have made significant contributions to the public debate about relevant topics in different historical periods. Lippmann wrote about the challenges of democracy and accurate news reporting in *Public Opinion* (1922), where the word “stereotype” was employed for the first time with a new meaning: fixed ideas that represent obstacles to accuracy. Galeano, an advocate of dependency theory, which has its roots in Marxism, examines historical and political aspects of the dependency of Latin American nations in relation to the First World in *Open Veins of Latin America* (1973).

Marxism and critical theory are represented by Frankfurt School member Jürgen Habermas (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 1962). The post-Marxist approach of Klein, known for anti-globalization works such as *No Logo* (2000) and *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), is complemented by references to French Marxist theorists Guy Debord (*La société du spectacle*, 1967) and Roland Barthes (*Mythologies*, 1957). The latter has, like Ferdinand de Saussure (*Cours de linguistique générale*, 1916), also influenced the schools of structuralism and semiotics. Saussure's semiotic approach is discussed in contrast with Foucault's post-structuralist views on the construction of knowledge (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1969), based on difference and the dynamics of power rather than on formal structural aspects.

Foucault's ideas are the basis for Stuart Hall's reflections on representation and ethnocentrism. Stuart Hall (*Encoding/decoding*, 1973) is, together with Raymond Williams, one of the founders of the British Cultural School and deals with issues of cultural studies such as hegemony, cultural identity and ethnicity. Post-colonialism is an influence present in Hall's work, as well as in the writings of bell hooks (*Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*, 1981), Edward Said (*Orientalism*, 1978), and imperialism critics Dorfman and Mattelart (*How to read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, 1975), who are also fundamental references in this chapter. The theoretical basis built in this chapter, therefore, is strongly influenced by post-Marxism and post-modernism. It is post-Marxist in the sense that it does not relate to traditional Marxism, with the focus on class struggles and the belief that the solution for capitalist domination is in political revolution and the Party, but to the movement that emerged after 1968 and was named Post-Marxism. This movement was characterized by the recognition that the Marxist project had failed and that it was necessary to take the next step and go beyond Marxism, which also failed to "theorise colonialism as an exploitative relationship between the West and its Others" and to "address sympathetically" the "difference" of the colonized world [Gandhi, 1998, 24]. The definition of Post-Marxism that seems fitting to the analysis undertaken in this work is that offered by Tormey & Townshend [2006, 2-3], who place the starting point of Post-Marxism after the Prague Spring and the Paris protests in 1968, which blew the notion that organized Marxism was a valid alternative to capitalism. These events showed that "progressive politics" was not to be found in Marxist institutions, but "in the streets", for example "in the new social movements of feminism and environmentalism". This work does not defend a revolution in

the Marxist sense of the word, but it proposes changes in ways of thinking and communicating that could trigger deeper social and economic changes.

It is post-modern because it acknowledges the failures and ambiguities of the project of modernity that call for a more critical and maybe even cynical approach to deal with the dilemmas of our time. It shares the “decay in the confidence” in “the idea of progress” caused by the events of the last two centuries; as Lyotard [1999, 143-144] eloquently puts it, “[n]either economic nor political liberalism, nor the various Marxisms, emerge from the sanguinary last two centuries free from the suspicion of crimes against mankind”. Progress for all, which was also one of the promises of globalization, and which would be reached through “the development of the arts, technology, knowledge and liberty”, remained a promise unfulfilled, and the current global scenario indicates a dim future. Carlsson [2003, 55] argues that globalization, if “properly structured”, could in fact lead to “a more just, peaceful and secure world”; however, globalization has shaped a world that is more “fragmented” than ever before. Lyotard [1999, 144] shares a similar skepticism towards scientific and technological development, which increases disease instead of fighting it and submits mankind to a continuous “process of complexification”. The failure of the modern project and the phenomenon of post-modernity are expressed in the current division of mankind: “one part confronted with the challenge of complexity; the other with the terrible ancient task of survival”. Lyotard acknowledges the binary structure of our globalized world, a perception that underlies the analysis undertaken in the following pages.

Finally, this work aims at contributing to the post-colonial debate. It is post-colonial because it acknowledges that the spirit of colonialism is well and alive in our 21st century global political and economic macrostructure, and that former colonies find themselves in “a postcolonial limbo between arrival and departure, independence and dependence”, which is supported by “persisting colonial hierarchies of knowledge and value” [Gandhi, 1998, 7]. It recognizes that colonialism has evolved from the “simple-minded” annexation of territories to the imperialistic sort of colonization, which is “more insidious in its commitment to the conquest and occupation of minds, selves, cultures” and is justified by intellectuals who argue that imperialism is “the messianic harbinger of civilisation to the uncivilised world” [Gandhi, 1998, 15]. The hypothesis defended in this work suggests a definitive rupture with such beliefs, which are characteristic of the modern thought, by challenging the common assumptions that globalization is an advantageous practice for all parties involved and colonization is a practice that

belongs in the past. By assuming this position, the discussion carried out in the following pages recognizes that the prefix “post” in postcolonial does not signalize the end of colonialism - a mistake against which Lyotard [1999, 143] warns us, arguing that the “rupture” suggested by the prefix “post” can be interpreted as “a simple succession (...) of periods, each of them clearly identifiable” and “a new direction after the previous one”. This rupture with the past, however, is merely a way of “forgetting or repressing” and thus of “repeating” it. The postcolonial approach employed here distances itself from this meaning by refusing to forget or repress the past and by trying to understand the past to explain and examine practices, structures and ideologies of the present.

Orientalism, one of the main works analyzed in the next section, has been canonized as the most influential “postcolonial classic” and is the main reference point for postcolonial theory [Gandhi, 1998, 64]. According to Gandhi [1998, 25], however, little attention is dedicated to the fact that *Orientalism* was strongly influenced by poststructuralist thought, of which Foucault is one of the main representatives. Said employed a number of Foucauldian paradigms in his work, especially Foucault’s ideas regarding discourse, which are formulated in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Although Foucault’s work does not address the issue of colonialism directly, his contribution to the establishment of postcolonialism as an academic discipline is undeniable, since the “alliance” between poststructuralism and postcolonialism has enabled the latter to “gain a privileged foothold within the metropolitan academic mainstream”. Through its “postructuralist parentage”, postcolonialism has “inherited a very specific understanding of Western domination as the symptom of an unwholesome alliance between power and knowledge” [Gandhi, 1998, 25]. The effects of this alliance on the production of discourses about the Third World - or “the representational violence of colonial discourse” [Gandhi, 1998, 77] - will be investigated in the next section.

2.1 Representing Difference

Hall [1997, 16-18] defines representation as “the production of meaning through language”. In this definition language assumes a larger role, including not only the written and spoken systems of a particular language but also visual images produced by different means: mechanical, electronic and digital, for example. Such images constitute a language when they are used to express meaning. As

Hall [1997, 19] points out, “any sound, word, image or object which functions as a sign, and is organized with other signs into a system that is capable of carrying and expressing meaning is, from this point of view, a ‘language’”. In order to explain how the process of representation connects objects, concepts and signs, Hall refers to two complementary approaches: Saussure’s semiotic and Foucault’s discursive approach. While Foucault focused on dynamic aspects of the production of knowledge through language, acknowledging the importance of social relations and historical context in this process, Saussure dedicated more attention to synchronic (static) aspects of language. Although he recognized that the development of language is “inseparable from political history”, he argued that it is irrelevant to know the circumstances in which a language has developed because it does not prevent one from studying its internal structure [Saussure, 1986, 22-23]. For Saussure [1986, 15], the production of meaning depends on language, understood as a “system of signs expressing ideas”. Saussure divided the sign in two elements: signifier (the form, i.e. the actual word or image) and signified (the concept associated with the form). He argued that the production of meaning was based on difference:

“A linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas (...). The entire mechanism of language (...) is based on oppositions (...) and on the phonic and conceptual differences that they imply. (...) Relations and differences between linguistic terms fall into two distinct groups, each of which generates a certain class of values. The opposition between the two classes gives a better understanding of the nature of each class.” [Saussure, 1986, 120-123]

In this context, signs can be understood as members of a system that gain meaning only when juxtaposed with other signs. The production of meaning depends on the marking of difference within language, and we can argue that the easiest way to achieve this is through binary oppositions: a simplistic solution that implies power relations between two poles, where one dominates and the other is dominated. The language employed by mainstream cinema for the production of texts that must be easily assimilated by a large, heterogeneous audience is structured upon oppositional signs that also have oppositional values, as suggested by Saussure. Despite the recognition that the production of meaning through language also involves a system of values, Saussure refrains from examining the social, economic

and political circumstances that influence production and ignores the power relations that determine the position of particular signs within a system of values. Because the focus on structural language aspects does not help to enlighten the ideas presented in this work, the focus is turned to Foucault, who goes beyond formal aspects to identify the role of power in the production of meaning and knowledge. Although it is clear that difference is essential for the construction of meaning, the issue of the values attributed to different signs - high and low, good and bad, right and wrong - deserves further investigation. Who decides to which category a certain sign belongs, and which factors influence this decision? A better understanding of the mechanisms of power helps to clarify this question.

The omnipresence of power in the production of knowledge is the essence of Foucault's approach, which expands Saussure's linguistic approach. While Saussure reduced the process of representation to language, analyzing it as a closed system free from external influences, Foucault dealt with the issue of the production of knowledge through discourse, focusing on the relation between power and knowledge. In Foucault's terms, "discourse" was not merely a synonym for language, but "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - a way of representing the knowledge about - a particular topic at a particular historical moment" [in: Hall, 1997, 44]. In this context, discourse cannot be confined to the realm of linguistics, but rather must be recognized as a concept that connects language and practice, emphasizing the dynamic character of discursive practices in opposition to the static nature of the semiotic approach. Discourse produces the objects of knowledge, determines the way people can talk and reason about these objects and appears in several texts and various institutions. Although Foucault's assumption that nothing meaningful exists outside discourse may sound absurd at first, this idea is part of the foundations of the constructionist theory of representation. We cannot deny the existence of physical things and actions, but they only acquire meaning within discourse, becoming objects of knowledge [Hall, 1997, 43-45].

For Foucault, knowledge is always a form of power and the question of the application of power/knowledge is more compelling than the question of its "truth", because knowledge associated with power has the authority to make itself true. For this reason it does not make sense to talk about an absolute, incontestable "Truth", which remains unchanged independently of cultural, social and political context and historical period, but rather of a "regime of truth". Each society has its own "regime of truth", a set of discourses that are socially

accepted and circulated, and these discourses are selected and disseminated by those invested with power, be it of political, economic or symbolic nature. When discussing knowledge, we must therefore regard the power structure in which it is produced and abandon:

“... a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended (...). We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (...); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (...) In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, (...) but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.” [Foucault, 1991, 27-28]

If the “activity of the subject of knowledge” does not play a decisive role in the production of knowledge, being subject to the exercise of power, then one can argue that symbolic power determines how and to which extent a particular “object” is represented in the media. Although Foucault’s ideas about the relation between power and knowledge emerged from his analysis of the historical development of punishment and correctional institutions, they also apply to other realms where power struggles take place. Global media and the international political and economic spheres are further domains where power is asserted and negotiated. The power hierarchy in these domains has been historically characterized by the dominance of certain nations in contrast with the subjugation of others. During the European colonial rule, the nations that today constitute the Third World were at the bottom of the power hierarchy, being subject to invasion and pillage by Europeans, as well as to the establishment of a body of knowledge from the perspective of the colonial master.

The conquered nations challenged their disadvantaged position in the hierarchy through claims to political independence, which was achieved by several African countries only in the 20th century. The use of the word “political” in the last sentence is not casual; it points out to the fact that, although these nations have become independent politically, they are still attached to their former colonial masters through other types of dependency, e.g. economic and symbolic.

Moreover, given the insignificant level of influence exercised by these nations in the international political arena, the legitimacy of their political independence is also questionable; it is a well-known fact that the spheres of political, economic and cultural (or symbolic) power are tightly interconnected. The construction of knowledge about former colonies by the developed world is shaped by centuries of cultural imperialism and economic exploitation, as well as by the ethnocentric tradition according to which civilized societies represent all that is good, true and valuable in the world, offering the parameters according to which other cultures and ethnic groups are classified, judged and valued.

The academic tradition known as *Orientalism* is an astounding example of a body of knowledge produced by ethnocentrism. Said [2003, 3] explains that Orientalism is a discourse in the Foucauldian sense of the word, i.e. it has been structured in accordance with a particular power hierarchy. Orientalism, Said adds, can be understood as a “corporate institution” that deals with the Orient by describing, explaining and ruling over it; it is a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient”. In order to understand how the West managed to produce a set of fixed political, sociological and ideological ideas about the Orient, one must take the prevailing relations of power into consideration. How was the world organized economically and politically when the production of knowledge within Orientalism reached its peak? As Said [2003, 40-41] points out, the period during which Orientalism became especially preeminent as an academic discipline and an impressive number of works of literature about the Orient was produced coincided with a period of exceptional European expansion. Between 1815 and 1914, European colonial domination increased from 35% to approximately 85% of the Earth’s surface. The authoritative position occupied by Europe was expressed not only in the political division of the globe, but also culturally. The main feature of the relation between the West and the Orient, or between colonizers and colonized, was that Europe invariably occupied a position of superiority in political, cultural and religious terms, and had therefore the authority to study, analyze and judge the Oriental according to its own standards.

Any serious study about Orientalism or another body of knowledge generated out of power must take the issue of domination into account. Said [2003, 12] explains that the Orientalist discourse is shaped by the exchange with several kinds of power: “power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (. . .), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what ‘we’ do and what ‘they’ cannot do

or understand as ‘we’ do)”. If the emergence and development of Orientalism was determined by different kinds of power emanating from the same source - Europe, the West, the metropolis or the “civilized” world -, one can also argue that the predominant discourse about Brazil has been strongly influenced by the power exercised by the West in the political, intellectual, cultural and moral spheres. Political because the Brazilian territory was defined by Portuguese conquerors; intellectual and cultural because the colonizers imposed their traditions, cultural practices and ways of thinking, as well as of organizing knowledge, upon the natives and African slaves; moral because, since the first encounter, the Portuguese judged the natives from their own moral perspective and, unable to see beyond what they claimed to be obscenity and paganism, decided they constituted a inferior race that should be exterminated or educated and converted in order to meet “civilized” standards.

The issue of the supposed political, cultural and moral superiority of the white race in relation to “subject races” is often discussed and illustrated by Said in *Orientalism*. The assumption that Egyptians and other Oriental peoples are subject races in need of Western management and influence because they are unable to decide what is good for them is recurrent in writings of England’s representatives in Egypt and other colonies selected by Said [2003, 36], who summarizes the main argument defended in these writings as follows: “There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power.”

The subjection of the “inferior” race to the civilizing white race was seen by Englishmen like Lord Cromer, representative of the Crown in Egypt between 1882 and 1907, as natural and even desirable, since Orientals did not seem to have the necessary knowledge and intellectual abilities to make reasonable decisions: “. . . it is essential that each special issue should be decided mainly with reference to what, by the light of Western knowledge (. . .), we conscientiously think is best for the subject race” [in: Said, 2003, 37]. Based on the extensive body of knowledge about the Orient available during the time of his rule in Egypt and on his personal experience as manager of a subject race, Lord Cromer assumed he was in a position to define the essential characteristics of the Oriental, to value his character and to point out his inherent flaws and limitations. The negative characteristics listed by Lord Cromer are emphasized through their juxtaposition

with the qualities attributed to Europeans, resulting in a binary system that is often the basis upon which discourses about the Other are constructed. For Said, the reduction of the Oriental to “cultural and racial essences” is not necessarily an evidence of a malicious character, but rather an indication of how efficient and convincing the discourse of Orientalism had become by the time such works were written. In the two-volume book *Modern Egypt*, published in 1908, Lord Cromer wrote:

“The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth.” [in: Said, 2003, 38]

In this “personal canon of Orientalist wisdom”, as Said calls it, Lord Cromer establishes a clear distinction between the nature of Europeans and Orientals, thus justifying the rule of the former over the latter. The presumed primitivism and inferiority of a particular race was a widely accepted pretext for territorial occupation and annexation. Intellectual inferiority and passivity, combined with the belief that inferior races did not have the means and the will to resist occupation, were the main elements of the ethnocentric, capitalist, colonialist and imperialist discourse that motivated and justified some of the greatest atrocities committed against humanity. Colonialism was supported by the myth of white superiority and, in some cases, by the doctrine of *terra nullius*, which means, in Latin, “land belonging to no one”. *Terra nullius* was one of the principles that legitimated the British appropriation of Australia, land of the Aborigines, one of the most abused and under-represented peoples of the world. It could be applied both to countries without a sovereign recognized by European authorities and to territories where nobody owns land. The first definition seemed to suit the land claimed by Sir James Cook in 1770: it had apparently no political and legal organization, let alone a property system comparable to the European.

A vast range of literature was available to sustain land appropriation in such circumstances. In *Two Treatises of Government*, published in the late 17th century, John Locke argues that in the state of nature all men were equal and property was held in common; nevertheless, God commanded man to subdue the earth and he was forced to labor to achieve this goal. In doing so, man created private property. As a hunter-gatherer society living in a warm climate, Aboriginal people had not developed agriculture or any other practice that implied land property. The absence of a well-organized structure of land property not only gave colonizers green light for occupation but also confirmed widely spread theories about the superiority of the white race in various fields. The fact that Europeans fought resistance with firearms and other weapons unknown to the natives was also perceived as a proof of superiority. In the early 19th century, American jurist James Kent wrote that the supremacy of colonizers over indigenous populations, expressed in hundreds of years of colonial practice in North America, was a consequence of “the superior genius of the Europeans, founded on civilization and Christianity, and of their superiority in the means and the act of war” [in: Reynolds, 2003, 15].

The mentality that predominated during the European colonial rule, and that justified this rule, was based on a system of classification that submitted difference to a moral judgment, categorizing it in terms of superior/inferior and civilized/primitive - the essence of ethnocentrism. In the binary world designed by Europeans, the white race represented purity, high morals, economic development and scientific advancement, while the subject races that inhabited the colonies, with their “exotic” traditions, religious practices, social and family hierarchies, ways of thinking and of relating to nature represented the opposite: immorality, lechery, disorder and political, social and intellectual decline. Today, difference is still often misunderstood, misrepresented and judged according to dominant values. This assumption will be further discussed and illustrated with practical examples in Chapter 3.

Despite the spread of economic and cultural globalization, perceived by many as the final purveyor of world peace, understanding and equality, the basic structure of economic, cultural and political relations between nations is still mainly a binary one, in which one of the poles dominates and the other is dominated. Said [2003, 350] quotes Harry Magdoff to emphasize his skepticism towards the concepts of globalization and post-colonialism. In an article entitled *Globalization – To what end?*, Magdoff [1992, 74] concludes that, although globalization has “produced

much that is new in the world's economy and politics", it has neither changed the basic functioning of capitalism nor promoted world peace and prosperity. Said is also critical of the claimed benefits of globalization; he sees it as a system that has enabled a small, powerful elite to expand its domination over the whole world, "inflating commodity and service prices, redistributing wealth from lower-income sectors (usually in the non-Western world) to the higher-income ones". This system is the new face of colonialism, expressed in the subordination of the South (developing world) to the North (developed world).

Writing about the advances of the anti-capitalist movement, Klein [2002, 9-12] argues that "globalization" used to be a euphemism employed to discuss capitalism, which has been brought back to the public debate through efforts by the anti-globalization movement. Klein also criticizes the World Bank for lending money "to the poorest and most desperate nations" so that they can build economies based on foreign-owned projects, which often lead to "environmental devastation, mass migration to urban centres, currency crashes and dead-end sweatshop jobs". In this context globalization is no longer a synonym for collective prosperity, and to talk about post-colonialism as a new phase after the end of colonialism seems incoherent. Colonialism has not ended; it has just been given a new face. Post-colonialism must therefore be understood as the study of current practices and tendencies of old colonialist traditions, but not of a world that has emancipated itself from colonialism and its associated practices and discourses.

In our post-colonial, post-modern world, where it is all about profit and spectacle, the subdued Other has become a major source of profit for the master, and not only through the exploitation of cheap labor and natural resources, but also through the Other's image and culture. Difference is no longer only an excuse for domination, but it has become a profitable commodity. The culture and the body of the Other still serve to ascertain white superiority and to justify domination, but currently the main function of Otherness is to generate profit. Dark skin, ethnic references and exotic flair are favorite themes in advertising, developing countries serve with increasing frequency as location for Hollywood blockbusters, international trade with exotic animals and skins thrives, and sex tourism is a booming industry in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The chapter of colonialism has been officially finished in history books, but it survives in different expressions of capitalist exploitation and imperialistic cultural practices. The territories in the Third World may have been decolonized, but the colonialist tradition lives on in the minds of people, keeps guiding decisions in international economy and

politics, and is eternalized by an ethnocentric regime of representation.

The focus of the representation of difference no longer lies on white supremacy, but rather on the pleasure and satisfaction to be experienced in the contact with the Other. As hooks [2006, 366] explains, the commodification of Otherness has proved so successful because it offers the promise of a pleasure that goes beyond the limits established by white popular culture. In this context, “ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture”, and the body of the Other becomes a playground where the dominant race, gender, culture and social class reinforce their authority. Sexual encounters with the Other are portrayed as especially exciting and rewarding, as a “rite of passage” that can transport a member of the dominant culture from the world of innocence and chastity to the world of experience and carnal pleasure. The desire of young white males for colored girls does not express the will to subjugate and dominate; unlike their ancestors, these young men belong to a generation that, with the help of electronic media, learned to perceive difference as desirable and exciting. By trespassing racial boundaries, they expect to be transformed. Otherness has yet another important factor of attraction for young audiences:

“Masses of young people dissatisfied by U.S. imperialism, unemployment, lack of economic opportunity, afflicted by the postmodern malaise of alienation, no sense of grounding, no redemptive identity, can be manipulated by cultural strategies that offer Otherness as appeasement, particularly through modification.” [hooks, 2006, 369]

The primitive, instinct-ridden world of the Other becomes a refuge against hard economic and social circumstances. In this playground preferred by white consumers, pleasure and satisfaction are available for purchase. In the Western cultural marketplace, hooks [2006, 370] adds, the Other is believed to have the key to a new world where one can experience “sensual and spiritual renewal”. Moreover, only a journey into Otherness can break with “cultural anhedonia”, or the incapacity to feel pleasure and happiness. The longing for absolute pleasure has reinforced the Western romantic fantasy of the “primitive”, an idea that is deeply rooted in Western culture, contributing to the reproduction of racist stereotypes. The impossibility of reaching fulfillment in the intricate structures and strict moral principles of the civilized world has stirred the desire to return to the simplicity of primitive life. The search for a “primitive paradise” barely touched by civilization, a place without moral restraints where everything is

possible, is undertaken through consumption and sexual contact with a dark Other. The attempt to cross racial boundaries and establish a connection with the Other is, however, not always aimed at affirming cultural domination. There are those who are critical of Western cultural imperialism, being able to value difference and to recognize its importance for the constitution of a diverse society and an enriching, democratic cultural scenario. hooks fears, however, that unless a radical cultural revolution takes place, the dominant voice in Western media will continue to be that which commodifies difference, presenting the Other as a product to be consumed and discarded.

The commodification and spectacularization of the Other has contributed to engrave ethnic and cultural stereotypes more deeply into Western consciousness. Instead of contributing to reducing ignorance and intolerance between cultures, and instead of challenging traditional binary representations that justify the rule of a particular country, people or culture over another, cultural globalization has provided dominant groups with new platforms where they can transmit their message of domination. If a century ago advertising was the only far-reaching medium able to disseminate the ideology of colonial masters, today those interested in maintaining and expanding the system of domination have a vast range of media to ensure their message is heard in all corners of the world, film and internet being the most ubiquitous. If it is true that there were significant achievements in democracy, human rights and the protection of ethnic and cultural diversity in the last century, it is also true that there is still much to be achieved in these areas. For Said [2003, 26-27], the globalization of communications and the development of electronic media have not contributed to challenge stereotypical ideas about the Orient; on the contrary. The strong standardization of television and film formats - associated, one can argue, with the post-modern tendency to turn culture and ethnicity into spectacle - have reinforced stereotypes about the Orient. Cultural homogenization and stereotyping have “intensified the hold of nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of the mysterious Orient”. There is no unbiased cultural position that makes it possible to discuss and understand the Arabs or Islam from an objective perspective, Said argues. The body of knowledge about the Orient, characterized by “racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, [and] dehumanizing ideology” has remained unchallenged for so long that it became too deeply inscribed in Western consciousness. Based on indiscriminate generalizations, Orientalism has produced a set of immutable laws about the Orient, which is supposed to summarize “the

Oriental nature, temperament, mentality, custom, or type” [Said, 2003, 86]. The Orientals themselves had no direct participation in the establishment of these laws: they were objects of study being judged, analyzed and classified according to Western methods and principles.

Evidence regarding the unchanged character of Orientalism can be found in recent representations of the Orient in American mainstream films. The plot of *Sex and the City 2* (Michael Patrick King 2010, USA) deals with conflicts that arise from the encounter between East and West. In the second film about the glamorous life of four upper-class female friends in New York, Samantha, the successful businesswoman with nymphomaniac tendencies, invites her best friends to spend holidays in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, where she expects to seal yet another profitable business deal. Equipped with expensive designer clothes and brand name cosmetics, the friends arrive in Abu Dhabi expecting to get a piece of the Other and to add some excitement and an exotic taste to their bourgeois lifestyle, as long as they are not forced to abstain from any of their Western habits and luxury items. The first conflict takes place at the airport upon the friends’ arrival, when Samantha is informed that her hormonal supplements against menopause symptoms are prohibited in the country. How will she be able to boost her libido and enjoy her stay in Abu Dhabi to the fullest without her hormones? Samantha’s unrestrained sexual desire precipitates not only the first East-West conflict in the film, but also the main conflict that anticipates the friends’ return to the United States. After being arrested for having sex with a tourist in public, Samantha loses all the benefits offered by her business partner in Abu Dhabi, and the business deal gets canceled. Suddenly they are no longer VIP guests in a luxury hotel in the Emirates, but only a group of Western women who must deal with the “real” Orient, which is greedy, dishonest, sexist, and unfriendly.

Before leaving the country, housewife Charlotte, eager to satisfy her consumer needs, convinces the women to pay a last visit to the public market, where she is promptly seduced by dishonest salesmen who take her to a hidden shop full of fake designer products. Upon leaving the shop with empty hands, Charlotte and her friends are followed by angry salesmen and a tumult takes place in the middle of the bazaar. The women, dressed with provocative, colorful clothes in contrast with the angry mob surrounding them, formed by men wearing sober clothes and women in burkas, get threatened and yelled at, and the situation escalates when Samantha loses the content of her purse - mainly condoms -

and has a hysterical outburst (Fig. 2.2). Close to being lynched by locals, the friends are brought to safety by a group of Arab women who hide a secret under their burkas: designer clothes (Fig. 2.3). The consumption of Western products builds the bridge that brings women from different cultures and backgrounds together, promoting mutual understanding and solidarity. That is the message the film wants to transmit: understanding cannot be reached through sincere attempts to experience the culture, the habits and the mentality of the Other, but only through the absorption of Western ideas and practices by the Other. It is a one-way process where the power structure is well-defined and immovable. If the women cannot have it their way in the United Arab Emirates, the only solution is to return to the United States, the “land of freedom”, as the narrator emphasizes in one of the last scenes, where Samantha finally has voluptuous and undisturbed sex in a public space. *Sex and the City 2* is an outstanding example of the dissemination and reinforcement of Arab and Muslim stereotypes through electronic media, combined with the glorification of Western values and lifestyles. The film tells us that the only desirable lifestyle is that in which sexual satisfaction and unbridled consumption are the basic requirements for a fulfilled life.



Figure 2.2: Samantha (Kim Cattrall) has a hysterical outburst at the bazaar.
Source: *Sex and the City 2*.



Figure 2.3: The local women bring Samantha and her friends to safety and reveal their passion for designer clothes. Source: *Sex and the City 2*.

The power structure upon which the plot is developed can also be visualized in the relationship between the women and their male butlers in the hotel. Each woman is assigned her own personal servant, available from sunrise until official discharge by the female master. Carrie, who is going through a crisis in her marriage, develops a motherly affection for her servant Guarau, who has a long-distance relationship and meets his wife only every couple of months. Aware of his duties and conformed with his subservient position, Guarau makes himself available at all times and all situations, holding an umbrella for Carrie during a stroll at the beach and preparing her beverages in the middle of the night. Such devotion is rewarded by Carrie with the only gift able to make a man like Guarau happier: money. In the first film of the series, Carrie gives her assistant, a young black woman, an original Louis Vuitton bag. Interestingly, the two employees taken by Carrie under her protective wing are dark-skinned. Differently from the white characters in the films, who are independent, self-made professionals, Guarau and Louise can only succeed with the help of a white tutor. In Carrie's Western capitalist mentality, all people strive for wealth and success, and those who are not rich and successful yet must simply work harder.

The main characters of *Sex and the City* are the synthesis of domination. They are white, wealthy, cosmopolitan, and professionally successful. They establish a direct opposition to the people, mentality and culture that Samantha, Carrie, Charlotte and Miranda encountered in Abu Dhabi. As long as their presence in the Emirates represented an opportunity to make profitable business, their antics were tolerated and their wishes were immediately fulfilled. Once Samantha broke with one of the most basic rules of behavior in the Arab country, ruining her reputation and losing credibility among her business partners, she became an unwanted nuisance, just as her companions. The Orient painted by *Sex and the City 2* is intolerant because it refuses to accept Western patterns of behavior, it is untrustworthy because it reserves itself the right to cancel a deal when it does not agree with terms of the contract, and it is reactionary because it refuses to embrace Western culture completely. Samantha's behavior in Abu Dhabi is not only an evidence of cultural insensitivity but also of Western arrogance; it expresses the Orientalist principle according to which the East must always invariably adapt to the West, and never the opposite. Samantha is not willing to make concessions, and as we see in the end of the film, she does not have to. The return to the homeland is portrayed as especially rewarding after the stay in Abu Dhabi. The beautiful desert landscapes, the fascinating bazaar and the tasty Arab cuisine are nothing compared to the cosmopolitan New Yorker life. The journey to the Orient did not serve to expand the friends' cultural horizons and to learn about tolerance; it just served to reaffirm the superiority of their own culture and lifestyle in relation to the Orient.

The discourse of Western superiority is also present in the Indiana Jones saga. Orientalist stereotypes can be found in films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg 1981, USA) and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (Steven Spielberg 1989, USA). In the latter, the American archaeologist embarks on a dangerous search for the Holy Grail. While doing research in Venice, he is followed and threatened by a group of Arabs who belong to a secret society dedicated to keep the location of the Holy Grail secret. When confronted by Jones, one of the men, Kazim, argues that he is not afraid to die: "My soul is prepared, how is yours?". The myth of the fearless Oriental willing to die for a cause repeats itself in several texts of Western popular culture. Kazim, who identifies himself as "a messenger of God", sacrifices his life trying to protect the Holy Grail. There are yet other images of the Orient in *The Last Crusade* that refer to widespread Oriental stereotypes. In the fictional Republic of Hatai, Nazis offer the king a

gift in exchange for permission to search for the Holy Grail in his land. “Your Highness” is a middle-aged man with a long beard, a prominent belly and a heavy accent. He is not interested in golden treasures; he is fascinated by the Rolls-Royce that brought the Westerners to his palace. He takes the car as compensation instead of a chest full of objects made of gold.

The alleged inability of Arabs to perceive the real value of certain objects is a recurrent theme in Disney comics. In a Donald Duck story, Moby Duck and Donald are captured by Arabs who become fascinated when the ducks start blowing soap bubbles. Moby tells Ali-Ben-Goli, leader of the Arabs, that he will exchange the secret of soap bubbles for their freedom, to which the Arab replies: “Freedom? That’s not all I’ll give you. Gold, jewels. My treasure is yours, if you reveal the secret. We have jewels, but they are of no use to us. They don’t make you laugh like magic bubbles” [Dorfman & Mattelart, 1986, 51]. Disney comics have a tradition in disseminating Western colonialist thinking, as Dorfman and Mattelart discuss in *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*. The example mentioned above is particularly illustrative of Disney’s representation of the Other. Dorfman & Mattelart [1986, 49] argue that this episode “reflects the barter relationship established with the natives by the first conquistadors and colonizers (in Africa, Asia, America and Oceania): some trinket, the product of technological superiority (...) is exchanged for gold”. For the King of Hatai, the Rolls Royce - a mass-produced commodity - is a generous compensation in exchange for the Holy Grail, a relic of inestimable religious and archaeological value.

In *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Jones and his partner Marion confirm the myth of the superiority of Western intellect in the streets of Cairo, where they are chased by Arabs under the command of Nazis. Marion wins a fight against an opponent armed with a knife using a pan, while Jones shoots a swordsman eager to show his ability with the weapon. Jones’ Egyptian friend, Sallah, is the only Oriental in the film that seems able to act with precaution and rationality. The other Orientals portrayed in the film do not seem to have a story or a name, but they are useful for the development of the story. The excavation coordinated by Jones’ opponent, Dr. Belloq, is run by Egyptian workers who are bossed around by the archaeologist and his German accomplices. Jones also relies on Egyptian labor to dig his way into the lost ark. While the good and the evil Westerners fight over the ark, the Egyptians keep digging and following orders as if they had no say in what should be done with the relic located under their soil.

The Indiana Jones saga reproduces ethnic and cultural stereotypes while glorifying the wisdom, sagacity and industriousness of certain Western characters. By juxtaposing Westerners with Orientals, the saga uses the Other to create a captivating and profitable cinematic spectacle and reinforces Orientalist ideas. Although they are portrayed as primitive and intellectually inferior people, Orientals are not presented as the main enemies of Western characters; in fact, the main enemy of Western civilization can be found in the West. In both *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *The Last Crusade*, the main threat to Western culture and civilization is imposed by the Nazis, who are treacherous, cold-blooded and greedy. In the first film, they want to get hold of the ark that contains the original Ten Commandments to ensure the triumph of the Third Reich; the search for the Holy Grail in *The Last Crusade* aims at giving the Führer eternal life. While Jones' actions are motivated by a thirst for knowledge and the recognition of the relics' historical value, the Nazis are moved by greed and the desire to accumulate power and dominate the world. German Nazis, representing an evil and merciless facet of Western civilization, are also often portrayed in American mainstream cinema. Films like *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg 1993, USA), *In Enemy Hands* (Tony Giglio 2004, USA) and *Inglorious Basterds* (Quentin Tarantino 2009, USA/Germany) emphasize the arrogance and belligerence of Nazi characters while stressing the loyalty and integrity of the heroes, a role often assigned to American characters. The frequent portrayal of German Nazis in American mainstream cinema can be explained not only by the fact that it requires little effort to tell a story where villains and heroes are easily identifiable from the beginning, but also because the gruesome history of Nazism and the Holocaust is well-known and interesting to several audiences. Moreover, when juxtaposed with their cruel enemies, American characters seem outstandingly benevolent and virtuous, reinforcing the feeling of patriotism that is often encouraged by American popular culture. Because of the inherent evilness and inhumanity of Nazism, Nazis are characters that can be easily assigned a position within a binary system of representation.

Stereotyping is an effective strategy in the dissemination and maintenance of Western values, lifestyles and ideology. Dyer [2006, 355-356] argues that stereotypes indicate what is considered normal and acceptable for ruling groups, serving as an instrument to shape society according to the world view, value system and ideology of these groups. By making their values and ideology appear natural, inevitable and desirable, the dominating groups reinforce their hegemonic position

within social, economic and cultural hierarchies. Dyer makes a distinction between social types and stereotypes, emphasizing the prejudicial nature of the latter. A type can be understood as “any simple, vivid, memorable, easily-grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded and change or ‘development’ is kept to a minimum”. The category “type” can be subdivided in social types and stereotypes. While the first refers to “those who live by the rules of society”, the second refers to those excluded by the rules. Social types are more flexible and create a sense of freedom and self-definition: people can choose the social type they want to incorporate. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are fixed, definitive, and immutable; they serve as a mechanism of “boundary maintenance”, keeping those who do not fit on the other side of the fence. Stereotypes determine the boundaries of cultural and ethnic identities, classifying peoples and cultures into immovable categories, judging them according to dominant values and discouraging alternative representation practices that are less judgmental and more accurate.

The word stereotype, originally employed to describe a method of duplicate printing, was used in a connotative sense for the first time by American journalist Walter Lippmann in 1922. In his book *Public Opinion*, Lippmann quotes Aristotle to illustrate the meaning of stereotype in a symbolic context. According to Aristotle, some men are slaves “by nature”: “It is the intention of nature to make the bodies of slaves and free men different from each other, that one should be robust for their necessary purposes, but the other erect; useless indeed for such servile labors, but fit for civil life” [in: Lippmann, 2007, 96]. Lippmann argues that the worthlessness of such an argument lays on the fact that it fails to verify if those men who happened to be slaves were in fact the men who, by nature, were supposed to be slaves. Such a question, Lippmann argues, would have “tainted each case of slavery with doubt”. For Lippmann, this example illustrates the perfect stereotype because “it precedes the use of reason; is a form of perception, imposes a certain character on the data of our senses before the data reaches the intelligence”. Because of the blind belief on the stereotype that justifies the enslavement of certain men and the freedom of others, slave holders see in the competence of their slaves to do servile work the evidence that they are in fact slaves “by nature”. Stereotypes are resistant to education and criticism, stamping themselves upon the evidence in the very act of securing it. Stereotyping makes it possible to classify the world in easily graspable categories that ensure a sense of familiarity, avoiding complex and unknown situations that are difficult to categorize and

producing impressions of order, adequacy and belonging: “Our slave must be a slave by nature, if we are Athenians who wish to have no qualms” [Lippman, 2007, 101]. The author adds that in every new generation there are “men of genius” who arrange, standardize and improve stereotypes into logical systems, and when writing about culture, one tends to refer to these systems. As discussed previously, Orientalism is one of the most extensive systems of production and propagation of stereotypes about the Other, and one can argue that the body of knowledge about Brazil also constitutes a system engaged in classifying difference, reducing complexity and reinforcing hierarchies.

As Lippman [2007, 107] points out, there is, however, always a point where stereotypes and facts part company, because “our images of how things behave are simpler and more fixed than the ebb and flow of affairs”. In fact, there seems to be an inconsistency between the still predominating image of Brazil in Western consciousness and its development as an autonomous, economically progressive and culturally diverse nation over the 20th century. The Brazil portrayed by international mainstream media has not yet proclaimed its independence from the colonial master; it is a country still in its infancy in terms of social, economic and human development. It is understandable that it is difficult to take the complexities and disparities of a continental country like Brazil into account when portraying it and this is one of the greatest barriers that prevent more accurate and diverse representations. The most significant barrier can be found, however, in the system of stereotypes upon which dominant representational practices are based. This system consists in a traditional and well-established body of knowledge that contains abundant information about the essence of Brazil, making the construction of a coherent and intelligible image of the country possible, an image that can be immediately grasped and assimilated by audiences from different age groups and sociocultural backgrounds. The attempt to reduce complexity by using easily recognizable images and references is a common and justifiable practice in the formulation of mainstream media texts, but it is questionable if this is also an acceptable practice when it comes to representing minorities and Third World cultures. In general, mainstream texts do not take the representational needs of these groups into account. On its way to become one of the world’s five largest economies, it is inappropriate to insist in portraying Brazil as a country characterized by chaos, hedonism and lawlessness. However, these are exactly the aspects emphasized in popular films like *Fast & Furious 5* (Justin Lin 2011, USA). Filmed in Rio de Janeiro, the blockbuster *Fast & Furious 5* explores the popular

triad sex, lawlessness and Otherness. More than a century after the abolition of slavery in 1888, it is also time to challenge the roles traditionally assigned to Afro-Brazilians in mainstream representations: samba dancer, outlaw, prostitute or victim. The ethnic, social and cultural diversity of Brazil should no longer be neglected in favor of simplistic stereotypes that borrow elements from the ethnocentric colonial tradition where the Other has no voice and no choice.

The dissemination of stereotypes about a colored Other has supported the marginalization and stigmatization of black people over centuries of colonial rule. Hall [1997, 239] indicates three fateful encounters between black people and the West that originated “an avalanche of popular representations based on the marking of racial difference”. The first encounter took place during the 16th century and was characterized by the slave trade between Europe and West African kingdoms. The second encounter was the colonization of Africa during the period of “high Imperialism”, when European nations contended with each other for colonies, markets and raw materials. The migration movement from the Third World to Europe and North America after the Second World War constituted the third major encounter between the West and black people and also contributed to the formation of Western ideas of racial difference. Hall [1997, 243-245] emphasizes that the basic structure of these ideas is formed by binary oppositions that justify the dominance and superiority of the West over the Other. The main oppositions identified by the author in representations of racial difference during the colonization period are “civilization” (white) and “savagery” (black); culture, knowledge and intellectual development (white) and nature, feelings and instincts (black); and racial “purity” (white) and racial “pollution” resulting from interracial relationships (black). These oppositions are typical of a racialized regime of representation that naturalizes difference, reducing black people to nature and detaching them from culture and civilization. This representational practice, Hall argues, suggests that the characteristics associated to black people are immutable because they are natural and therefore not subject to change. Cultural characteristics, on the contrary, are more flexible and open to transformations. By naturalizing characteristics attributed to the Other, the West fixes difference and hinders any possibility of development for the Other within discourse.

The regime of representation that classifies peoples and cultures according to parameters of civilization and cultural development established by the West has originated a particular picture of the world that appears repeatedly in West-

ern popular culture. In this picture the world is divided between spaces that have achieved a certain degree of civilization and economic, social and human development and spaces that are still stuck in a kind of pre-history, still lacking basic infra-structure, a well-educated and cultivated population, strict laws and economic progress. This is the basic world structure found across several texts produced within Orientalism, and it is also the basis of ethnocentric representations of black people in Western popular culture. Ethnocentrism presupposes a world structure where there is a clear separation between groups with different characteristics. Encounters between these groups cannot take place without conflict because the dominating group must subdue, convert or influence the weaker group in some way. The potential for conflict of these encounters is exemplified in a number of films mentioned in the present and in the following chapter.

A regime of representation that supports a binary view of the world is not able to grasp diversity and the gray areas between the poles of binary oppositions. Such a regime may classify and represent the world in an easily understandable way, reducing the overwhelming complexity of social, economic, ethnic and cultural differences, but it also produces texts which, in their majority, ignore historical background; it portrays the effects without offering a glimpse into the causes; it focuses on a few aspects while ignoring the larger picture and it fails to challenge power hierarchies. Several films mentioned in this work were produced following the rules of this regime, contributing to the enlargement of a body of knowledge comparable to Orientalism, which can be called “Brazilianism”. The next section will be dedicated to identify the origins of “Brazilianism” and to discuss how colonialist ideas about Brazil are perpetuated through Western popular culture.

This “Brazilianism”, which encompasses narratives and discourses produced from the 16th century until present, especially in the realm of popular culture, should not be mistaken with the homonymous academic movement that reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s in Brazil. Although the Brazilianist movement has generated controversial opinions in Brazil, it is seen by many intellectuals as a legitimate academic enterprise aimed at studying a country that was becoming increasingly influential politically and economically and to advance the establishment of Brazilian Studies as a respectable academic discipline abroad, especially in the United States. Carrijo [2007, 18-21] explains that the birth of Brazilianism as an academic discipline started to take form between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in the United States, when the study of history became more professional and systematic. From the 1920s on the

study of Latin American history became an increasingly well-established academic discipline, with an increasing number of graduation programs and publications dedicated to the topic.

The publication of the “National Defense Education Act” in 1958, which defined research priorities and provided funding for research in strategic regions of the earth, stimulated the development of Brazilianism by providing grants for American scholars to undertake research in Brazil. Carrijo [2007, 57] adds that the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the consequent concern about national security in the United States played a fundamental role in increasing the interest for research in Latin America and the availability of funding for this purpose. The predominating ideology in the studies of American scholars in Brazil was based on the belief that the adoption of American values and institutions and the consequent modernization of the Third World was the way to overcome underdevelopment. From this perspective, economic growth would lead to the establishment of a solid democracy [Carrijo, 2007, 72-73].

One of the most well-known Brazilianists is Thomas Skidmore, author of a number of works about Brazilian politics and culture, among them *Politics in Brazil 1930–1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (1967). Skidmore’s work is representative of Brazilianism as an academic discipline, characterized by an interdisciplinary approach and by the combination of history and social sciences. Carrijo [2007, 152] argues that Skidmore’s concern with the recent past was groundbreaking and influenced many American and Brazilian authors who wrote about Brazilian politics after the 1960s, and that he is still a respected Brazilianist whose work on Brazilian politics is highly regarded in Brazil and in the United States. Although he was also criticized by opposers of Brazilianism, Skidmore has largely managed to overcome the suspicion that surrounded the activities of Brazilianists.

Although Brazilianism has reached a relatively high degree of legitimacy as an academic discipline in Brazil, a number of Brazilian journalists and intellectuals continued to view the movement as an attempt of the United States to understand the country in order to better dominate it. Massi [1990, 30] wrote about the repercussion of the rapid expansion of Brazilianism among the Brazilian intelligentsia and the press. The author rejects the “homogenizing” notion that includes American Brazilianists in the group of “historical Brazilianists” formed by European travelers that wrote about Brazil from the 16th until early 20th century, either in a romantic, subjective fashion or objectively. This corpus of narratives

about Brazil forms what is called “literatura de viagem” (travel literature), of which French naturalist Auguste de Saint-Hilaire is a prominent example.

With the relocation of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil and the opening of the harbors in 1808, a new world of possibilities was opened to non-Portuguese scientists and travelers eager to experience the exoticism of the tropical country and to study its flora and fauna. This led to a significant increase in the number of publications about Brazil in Europe. During his stay in Brazil from 1816 to 1822, Saint-Hilaire wrote descriptions of Brazilian flora and fauna, as well of Brazilian society and customs, and collected thousands of plants, insects and animals, many of which were described for the first time to the European public. The results of his research in South America were published in several volumes in France, reflecting the “classificatory fever” that predominated in Europe during the industrial revolution. Not only should industrial production become more and more efficient and systematic, but the world’s natural resources should be listed and classified in order to allow for a better “organization” of the world. The publication of Linné’s *Systema Naturae* in 1735 provided the basis for a global system of classification for plants and animals, encouraging many naturalists and botanists to make scientific excursions in the New World [Eckardt, 2009, 72-78].

The approach employed in this work is based on Massi’s recognition that it is necessary to distinguish “historical Brazilianism” from the Brazilianism advanced by American researchers in the 20th century, which is directly connected to American educational and political institutions. When the term “Brazilianism” is used in the following pages, it refers to the Brazilianism that encompasses the early writings of Portuguese explorers, travel literature and the diverse expressions of popular culture made possible by the development of mass media in the 20th century. Analyzing Brazilianism as an academic discipline consolidated during the 1960s and 1970s lies outside of the scope of this work. It is reasonable, however, to present some of the criticisms directed at US-funded Brazilianism in Brazil during this period. Especially in the 1970s, when several books by American Brazilianists are published in Brazil, the press reacts defensively to the growing influence of these researchers on academic production. In several interviews with Brazilianists and reports on Brazilianism, the fear of invasion is present: “This North-American interest - there are almost thousand Brazilianists - is quite disturbing not only for Brazil, but for many other countries. With this system, they acquire a volume of information that surpasses the knowledge available

to the government”⁴ (Folha de São Paulo, 1977) [in: Massi, 1990, 31]. In some cases, however, the work of American Brazilianists is praised due to its innovative and interdisciplinary character. Among Brazilian scholars there was the concern that Brazilian history would not only be written but taught by Americans in Brazilian universities. The concern proved to be unjustified with the weakening of Brazilianism in the 1980s, when the debate about the topic became less political and more intellectual, focusing on particular works rather than on the perceived threat of invasion [Massi, 1990, 33-41].

The following section is dedicated to analyze the formation of a discourse about Brazil based on the early writings of Portuguese explorers, which undertook the first attempts to describe and explain Brazil to Europe.

2.2 The Birth of Brazilianism

In *Die Ordnung des Unbekannten: Von der Erfindung der Neuen Welt*, Borchmeyer [2009, 57-58] discusses the appropriateness of the terms discovery (*Entdeckung*) and invention (*Erfindung*) to talk about the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America in 1492. He argues that it is not coherent to talk about the discovery of America because the idea of America did not exist before Columbus accidentally reached the American continent. Since America did not officially exist until that point, it had to be invented before it could be properly discovered. The conceptualization of America, followed by its inculcation into Western consciousness, is the starting point of its discovery, and not the first coincidental encounter between the West, represented by Columbus, and the vast continent that would become America. The first step of the conceptualization process is the differentiation between America - the accidental but actual destination - from the East Indies, which was Columbus’ original destination. Once America has been recognized as a new territory, the West must include it in its description of the world. The invention of America has transformed the Western picture of the world permanently. Invention should not, in this context, be mistaken with creation; while the latter refers to *Schöpfung*, to giving origin to material things, the former is characterized by an image-generating process conditioned by the collective imagination of a particular historical period. The invention of America, therefore, was less based

⁴“Esse interesse norte-americano - existem quase mil brasilianistas - revela-se um fator inquietante, não só para o Brasil, mas para muitos outros países. Porque com esse sistema, eles obtêm um volume de informações que supera os conhecimentos que o próprio governo brasileiro tem a sua disposição.” (Ibid.)

on real aspects of the continent and more on Western myths and projections regarding exotic places and the unknown.

The encounter between Europe and America also represented a milestone of the civilization that, from that fateful encounter on, would be identified as the Western civilization. As Borchmeyer [2009, 37-40] points out, Columbus' journey gives concrete form to a world that was nothing more than vague speculation. Through this sudden "irruption of reality" in a space previously defined solely by imagination, the unknown reveals itself as an earthly paradise, as a "concrete" and not simply abstract utopia, as Paraguayan writer Augusto Roa Bastos explains: "The discovery of America belongs to this kind of utopia: a deed without precedent in the pages of this millennium, which transformed radically, in a global scale, the prevailing cosmovision until then and showed the truth of the concrete Copernican 'utopia'"⁵ [Roa Bastos, 1989, 166]. In an attempt to summarize the impact of the transition from an abstract to a concrete utopia, Borchmeyer quotes Mexican poet Alfonso Reyes: "The spark of dream fell on the gunpowder of reality"⁶. Still surprised by the sudden "irruption of reality", the chroniclers of the new world must find a way to grasp and represent the new and unknown, an unexpected part of the world that cannot be interpreted on basis of what has already been seen, analyzed and registered. They try to describe and explain the new world to the European public without having a comparative example or a prototype they can base their description on. In the process of describing and explaining the new world, a new system of representation and a discourse about America come into being. The first reports about America, born out of the encounter with an unprecedented Otherness, represent the beginning of a body of knowledge defined by Borchmeyer as a threshold space (*Schwelldenplatz*) between history, philosophy, theology and fictional literature. The collection of writings of Spanish explorers about America, called *Crónicas de Indias*, is representative of this body of knowledge and was designated by Peruvian-Spanish writer Mario Vargas Llosa as "género hermafrodita" [in: Borchmeyer, 2009, 40], i.e. a hybrid genre combining elements from reality (scientific reporting) and fiction.

The first European explorers who attempted to apprehend and explain America created a prototype, understood here as a system of representation with certain

⁵"A esta suerte de utopias pertenece el descubrimiento de América: un hecho sin parangón en los anales de este milenario, que vino a transformar radicalmente, a escala planetaria, la cosmovisión vigente hasta entonces y a demostrar la verdad de la concreta 'utopía' copernicana." (Translated from the Spanish by Andreza André da Rocha)

⁶"La chispa del sueño había caído sobre el grano de pólvora de la realidad." (Ibid.)

rules, that would guide future representations of the continent. The hybrid character of narratives concerning the New World and the inability of Europeans to deal with their “discovery” and to describe and explain it is also expressed in writings about the arrival of the Portuguese in Brazilian territory. The letter of Pero Vaz de Caminha is the most relevant among the documents produced about the first encounter between Portuguese explorers and natives in 1500. Other noteworthy documents that fit in the category of travel literature are *Diário de Navegação* (written in 1530 by Pero Lopes, scrivener of Martim Afonso de Sousa’s expedition), *Carta do Mestre João* (sent to the King of Portugal D. Manuel I in 1500 by Mestre João, a doctor and astronomer who was part of Cabral’s expedition), *Diálogos das Grandezas do Brasil* (written by Ambrósio Fernandes Brandão in 1618) and *Relação do Piloto Anônimo*, written by a member of Cabral’s crew. In this document published in 1507, the anonymous sailor confirms much of what has been described by Caminha in his letter to the King of Portugal. The description of people is similar, focusing on their nudity and well-built bodies:

“Regarding their appearance, these people are dark-skinned, they walk around naked without shame and have long hair. And no facial hair. And their eyelids are painted in white, black, blue and red. They have a hole in the lower lip through which they insert a bone as big as a nail. (...) The women walk around in the same shameless way and have beautiful bodies, long hair.”⁷ [Domínio Público, 2011]

Endeavoring to offer an accurate and understandable picture of the people inhabiting the newly discovered land, the anonymous sailor focuses on characteristics that are unknown or familiar to the average European. The first aspect that seems to call the attention of the Portuguese is nudity, and especially the realization that the natives did not show any shame for being naked in front of strangers. These two aspects represented a direct opposition to European practices and mentality. Once the astonishment caused by the naked bodies is overcome, attention is directed to other unusual, exotic characteristics such as the lip piercing described in the fourth sentence. Considering that the report was not accompanied by a corresponding picture due to the technological limitations of the time, one can

⁷“De aspecto, esta gente são homens pardos, e andam nus sem vergonha e seus cabelos são compridos. E têm a barba pelada. E as pálpebras dos olhos e por cima delas eram pintadas com figuras de cores brancas e pretas e azuis e vermelhas. Têm o lábio da boca, isto é, o de baixo, furado, e nos buracos metem um osso grande como um prego. (...) As mulheres andam do mesmo modo sem vergonha e são belas de corpo, os cabelos compridos.” (Translated from the Portuguese by Andreza André da Rocha)

only imagine what kind of mental picture it evoked among its readers. Having European knowledge and concepts of law, society and civilization as the lenses through which they viewed and valued the new world, Europeans constructed an initial picture of Brazil that would influence later representations of the land considerably. The initial pictures and ideas resulting from these early reports are loaded with mystery, fear, curiosity and endless possibilities. The recognition of the primitive and pacific nature of the natives, associated with the conspicuous abundance of natural resources, indicated that the circumstances were favorable to annexation, settlement and extraction of raw materials. The anonymous sailor notices that the natives do not carry any artifacts made of metal but emphasizes other aspects that suggest an exuberant fauna and affluence of natural resources:

“In this land we have not seen iron and other metals are missing. They cut wood with stones and have birds of several species, especially parrots of many colors, some as big as chicken, and other beautiful birds. (...) The land is abundant with many trees, good water, yam and cotton. In these places we have not seen any animals. The land is large and (...) we believe, because of its extension, that it is mainland. And it has very good air and these men have nets and are great fishermen and catch fish of many species.”⁸ [Domínio Público, 2011]

When the writer affirms that no animal has been seen, he is actually referring to farm animals: cattle, pigs and chicken were introduced in Brazil by European settlers. The animals they had the chance to observe were exotic ones, like parrots and a fish caught by the natives, described by the anonymous sailor as having the pelage, skin and flesh of a pig. Chroniclers of the New World often refer to objects and standards familiar to Europeans in order to make their descriptions and explanations more intelligible, to offer a basis for comparison that helps to construct a clearer picture of the land and its inhabitants. In his description of the plants and animals found in Brazil, Pero Lopes often makes comparisons with Portugal; sometimes the landscape reminds him of Portugal, but in most occasions he is overwhelmed by the realization that the newly discovered territory

⁸“Nesta terra não vimos ferro e faltam-lhe outros metais. E cortam a madeira com pedras e têm muitas aves de muitas espécies, especialmente papagaios de muitas cores, entre os quais alguns grandes como galinhas e outras aves muito belas. (...) A terra é muito abundante e muitas árvores e muitas águas boas e inhames e algodão. Nestes lugares não vimos animal algum. A terra é grande e (...) julgamos pela sua grandeza que seja terra firme. E tem muito bom ar e estes homens têm redes e são grandes pescadores e pescam peixes de muitas espécies.” (Ibid.)

has much more to offer in terms of plants, animals and other natural resources than his homeland. After catching “fish as high as a man, some yellow and others black with red dots - the most tasty in the world”⁹ [Lopes de Souza, 1839, 43], Lopes must admit that the rivers and the seaside of Portugal cannot offer so much diversity and quantity. The abundance and diversity of wild animals that could be used for food also astonished the scrivener, who wrote: “(...) the fields are covered with animals - I never saw in Portugal so many sheep, or goats, as I have seen deers here”¹⁰ [Lopes de Souza, 1839, 51-52]. The profusion of fish and land animals evokes dreams of a life without hardship and the daily struggle for survival in an earthly paradise where the nature provides man with everything he needs - and more - and requires very little effort and no sacrifice.

When the anonymous sailor describes the women of Brazil, he refers to European beauty standards to explain their physical appearance, emphasizing that they have long hair, what seems in his eyes to contribute considerably to their pleasant appearance. The typical long, straight hair of the female natives has also caused an impression on Portuguese historian Pero de Magalhães Gândavo, who published the first historical narrative about Brazil in 1576. *História da Província de Santa Cruz a que vulgarmente chamamos Brasil* contains “knowledge” about the flora, the fauna and the native peoples of Brazil, as well as an evaluation of its economic potentialities. About the female natives Gândavo wrote: “The female are very proud of their hair and keep them very long, clean and combed, and some have it braided”¹¹ [Gândavo, 2011, 26]. It is interesting to notice here the use of the word “fêmea” to designate the women. In Portuguese language, “fêmea” is used to indicate the gender of animals, but is considered offensive when applied to people. Although one must take the historical context of Gândavo’s work into account, written centuries before the women’s emancipation movement, one can speculate whether this particular word was chosen purposefully in order to establish a direct association between the natives and nature, thus confirming their primitivism and assigning them to a lower category than that of Europeans.

The belief that the natives were morally inferior is reinforced by several passages of the text, e.g. the following remark about the natives’ behavior in chapter X:

⁹“Nenhum era da maneira como o de Portugal: tomavamos peixe d’altura de hum homem, amarelos e outros pretos com pintas vermelhas, - os mais saborosos do mundo.” (Ibid.)

¹⁰“(...) o campo [está] todo coberto desta caça - que nunca vi em Portugal tantas ovelhas, nem cabras, como ha nesta terra de veados.” (Ibid.)

¹¹“As femeas presam-se muito de seus cabellos e trazem-nos mui compridos, limpos e penteados, e as mais dellas ennastrados.” (Ibid.)

“They are very dishonest and given to sensuality, and so they give themselves to bad habits as if reason would not exist. They do, however, keep some discretion during intercourse, and in this aspect show some shame”¹² [Gândavo, 2011, 25]. Once again terms used to talk about animals - “machos e fêmeas” - are employed to describe characteristics and behaviour patterns of natives. These terms appear in other parts of the book, for example in the passage where Gândavo shares his impressions about the language of the natives and explains that some consonants are pronounced differently by “machos e fêmeas”: “There are some words that are only pronounced by the females, and other that are of no use even for the males: three letters are missing, F, L, and R, a surprising realization because it means that they have no Faith, no Law, and no King”¹³ [Gândavo, 2011, 25]. This passage is illustrative of the general attitude of Europeans toward native peoples, based on an ethnocentric valuation of Otherness. Having collected enough evidence of the primitivism, passivity and uncivilizedness of the natives, nothing else stood in the way of a complete takeover by the Portuguese. This takeover was partially justified by the mission assigned to “higher” civilizations: to convert the natives, introducing them to Christianity and teaching them to live according to the laws of God and men, remembering that, according to European standards, they could not yet be considered real men.

From an ethnocentric, colonialist point of view, people who lived in such a close relation to nature, without systems of faith, law and government comparable to the European, belonged to a category lower than human. The idea of humanity was closely connected to civilization, thus cultures and ethnic groups that did not correspond to the prevailing ideal of civilization were reduced to the category of animals and beasts. The issue of bestiality was another aspect that, in fact, contributed to the crystallization of the idea of indigenous inferiority. Writing about the supposedly inherent cruelty of the natives towards their enemies, Gândavo sowed a seed that flourished fruitfully in the Western collective imagination: natives as cannibals. Cannibalism, the maximum expression of bestiality, is presented by Gândavo as a common practice among natives, described as cruel rascals able of the most atrocious acts against their enemies:

¹²“Sam mui desonestos e dados á sensualidade, e assi se entregam aos vicios como se nelles nam houvera razão de homens: ainda que todavia em seu ajuntamento os machos e fêmeas têm o devido resguardo, e nisto mostram ter alguma vergonha.” (Ibid.)

¹³“Alguns vocabulos ha nella de que nam usam senam as femeas, e outros que nam servem senam pera os machos: carece de tres letras, convem a saber, nam se acha nella F, nem L, nem R, cousa digna despanto porque assi nam têm Fé, nem Lei, nem Rei.” (Ibid.)

“One of the characteristics of these Indians that disgusts human beings the most, and that differentiates them from other men, is the cruelty against any person they get their hands on who does not belong to their herd. Because they not only give them a cruel death but they also do it without any passion; and after that they eat the flesh using such diabolic practices that they exceed brutal animals, which do not know reason and were not born to be merciful.”¹⁴ [Gândavo, 2011, 30-31]

In this passage Gândavo indicates the practice among natives that establishes the ultimate difference in relation to civilized people: cannibalism. The extreme cruelty of the “Índios” (natives) against their enemies “disgusted the human being”. As if imposing a violent death on the enemy was not enough, the natives would eat their flesh, thus exceeding the brutality of irrational animals that are merciless by nature. By associating the natives with the Western taboo of cannibalism, Gândavo illustrates his assertion that they live without faith, law and king; otherwise such atrocities would not be possible. Cannibalism is the final evidence of their alienation from civilization, evidence that corroborates the prevalent theory that natives are not proper human beings and must be handled accordingly. Just like man has domesticated the dog and the sheep, the native should also fall under the control of civilization: he must be domesticated through faith, be taught to respect the law and to subject himself to the King. The law mentioned here is the European law brought to the colony by the settlers together with traditions, customs and social norms that often stood in direct opposition to the informal rules followed by each tribe.

Although cannibalism is commonly associated in Western consciousness with chaos and gratuitous, irrational brutality, this social and religious practice followed certain rules. Fausto [2002, 16-21] analyzes the beliefs and eating habits of a number of Brazilian indigenous tribes to discuss the symbolic meaning of cannibalism within the tribes. In many indigenous cultures, animals and humans occupy the same hierarchical position; therefore there are situations where eating animal flesh is forbidden, while the collective consumption of human flesh acquires

¹⁴“Huma das cousas em que estes Índios mais repugnam o ser da natureza humana, e em que totalmente parece que se extremam dos outros homens, he nas grandes e excessivas crueldades que executam em qualquer pessoa que podem haver ás mãos, como nam seja de seu rebanho. Porque nam tam somente lhe dam cruel morte em tempo que mais livres e desempedidos estam de toda a paixão; mas ainda depois disso, por se acabarem de satisfazer lhe comem todos a carne usando nesta parte de cruezas tam diabolicas, que ainda nellas excedem aos brutos animaes que nam tem uso de razam nem foram nascidos pera obrar clemência.” (Ibid.)

a symbolic meaning. One of the rituals of the Tubinambás, for example, included the killing of a jaguar exclusively for ritualistic purposes, not for food. The flesh of a human enemy, however, was eaten by men, women and even children - only the person responsible for the enemy's death was not allowed to eat. Cannibalism had, in this context, a practical aspect and a symbolic meaning: human flesh was considered particularly tasty because of its characteristic sweetish flavor. Furthermore, eating the enemy's flesh was the confirmation of victory, the final act of revenge. It also strengthened the sense of social bonding among tribe members, establishing a clear separation between those who ate and those who were eaten. Wink [2009, 132] calls attention to the fact that the cannibal myth, introduced in the European imaginary by Christopher Columbus, was not linked to the Caribbean where the first encounter between Columbus and the new continent occurred, but to Brazil, especially to the Tupinambás.

The stereotypical representation of indigenous cannibalism does not take traditional indigenous rituals and meanings into account, taking the consumption of human flesh out of its social and cultural context and leaving symbolic meanings unexplained. The stereotype of the barbaric cannibal Indian was catapulted to a new height with the series of cannibal films produced mainly by Italian directors in the 1970s and 1980s. The first production that explores cannibalism in order to reach unprecedented levels of gore and brutality on the screen is *The Man from the Deep River* (Umberto Lenzi 1972, Italy), which tells the story of a photographer who is captured by natives in the jungle along the border between Thailand and Burma and ends up marrying a native woman and helping to protect the tribe from cannibal enemies [The Internet Movie Database (IMDb), 2011]. This film included real scenes of killing of animals, a practice that became standard in cannibal movies, especially highlights of the genre such as *Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato 1980, Italy) and *Cannibal Ferox* (Umberto Lenzi 1981, Italy). These two films take place in the Amazonian jungle, a place commonly associated in Western minds with mystery and danger.

As Amâncio [2000, 81-82] points out, the Amazon is not only a geographically defined space but also an "imaginary construction" that incorporates meanings generated in different historical periods. The Amazon represents the return to nature and its "innocent pleasures", being the concretization of Marco Polo's idea of an earthly paradise and of Western dreams of a life free from plague, violence and greed. The traditional themes associated with the location of a paradise on Earth - exuberant fauna and flora, everlasting youth, abundance of gold and

precious stones - are part of a binary system that has, in the opposite pole, physical aberrations, Cyclops and other primal sources of fear. These extreme factors together contribute to the crystallization of fixed ideas (myths) about the rainforest and its native inhabitants. In the first phase of this mythification process, the focus lays on the innocence of the savage and his life in harmony with nature. Native religious practices and the refuse of natives to engage in systematic work lead, however, to the “demonization” of indigenous peoples, of which the association with cannibalism is an outstanding example.

The Amazon serves as a location for a number of cannibal films. Before *Cannibal Holocaust* and *Cannibal Ferox* there was *Emmanuelle and the Last Cannibals* (Joe D'Amato 1977, Italy), which takes the sensual heroine to the Amazon, where she fights blood-thirsty cannibals between erotic scenes. Emmanuelle brings together two favorite themes in the cinematic representation of Brazil: indigenous primitivism (expressed in this case through cannibalism) and eroticism. As a rule, however, most films that portray cannibalism tend to associate the extreme act of eating human flesh with sexual practices, mostly violent and outside the Western norm (e.g. rape, sex in public, group sex). The combination of cannibalism and abnormal sexual behavior produces a distorted picture of nativeness that strips natives from their humanity, reducing them to the category of beasts. Other films that explore the myth of Amazonian cannibals are *Amazonia: The Catherine Miles Story* (Mario Gariazzo 1985, Italy) and *Massacre in Dinosaur Valley* (Michele Massimo Tarantini 1985, Italy/Brazil). Myths are understood here as “essential types” produced by “bourgeois ideology”, to borrow Barthes' definitions. Myths deprive facts and objects from their History in order to “immobilize the world”: “Myths are nothing but (...) this insidious and inflexible demand that all men recognize themselves in this image, eternal yet bearing a date, which was built of them one day as if for all time” [Barthes, 2006, 101-104]. Myths lock men up inside Nature and reduce Otherness to exoticism, turning the Other into “a pure object, a spectacle, a clown” and thus relegating him “to the confines of humanity”.

The myth of cannibalism deprives indigenous peoples of their last trace of humanity while emphasizing the sanity of white people. It reinforces the prevailing idea among conquerors that Indians deserved to be enslaved and annihilated because of their beastly nature. In *Open Veins of Latin America*, Galeano [2009, 38-41] describes the cruelties afflicted upon natives forced to work in the mines of Potosí in Bolivia. To have an idea, the mines claimed the lives of eight million

Indians during three centuries of exploitation. Every year thousands of Indians died because of the inhuman work conditions in the mines, but this gradual extermination was justified by a number of theories that either transferred the responsibility to the natives, emphasizing their physical “weakness” and ineptitude to work, or trivialized their death by denying their humanity and comparing them to animals. As Galeano points out, the “bleeding of the New World” became an “argument for the faith”. Indians deserved no better than working themselves to death in the mines because of their “natural wickedness”. Judged against the background of Catholic totalitarianism, Indians were degraded to an even lower rank of humanity. Spanish theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda justified the atrocities against natives with the argument that their “sins and idolatries” were offensive to God. French naturalist Count de Buffon argued that “no activity of the soul” could be observed among Indians. Galeano names yet other “intellectuals” who denied the humanity of natives, e.g. Voltaire, Bacon, Montesquieu, Hume, Bodin and Hegel, who illustrated the “physical and spiritual impotence” of Latin America with the argument that “Indians died when Europe merely breathed on them”. It is no wonder that this observation was correct, considering that Europeans brought to America a variety of bacteria, viruses and diseases against which the organism of the natives had no defense. According to Galeano, approximately 70 million Indians lived in pre-Columbian America. A century and a half after the “discovery”, this number had been reduced to 3.5 million. Returning to the issue of cannibalism, one can argue, in this context, that Europeans practiced a kind of cannibalism much more bestial and dreadful than the natives. A cannibalism that consisted of consuming human lives in order to achieve territorial expansion, accumulation of capital and the dissemination of a model of “civilization” based on European principles.

The representation of cannibalism in Gândavo’s work indicates that this particular myth was born out of a combination of ignorance about the customs of indigenous peoples, ethnocentrism and pre-conceived ideas about the Other and the New World. It is not surprising, however, that a book published only 76 years after the first encounter between the Portuguese and native Brazilians contains so many obscure passages and inaccurate observations. The reader must also bear in mind that the main objective of *História da Província de Santa Cruz* was not to enlighten Europeans about Portugal’s new colony but to attract immigrants, and such a task also entailed warning against the dangers of the colony. The main focus, however, does not lie on the dangers, but on the possibility to attain

material prosperity. Especially helpful in this endeavor is the last section of the book, which deals with the wealth to be found in the new land. The Brazil portrayed by Gândavo is not only able to provide abundant natural resources, food and water, but also wealth in the form of gold and precious stones: “This Provincia de Santa Cruz is not only very fertile and full of all provisions necessary for human life, but it is surely also very rich, and one can hope to find a lot of gold and precious stones”¹⁵ [Gândavo, 2011, 35]. The opulence of precious metals is also a theme in a letter of Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci to aristocrat Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de’ Medici, entitled *Mundus Novus*. According to Wink [2009, 131], this letter, published for the first time in 1504, constitutes one of the most influential documents in the initial European perception of Brazil. Sent to Brazil by the King of Portugal to confirm Caminha’s impressions, Vespucci emphasizes the good climate, the abundance of water and the presence of precious metals, thus reinforcing the association of Brazil with paradise: “They don’t have any metals except gold, which is available in all regions in profusion” [Wink, 2009, 144]¹⁶.

Wink [2009, 142] explains that the abundance described by the chroniclers of the new world is one of the characteristics that have always been associated with an earthly paradise in Western imagination, even before Europe learned about the existence of America. The most important element of the paradise described in the Old Testament is fertility connected to abundance of water and a humid soil. These conditions, Wink adds, have an enormous influence on the organization of human life: the efforts of subsistence agriculture become obsolete because plants and vegetables grow independently and the earth provides abundant gold and precious stones. Because the contemporary European idea of paradise was closely affiliated with rivers and affluence of water, Brazil seemed, because of its geographical features, to be the concretization of a paradisiacal utopia.

In his letter to Medici, Vespucci also gives a contribution to the crystallization and dissemination of the idea of Brazil as paradise: “The soil is in all areas fertile and the landscape is delightful. The land is rich in hills, mountains, endless valleys and massive rivers, it is irrigated by wholesome springs and is blessed with large, dense and almost impenetrable forests, which are filled with wild animals of all

¹⁵“Esta Provincia Santa Cruz alem de ser tam fertil como digo, e abastada de todos os mantimentos necessarios pera a vida do homem, he certo ser tambem mui rica, e haver nella muito ouro e pedraria, de que se tem grandes esperanças.” (Ibid.)

¹⁶“Metalle haben sie dort keine außer Gold, das in jenen Regionen im Überfluß vorhanden ist.” (Translated from the German by Andreza André da Rocha)

sorts” [in: Wink, 2009, 143]¹⁷. This land with an exuberant and opulent nature and endless promises of wealth and fortune represents the culmination of an idea of paradise that has undergone significant changes over the centuries. Wink [2009, 141] explains that the paradise described in ancient writings is not accessible to “mortals” (*Sterbliche*) because it was located in a mythical past or future, and entrance to the Christian paradise was also denied because of the “Fall of Man” (*Sündenfall*)¹⁸. This perspective changed during the Renaissance, when the idea of paradise no longer implied a place outside human reach, but a place outside the world known so far. The new “positioning” of paradise was accompanied by a shift to the West: while in the Old Testament the paradise on earth was located in the East, the early modern discourse about an earthly paradise indicated that it could be found in the East as well as in the West.

The roots of this mythical place called Brazil can be therefore found in the European concept of earthly paradise and in the attempts to apprehend, describe and classify the unexpected reality found by Portuguese navigators in 1500. The combination of elements already present in the European imaginary with new representations produced by the encounter between the Old and the New World resulted in a hybrid picture that contains truth and fiction in similar amounts. While it is true that the land encountered by the Portuguese was filled with opulent natural resources, had a pleasant climate and a fertile soil, the possibilities that these resources and conditions represented were a European creation: wealth, luxury, and a comfortable life with little effort. It is also true that indigenous peoples had social, religious and authority systems that were, from a European perspective, primitive and unintelligible, but the assumption that they lived in chaos, without faith, law and king, was also a European invention. Much of what was invented about the new world served the political and economic interests of nation states and reflected the desires and projections of Europeans.

The portrayal of indigenous peoples is a revealing example of this proposition. On the one side we have the “noble savage” living in harmony with nature and demanding very little material support to achieve satisfaction. The “noble savage” has a passive nature, shows honest interest for the customs and artifacts of the

¹⁷“Der Boden jener Gebiete ist sehr fruchtbar, und die Landschaft ist lieblich. Das Land ist überreich an Hügeln, Bergen endlosen Tälern und gewaltigen Flüssen, es wird von gesunden Quellen bewässert und ist mit weiten, dichten und nahezu undurchdringlichen Wäldern gesegnet, die von Wild jeder Art voll sind.” (Ibid.)

¹⁸The “Fall of Man” refers to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise for succumbing to the temptation of trying the forbidden fruit.

white man and is believed to offer no resistance to territorial occupation by Europeans. Because of its inherent passivity and friendly nature, the figure of the “noble savage” suggests an unproblematic takeover of “paradise”. On the other side, however, we have another preferred portrayal of natives focusing on barbarism and cannibalism. This stereotype reduces natives to the condition of irrational animals who feed on the flesh of members of the same species. Cannibalism takes away the last trace of humanity possessed by the natives, turning them into prey to be subjugated and killed by the “natural” predator, i.e. representatives of the “superior” European civilization.

One way or the other, the natives do not constitute an obstacle to the occupation of Brazilian territory. They are just part of a new “reality” constructed by the European, a detail in the landscape that is observed, analyzed and classified according to European standards. The original inhabitants of Brazil had no say in the construction of this “reality” that has been guiding Western representations of the country for centuries, otherwise the consequence of the encounter between Old and New World in the 16th century would have always been called “invasion” and not “discovery”. Although today the voices that talk about “invasion” instead of “discovery” keep multiplying, the main elements that form Brazilian “reality” remain unchanged, and thus the idea that persists in Western consciousness is that of Brazil as an eternal colony, always receptive and responsive to the desires of the metropolis.

2.3 The Eternal Colony

The arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean on 12 October 1492 marks, for León-Portilla, the beginning of the age of globalization: “500 years ago mankind started a process of globalization, an appropriation of the world where we live”¹⁹[in: Borchmeyer, 2009, 52]. This statement was proffered in the context of the controversy surrounding the celebration of 500 years of “discovery” in Latin America. The occasion fueled the debate about the adequacy of the term “discovery” when used to refer to the events initiated in 1492. Uruguayan poet Mario Benedetti rejects the use of the term in this context by assuming the indigenous perspective: “I do not agree with the use of the word discovery

¹⁹“Vor 500 Jahren begann die Menschheit einen Prozeß einer Globalisierungs-Begegnung, einer Inbesitznahme der Welt, in der wir leben.” (Translated from the German by Andreza André da Rocha)

because America (long before it was called like this) was actually discovered by its original inhabitants, and in every case it was the natives who discovered the conquerors, which, by the way, must not have been a very pleasant discovery”²⁰ [in: Borchmeyer, 2009, 46]. For many intellectuals involved in the debate, the term “discovery” makes the conquest of America, marked by sanguinary battles, the annihilation of indigenous communities and acts of unprecedented cruelty and brutality against natives appear harmless.

For hooks [2008, 232-234], a fierce critic of “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy”, the 500 years anniversary of the “discovery” of America by Columbus was mostly misused to reinforce “commitment to imperialism and white supremacy”, while it could have served as an opportunity “to grieve for what this world was like before the coming of the white man and to recall and reclaim the cultural values of that world”. The dominant discourse about the “discovery” of the New World transmits the idea that “the will to dominate and conquer” those who are different from ourselves is an inherently human characteristic, free from cultural influences. According to this perspective, the Indians just did not attempt to “dominate and conquer” Europe and the Europeans because they did not have the right strategy and the necessary weaponry. This discourse is also present in school books, disseminating the idea that the atrocities committed against Native Americans were condemnable but necessary in order to “bring the great gift of civilization”. Children are taught, since a young age, that whites were actually doing a favor to native peoples all around the world by “civilizing” them and teaching them the high values, customs and beliefs of the civilized world. Such assumptions suggest that domination is necessary to foster “the progress of civilization” and to ensure social order.

It is a curious coincidence that the terms highlighted by hooks in a critical article about Columbus and “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” are the same that appear in the Brazilian flag. The slogan “Ordem e Progresso” reflects the positivist ideas of Auguste Comte, who influenced several politicians and intellectuals involved in the overthrow of monarchy and the proclamation of the Brazilian Republic in 1889. Comte’s theories are not relevant at this point; what is relevant here is the symbolism of these words at a particular historical moment

²⁰“Ich bin mit dem Wort Entdeckung nicht einverstanden, denn in Wirklichkeit wurde Amerika (lange bevor es so genannt wurde) von seinen ursprünglichen Bewohnern entdeckt, und in jedem Falle waren es die Ureinwohner, die die Eroberer entdeckten, was übrigens keine besonders angenehme Entdeckung gewesen sein muss.” (Ibid.)

when Brazil cut its last official tie to Portugal, to its status as colony, and started to search for an own identity. The words chosen to adorn the flag do not, as hooks could suggest, merely reflect a wish to belong in the same category of independent nations that enjoy political self-determination and economic development. “Ordem e Progresso” is part of an attempt to redefine an identity imposed by centuries of colonial domination and to offer a counterpoint to “Brazilianism”, the body of knowledge created out of ignorance and a sense of cultural superiority. The Brazil represented by the blue, green and yellow flag with the prophetic words in the center could no longer be reduced to the aspects involved in its “invention” by Europe; it had overcome the limits of “invention” and acquired a life of its own. However, once Portugal is relegated to the position of former metropolis, the United States assumed the position of main imperialistic force, expanding their sphere of political and economic influence throughout the globe while trying to prevent Brazil and other Latin American countries from achieving real independence.

The assertion that the United States has played (and continues playing) a significant role in delaying and even impeding the economic and political independence of Latin America is corroborated by facts compiled by Galeano in the controversial book *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. Galeano [2009, 13] starts his chronicle of the domination and exploitation of the New World with the arrival of Columbus in 1492. Three years later, Columbus himself organized and conducted the *Española*, a military campaign that annihilated the natives of Haiti. Before the *Española*, as the rules of domination required, Columbus read an official document to the natives, requesting them to convert to Catholicism. There was, of course, no interpreter.

The Catholic Church joined the explorers in the frenzy of expansion and domination under the disguise of disseminating Christian faith and thus legitimated ethnic cleansing and genocide. In the eyes of the Church, as Galeano points out, “America was the vast kingdom of the Devil”, and the “fanatical mission against the natives’ heresy” was accompanied by an equally fanatical search for “treasures” in the New World. In this sense, both the Church and the explorers were moved by greed and the urge to appropriate and expand their sphere of domination. They quickly recognized the potential of the New World in providing the necessary resources to boost European economic development. However, this astonishing development was achieved at the cost of the plunder of Latin American natural resources and the permanent relegation of Latin America to a state of social and

economic backwardness. According to Galeano [2009, 28-29], plunder was “the most important means of primitive accumulation of capital” which gave origin to “a new historical stage in world economic evolution”. The mass of capital generated by gold and silver from Latin America, the booty from Indonesia, slave trade and labor and British looting in India directly increased the pace of the Industrial Revolution. The “rape of accumulated treasure” and the forced labor of Indians and Africans were the purveyors of European wealth and unprecedented economic growth.

Writing about rape as a metaphor for the invasion of America, hooks [2008, 238] quotes American historian Samuel Eliot Morison, who compared America to a virgin ready to surrender to her conquerors: “Never again may mortal men hope to recapture the amazement, the wonder, the delight of those October days in 1492, when the new world gracefully yielded her virginity to the conquering Castilians”²¹. If domination is in fact, as hooks suggests, a “dick thing”, then there is not a more accurate metaphor to represent the takeover and plunder of America by Europe. In the view of the conquerors, America was a female, virgin land, unaware of its enchantments and monetary value. Europe then assumed the task to disclose the treasures to the rest of the world, ensuring maximum profit in the process. America was ripped from her innocence and turned into a prostitute to feed the insatiable greed of her European procurers. That this greed was nearly insatiable is proven by the progression of raw materials taken from Brazil over centuries of colonial rule. Since the 16th century Brazil has been a generous provider of raw materials, crops and precious metals for Europe and, more recently, the United States. In the first two centuries after Portuguese takeover, gold had not yet been found in Brazilian soil. During this period brazilwood and sugar cane were the main “exports”. The intense exploration of brazilwood in the first two centuries of colonial rule resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of trees of the species, which is currently listed as an endangered species by IBAMA (Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources).

The sugar monoculture in Northeast Brazil has also left deep scars in the environment and economy of the region. Galeano [2009, 62-64] argues that sugar has “destroyed” the Northeast. The establishment of monoculture has replaced the tropical forests and fertile soil that characterized the region with savannas and

²¹Castilians is used here as a synonym for Spanish. At the time of America’s discovery, the territory today known as Spain was formed by a number of kingdoms, among which the Crown of Castile was the largest.

eroded land, and the fire used to clear land has made the rich fauna disappear. Land owners did not grow food, they imported it; the majority of the population was therefore sentenced to misery and malnutrition. Today, the Northeast is the most underdeveloped region of Brazil and one of the poorest areas of Latin America. The burden of centuries of colonial exploitation, associated with the lack of perspectives and the high living costs in large cities, has contributed to make cities like Recife and Fortaleza notorious for child prostitution. The issue of sex tourism, discussed previously in this chapter, is a phenomenon that cannot be explained only from the perspective of current social and economic circumstances, because its roots reach deep into the history of the region.

External competition and the discovery of gold in south-east Brazil precipitated the decay of the sugar cane business in the Northeast. Since the tribes that inhabited the land did not know about the existence of gold, “the Portuguese had to discover the gold on their own as they opened up the territory and exterminated its inhabitants” [Galeano, 2009, 51-52]. The situation changed when, in the end of the 17th century, gold and diamonds were found in the region of Minas Gerais: it was “the largest amount of gold ever discovered in the world” and the Portuguese ensured that it was extracted “in the shortest space of time”. For instance, more gold was taken from Brazil in the 18th century than the Spanish took from their colonies in Latin America in the two previous centuries. Brazilian population boomed during the gold rush, from 300.000 inhabitants in 1700 to more than three million in the end of the century.

The flourishing of a particular industry attracted a large number of peasants looking for work and hoping to receive a share of the riches that invariably landed in the hands of a few masters. Until the end of the 19th century, during the peak of the rubber fever, approximately half a million workers from the Northeast relocated to Amazonia, and many more followed in the next century. The work in the rubber fields has claimed a similar number of lives, reveals Galeano [2009, 87]: “Peasants with no nutritional reserves went from the dry lands to the swampy jungles, where fevers lay in wait for them”. The rubber extracted by wretched human beings in the heart of the Amazon was sent to Europe and the United States, where it supplied the increasing demand created by the flourishing automobile industry. When external competition shattered the rubber trade, the workers who survived the diseases and epidemics were once again left to their own luck, as miserable and dispossessed as they had arrived. Their fate was to “make fortune for others - and not even for Brazilians”: “For

Brazil had merely responded to the siren song of world demand for raw materials, without itself participating in the real business of rubber” [Galeano, 2009, 90].

In the course of the 20th century, Brazil remained faithful to its “tradition” of promptly responding to the international demand for raw materials: cacao, cotton, coffee. The business of coffee is especially disadvantageous for the people who produce it. According to Galeano [2009, 101], plantation workers in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, San Salvador and Haiti earn just a small fraction of the profit made by people who distribute and sell their coffee in the United States. Galeano’s book was originally published in the 1970s, but current data on the economic situation of plantation workers confirm that this scenario of exploitation continues up to this date. Hogan [2009, 39-43] reveals that a plantation worker in Guatemala, for example, receives 1% of the price paid by the American consumer for his coffee. The introduction of free trade and globalization policies has aggravated the situation. Forced to “impose efficiencies” in order to maximize profits and reduce costs, agribusiness owners started to hire seasonal workers instead of regular workers, thus relieving themselves from the responsibility to provide housing, health care, minimum wage and other benefits to the laborers and their families. The result is increasing unemployment and criminality rates, making Guatemala City one of the most dangerous urban centers in the world. For Hogan [2009, 43], the coffee trade illustrates one of the main contradictions of free trade and globalization: “More income is generated in the United States and more jobs because of coffee, than in Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica combined”.

The strategies used by the United States to guarantee the supply of cheap coffee and other raw materials are more subtle than the aggressive tactics that characterized their external politics in the 20th century, but not less harmful to Third World peoples. The United States have financed and supported a number of military dictatorships in Latin American countries, e.g. Brazil, Chile and Nicaragua. As Galeano [2009, 135-137] puts it: “The wealth of iron beneath Brazil’s Paraopeba valley overthrew two presidents (...) before Marshal Castelo Branco, who made himself dictator in 1964, graciously handed it over to the Hanna Mining Company”. The United States’ ability to wage war and further expand their sphere of domination strongly depends on the availability of minerals like iron and copper, found in abundance in Chilean soil. Two US companies controlled the extraction of copper in Chile until the victory of president Salvador Allende in 1970, when he announced the nationalization of the mines. For the

companies that managed to bleed Chile of four billion dollars in half a century, an economic tragedy [Galeano, 2009, 144]. The United States was quick in its response, supporting the military coup that ensured the ascension of General Augusto Pinochet to the power in 1973, the beginning of an oppressive dictatorship characterized by serious infringements of human rights. In the foreword of *Open Veins of Latin America*, Isabel Allende²² expresses the terror faced by Latin American people during dictatorships financed by US capital:

“If I had been able to read between the lines, I could have concluded that Salvador Allende’s government was doomed from the beginning. It was the time of the Cold War, and the United States would not allow a leftist experiment to succeed in what Henry Kissinger called ‘its backyard’. (...) Similar coups followed in other countries, and soon half the continent’s population was living in terror. This was a strategy designed in Washington and imposed upon the Latin American people by the economic and political forces of the right. Repression was organized on a large scale; torture, concentration camps, censorship, imprisonment without trial, and summary executions became common practices. (...) New wounds were added to the old and recent scars that the continent had endured.”

The wounds inflicted upon Nicaragua to defend US interests have not healed yet. Hogan [2009, 51-53] defines Nicaragua as an “abused and exploited child” whose beauty and natural resources “are being sold to the highest bidder”. The Sandinista Revolution started in 1931 brought hope to oppressed Nicaraguans by establishing agrarian reform, taking away the control of banks from foreign hands, providing health care, developing a literacy program and a system of public transportation, as well as repairing roads destroyed by earthquakes. All this was achieved, Hogan emphasizes, despite the economic blockade imposed by the United States and its support of anti-Sandinista Contra forces. The Contra movement finally managed to depose the Sandinistas in 1985, after the United States authorized a military action against the Nicaraguan government. Hogan summarizes the results of the American intervention as follows: “...thousands dead, the best hope of true democratic reform stillborn, and Nicaraguan government more than ever dependent on good relations with the United States to maintain its economic survival”.

²²Her father Tomás Allende was a cousin of Salvador Allende.

The history of Nicaragua resembles the tragedy of Paraguay. Once the most democratic, progressive and economically independent nation in South America, it was destroyed by an alliance between Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay and financed by Great Britain, uncomfortable with the positive developments observed in the former Spanish colony. Before the war, Paraguay was the most developed of the former Spanish colonies in South America: by 1840 the country had eradicated illiteracy, it prioritized public education and the development of a strong domestic industry, and it adopted protectionist policies to protect its economy from foreign interference. Instead of following the dependency path of its neighbors Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, Paraguay closed its borders to imports of manufactured goods from Great Britain. In a continent characterized by economies based on slave work and intense trade with Europe, Paraguay was a dangerous exception for those interested in keeping Latin America underdeveloped and dependent. Amayo [1995, 264] explains that Great Britain was the main beneficiary of the Paraguay War, which was motivated by political rivalries and border conflicts between Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay. Although a number of historians argue that Great Britain assumed a neutral position during the war, this belief has been refuted by intellectuals like Fornos Peñalba, who identifies Great Britain as the fourth ally in the war against Paraguay, which was not merely a territorial conflict but also a campaign against an independent country motivated by economic and political interests of the Crown in South America.

After the Paraguay War (1864-1870), during which the majority of Paraguay's male population was killed, there was only chaos and destruction left, and Great Britain could breathe in relief knowing that Paraguay corresponded again to the desired prototype of a "former" colony: underdeveloped, dependent and open to economic exploitation. Amayo [1995, 264-266] reveals that Paraguay had never requested a loan to Great Britain before the war. One year after the war, in 1871, Great Britain made its first large investment in Paraguay. The English banks *The Baring Brothers* and *The Rothschild Bank* made a fortune during and after the war lending large sums of money to Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. Paraguay also requested a loan to Great Britain to support its army during the war; the request was, of course, denied. The main winner of the war was Great Britain, which not only increased its influence over the allied countries but also managed to include Paraguay in its global system of free trade and economic exploitation. Today, Paraguay has not yet fully recovered from the damages of the war. With an economy based on agriculture and the informal sector, high levels of land

concentration and poverty, the country still struggles to keep up with its more developed neighbors, Brazil and Argentina. In the international sphere, Paraguay is mostly an invisible nation with a tragic history that remains unknown to most audiences outside South America and an insignificant participation in global communications.

Economic and symbolic domination walk hand in hand. As long as the former colonies of the world remain colonies in the collective consciousness, exploitation and appropriation seem justifiable and the status quo is protected from radical change. The prevailing picture produced in the context of media concentration is that of a world still divided between civilized and primitive, teachers and pupils, powerful and powerless; in this world, inequalities have natural causes and hierarchies are also presented as phenomena of nature lacking historical background. According to this particular picture, Brazil's social and economic inequalities are not explained by centuries of colonial exploitation, but rather justified by the character of its people and the many distractions and temptations offered by its natural exuberance. In general, the Brazil painted by global media has not yet evolved to a "higher" level of civilization, still resembling the invention made by Portuguese conquerors in the 16th century. By reproducing essential elements of this invention, media discourses in the 20th and 21st century perpetuate the image of Brazil as an eternal colony, abundant in natural resources, blessed with a gentle and permissive population and lacking in autonomy and economic and human development. In this context, Brazil is presented either as a place of enjoyment, where one can indulge in earthly pleasures, or as an opportunity for profit. One way or the other, Brazil remains relegated to the condition of colony: it gives without demanding any compensation just for the sake of fulfilling the mission of serving its masters and proving itself useful to the global capitalist machine.

The present chapter investigated the connections between predominant representations of developing countries, their status as former colonies and economic relations with developed nations. In the following chapter, the representation of Brazil by Portuguese explorers in the 16th century, presented and discussed in the last pages, will be complemented by the analysis of films located in Brazil produced between 1984 and 2008. The objective of the film analysis is to confirm the hypothesis that portrayals of Brazil produced in the second half of the 20th and in the beginning of the 21st century do not differ substantially from the image constructed by Portuguese conquerors soon after the "discovery" of Brazil in 1500. All the films analyzed were produced mainly by American-based companies.

The decision to narrow down the film selection to American films is justified by the fact that the United States has overpowered Europe in terms of political, economic and cultural supremacy, becoming a powerful and influential nation in these fields.

During preliminary research of films that could be included in the analysis, it soon became clear that the American film industry has a long tradition of representing Brazil in its productions: references to the country can be found as early as 1916 and 1919, respectively in *Vultures of Society* (Arthur Berthelet and E.H. Calvert 1916, USA) and *Hit or Miss* (Dell Henderson 1919, USA). In later decades, productions like *Latin Lovers* (Mervin LeRoy 1953, USA) and *Macumba Love* (Douglas Fowley 1960, USA/Brazil) contributed to the consolidation of Brazilian stereotypes as a source of inspiration for American filmmakers. Recent film releases (e.g. *Fast and Furious 5* and *Breaking Dawn* in 2011) indicate that this tradition will likely persist for as long as the US-based film industry maintains its privileged position in the global film market, recycling formulas and ideas in order to release a large number of commercially successful productions every year. To include an exotic element in the plot is a common and comfortable solution for an industry that must supply a global demand for unpretentious and accessible entertainment - in order to fulfill this task while ensuring high profits, the industry continues, under a different disguise, the exploitation carried on by colonial masters for centuries. The entertainment industry is not plundering the country for gold or rubber, but it is misusing its image, misrepresenting Brazilian ethnic diversity and cultural heritage and reproducing stereotypes for profit. This assertion is sustained by the film analysis conducted in the next chapter and further discussed in Chapter 4, which deals in more detail with the issue of media concentration and cultural imperialism.

3 Film Analysis

The previous chapter analyzed the discourse about Brazil in early writings of Portuguese explorers. This discourse introduced a set of preconceived ideas about Brazil in the Western collective memory, ideas that have, in the centuries after the first encounter between Europe and Brazil, only suffered minor changes. The present chapter is an attempt to defend the assumption that the basic image of Brazil in Western imagination has remained the same, i.e. that the representations of the country were adapted to new media and narrative forms but have kept their essence. In order to illustrate this hypothesis, 15 films were analyzed and classified in three main categories. Although the films belong to different genres, they form a homogeneous group because of their mainstream character. Mainstream means, in this context, that the films selected do not seem to have high aesthetic or artistic ambitions and were produced mainly for profit, aiming to attract and entertain diversified audiences. Productions that fall into this category are also characterized by easy assimilation, with story lines that often recur to stereotypes in order to avoid ambiguities and misunderstandings. The American film industry excels in the mass production of mainstream, only-for-profit films and is globally the leading industry in this area. The global supremacy and ubiquity of American media narratives, and the perception that Brazil is a regular theme in many of these narratives, justify the decision to limit the analysis to films produced and distributed by American companies.

The objective of the film analysis is to identify the main elements that form the discourse of the US-based film industry about Brazil. The critical examination of films and the search for common characteristics among them are based on two main assumptions:

1. The discourse follows the tradition of an ethnocentric regime of representation of Third World countries by developed nations with powerful media industries;
2. The discourse is formed by a few stereotypical elements that are easily identifiable and tend to repeat themselves throughout a variety of texts of popular culture.

The classification system suggested by Amâncio [2000] in *O Brasil dos Gringos: Imagens no Cinema* serves as a starting point for the design of an own classification model. Amâncio [2000, 33] identifies the most common stereotypes about Brazil in American and European cinema and classifies them in four main categories. The category “Essomericq” encompasses films that deal with the experience of Brazilians abroad, while “Utopia” refers to foreign characters who look for strangeness, exoticism and self-fulfillment in Brazil. The affiliation “Pero Vaz” refers to the Portuguese explorer who described the newly discovered land in a letter to the king of Portugal. This category includes films that focus on the foreign look upon Brazil. The category “Afonso Ribeiro” encompasses a recurrent theme in mainstream cinema: the escape to Brazil after committing a crime. Among the films analyzed by Amâncio in this category are *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison 1968, USA), *Max Dugan Returns* (Herbert Ross 1983, USA), *Darkman* (Sam Raimi 1990, USA), *Nothing but Trouble* (Dan Akyroid 1991, USA), and *The Real McCoy* (Russell Mulcahy 1993, USA). The reasons to escape are diverse, but there are similarities between the films: in all mentioned examples the fugitives are running away from the law in order to escape punishment, and the decision to hide in Brazil happens almost naturally. As Amâncio [2000, 104] points out, the decision to go to Brazil is not justified; for the filmmaker, the escape to Brazil is an efficient dramatic solution. The constant repetition of this idea in mainstream cinema - Brazil as the perfect hiding place for criminals - resulted in its incorporation to the collective memory about the country, so that this solution is perceived as logic by audiences.

The term “*mémoire collective*” was coined in the 1920s by Halbwachs, who emphasized the social conditionality of memory. According to Halbwachs, collectivities determine the memory of their members, since even personal memories emerge out of communication and interactions within a social group. We do not remember only what we experience but also what others tell us and consider relevant. Assmann [1992, 36-37] builds on Halbwachs assumptions concluding that individual memory is not possible without collective memory, because the first depends on the participation in communicative processes: “The memory lives and is preserved in the communication; if this is interrupted, or if the points of reference of the communicated reality change or disappear, the consequence is oblivion”¹. Collective memory, Assmann argues, is a question of distribution of

¹“Das Gedächtnis lebt und erhält sich in der Kommunikation; bricht diese ab, bzw. verschwinden oder ändern sich die Bezugsrahmen der kommunizierten Wirklichkeit, ist Vergessen

knowledge among members of a group. But who is responsible for the selection of the knowledge that will remain or be included in the collective memory, and the knowledge that will not make it into the archive? Assmann [1999, 21] defines archive as a collective knowledge storage based on material data storage media that act as “pillars of memory”. The construction of reality through the material stored in the archive depends not only on social, cultural and political interests but is also strongly influenced by dominant media. Moreover, the archive that feeds the collective memory can be interpreted as “the memory of domination” [Assmann, 1999, 343]. The archives of monasteries, churches and cities in the Middle Ages were filled with documents that served to legitimize dominant groups and institutions. One can argue, therefore, that those who control the archive also control the collective memory.

If we consider the archive mentioned by Assmann as the selection of cultural texts available in a certain place at a certain time, we will understand the relevance of this concept for the hypothesis defended in this work. The collective memory is defined by the knowledge included in the archive, which is controlled by dominant groups. The decision about what is included in or excluded from the archive, and consequently what will eventually be a part of collective memory, is taken by the groups that occupy a privileged position in the power hierarchy. The concentration of power in a few powerful hands leads to a decrease of diversity in the archive which is the basis for the construction of collective memory.

The films analyzed in this chapter are divided in three main categories according to their plot and the focus of the narrative: *Latin Lovers*, *Heroes and Bandits* and *Thrill Seekers*. *Latin Lovers* comprises works that focus on the sensual aspects of Brazilian culture and people, having carnival festivities and beaches as main locations. Under the rubric of *Heroes and Bandits* appear films that portray attempts of foreign characters to help Brazilians to escape a situation of oppression or exploitation. The category *Thrill Seekers* contains narratives based on natural and human threats faced by foreign characters in Brazilian territory. This classification system facilitates the identification of stereotypes repeated in the films and helps to delineate the discourse about Brazil disseminated by the American film industry. Although Brazil has been being represented in American cinema since the early 20th century, extending the spectrum of analysis to films produced since the emergence of cinema as a mass medium by such a prolific

die Folge.” (Translated from the German by Andreza André da Rocha)

film industry would result in an exhaustive analysis that would go beyond the objectives of this work. For this reason the analysis was restricted to films produced in the last two decades of the 20th century and in the 21st century, a time span that also reflects a period of pronounced supremacy of American culture in a global level. It is important to add that the film categories often overlap. A film like *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*, classified under the rubric of *Heroes and Bandits*, also contains elements of sensuality; however, the role of the American hero is stronger and actually defines the character of the film. The same principle was employed to categorize the other films.

The plot was a fundamental factor in the film selection. An attempt was made to select films partially or totally located in Brazil, or films that attempted to grasp and to portray the essence of “Brazilianism”. *Next Stop Wonderland*, for example, was filmed in Boston, but the soundtrack consists of Brazilian music and a Brazilian character plays a decisive role in the life of the protagonist. Although some films are co-productions between the United States and other countries, they still have a predominant American perspective, i.e. the participation of other nations in the production did not seem to have influenced the film significantly in terms of plot, style and structure.

The list of films to be analyzed follows:

- *Rio* (Carlos Saldanha 2011, USA);
- *The Incredible Hulk* (Louis Leterrier 2008, USA);
- *Journey to the End of the Night* (Eric Eason 2006, USA/Brazil/Germany);
- *Turistas* (John Stockwell 2006, USA);
- *The Rundown* (Peter Berg 2003, USA);
- *Woman on Top* (Fina Torres 2000, USA);
- *Next Stop Wonderland* (Brad Anderson 1998, USA);
- *Anaconda* (Luis Llosa 1997, USA/Brazil/Peru);
- *The Relic* (Peter Hyams 1997, USA/UK/Germany/Japan/New Zealand);

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- *Kickboxer 3 - The Art of War* (Rick King 1992, USA);
 - *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (Hector Babenco 1991, USA);
 - *Wild Orchid* (Zalman King 1990, USA);
 - *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada* (Greydon Clark 1990, USA);
 - *The Money Pit* (Richard Benjamin 1986, USA);
 - *Blame it on Rio* (Stanley Donen 1984, USA).

The characteristics that differentiate America and Brazil are emphasized in several mainstream films produced in the United States in the last 30 years. As previously mentioned, Brazil was the location of several American productions before 1980, e.g. *Latin Lovers* (Mervyn LeRoy 1953, USA), *The Naked Jungle* (Byron Haskin 1954, USA), *Curucu, Beast of the Amazon* (Curt Siodmak 1956, USA), *Manhunt in the Jungle* (Tom McGowan 1958, USA), *Macumba Love* (Douglas Fowley 1960, USA/Brazil), *The Boys from Brazil* (Franklin Schaffner 1978, USA/UK), and *Killer Fish* (Antonio Margheriti 1979, USA/Italy/Brazil). The following film analysis will focus on productions from the period 1984-2011 and cover a variety of genres, e.g. comedy (*Blame it on Rio*), action (*The Rundown*) and thriller (*Turistas*). The analysis approach is rather synchronic than diachronic, i.e. it is not primarily concerned with the historical developments of the period in which the films were produced. The synchronic approach focuses on structural aspects and permits the identification of patterns and connections between the objects of study. This relates to the main objectives of the film analysis: the identification of elements that can be found in a variety of films, forming a homogeneous discourse of the US-based film industry about Brazil.

The film analysis will follow a structural approach, referring to the semantization of topographic spaces first described by Lotman [1972] and further developed by Titzmann [1977], Renner [1983] and Krah [2006]. According to this structural model, a text is composed of two main layers: a “subjectful” (*subjethaft*) layer and a “subjectless” (*subsetlos*) layer². The story line, or the *subjethaft* text layer,

²It is challenging to find corresponding terms to *subjethaft* and *subsetlos* in English. The neologisms “subjectful” and “subjectless” are an attempt to translate the German expressions to English while keeping the original meaning. In order to remain as faithful to Lotman’s definitions as possible, the original terms will be preferred.

is developed in each text on the basis of a *sujetlos* text layer, understood as the order of the semantic spaces in a text. In the majority of texts of popular culture, the *sujetlos* layer is divided in two main semantic spaces with opposing characteristics. These semantic spaces can correspond to topographic spaces or not. In the films analyzed in this chapter, the world is divided in two main semantic spaces which are also topographic spaces: Brazil and the United States. The attribution of opposing non-spatial characteristics to topographic spaces fills them with meaning, turning them into semantic spaces. Once the topographic spaces “Brazil” and “United States” have been semanticized, they are no longer simply a Portuguese-speaking country in South America and an English-speaking country in the Northern hemisphere, but nations with particular non-topographic characteristics.

The characters (subjects) of a story line have special spatial connections (i.e. the belonging to a particular order) in the *sujetlos* text layer; some of these characters are given during the development of the story the opportunity to overthrow this spatial connection and cross the border. When a border transgression between two oppositional semantic spaces happens, there is an event (*Ereignis*). It is not relevant how this transgression is made possible and how it is caused. What is relevant is the temporary discrepancy, the inconsistency of characteristics caused by the event: a figure that belongs to a certain semantic space faces a situation where the opposing characteristics must be valid. This text dimension, the tension between postulated order and factual deviance, is the main component of the story line: there is no story without an event. In most texts of popular culture, including the films analyzed in this chapter, an event is usually followed by the restoration of the order, a solution that brings consistency back to the narrative. Based on his analysis of the short novel *Der Findling* by Heinrich von Kleist, Renner [1983, 42] identifies consistency as the basic principle upon which a story develops. According to what the author calls “consistency principle” (*Konsistenzprinzip*), a story can only be finished when the contradictions between the *sujetlos* (space order) and *sujethaft* (plot) text layers are eliminated: the initial and final situation must be free of discrepancies, i.e., characterized by equilibrium and the absence of events.

Renner has developed his consistency principle based on Todorov’s equilibrium principle. For Todorov, the intrigue of a narrative consists in the transition from an initial state of equilibrium to a state of disequilibrium followed by the a final state of equilibrium. As Todorov [2006, 213] points out, “the second equilibrium is

similar to the first, but the two are never identical". There are, however, exceptions to the "ideal" narrative structure described by Todorov; not all narratives follow these rules. Todorov [2006, 218] explains that sometimes a narrative, for example, only presents a part of the trajectory equilibrium → disequilibrium → equilibrium: it describes only the transition from equilibrium to disequilibrium or vice-versa. In his analysis of the novellas that form Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, Todorov identifies both stories that constitute "ideal" narratives, including all development stages, and stories that begin with an unstable situation (disequilibrium) and end with an state of equilibrium. Moreover, in some cases the disequilibrium is not caused by an event, but simply by the qualities of a particular character.

Todorov's model is, according to Wigston [2006, 154], the most effective way to describe a narrative structure. The film analysis will take the basic narrative structure suggested by Todorov into consideration, identifying the events that cause disequilibrium in the narrative and how the transition to a final state of equilibrium is achieved. Based on Todorov's model, Wigston [2006, 154] describes the five main steps that characterize the development of an "ideal" narrative:

1. a state of equilibrium;
2. a disruption of this state by an event;
3. the recognition that the equilibrium has been disrupted;
4. attempts to restore the equilibrium;
5. the reestablishment of a state of equilibrium.

The films selected for analysis are mainstream narratives structured according to a language with well-defined rules employed by Hollywood. In most cinematic narratives produced by the US film industry for profit, there are clear limitations that define the development of a story and certain formulas and parameters that are rigorously followed so that the films can be easily categorized into a particular genre. This classification system facilitates the commercialization of films, including distribution on a global scale. The conclusion of narratives with a happy end (the return to a state of equilibrium or "consistency") is characteristic of Hollywood mainstream productions, which tend to avoid the permanence of conflict, controversy, and statements that contradict what is widely accepted as being desirable and correct - the status quo. In general, one can argue that

mainstream cinematic narratives are conservative and predictable, being examples of what Todorov [2006, 218] calls “ideal” narratives because they tend to follow the trajectory equilibrium → disequilibrium → equilibrium, usually without skipping any step.

Although mainstream narratives commonly end in a state of equilibrium or “consistency”, the final state is different from the initial one [Todorov, 2006]. Post-apocalyptic films that portray the fight for survival of humans in a world infested by zombies - recent examples are *Zombieland* (Ruben Fleischer 2009, USA) and *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (Paul W.S. Anderson 2010, USA/Germany/France) - are illustrative of this principle: although it is not possible to talk about a traditional “happy end”, since the world that existed before apocalypse will unlikely be restored, it is still possible to identify an ending characterized by a return to equilibrium, expressed in the survival of the main characters, the elimination of a great life threat and/or the identification of a possible safe haven. In films that portray the encounter of cultures with opposite characteristics, a final state of equilibrium can also be reached, but the event that caused disequilibrium provokes changes and conflicts that make an exact restoration of the initial state of equilibrium impossible. A common aspect among the films analyzed in this chapter is that the encounter between Brazil and the United States has unexpected consequences for those involved, and although every film contains a kind of “happy end”, many characters are transformed by this encounter.

There are a number of ways to turn a state of disequilibrium caused by a particular event into a final state of equilibrium or “consistency”. That means that an eventful condition must be turned into an uneventful one by undoing the tension and the dysfunction that made the event possible. Krah [2006, 312-314] indicates three main ways to re-establish consistency in a narrative: 1. return to the initial space; 2. merge into the opposing space; 3. meta-extinction. In the first option, the event that caused a consistency loss in the narrative is neutralized by a contra-event: the return of the figure that caused the event to its original semantic space. This way the initial situation is restored. In the second alternative, the figure remains in the opposing semantic space but adapts its characteristics to the rules of this space, re-establishing consistency in the narrative. In the meta-extinction, the space is transformed and the border transgression that resulted in an event is no longer seen as such because the border has lost its status, i.e. the order is invalidated. When certain rules and orders are no longer valid, a border trespassing is no longer able to generate an eventful state.

An example of transformation of space order is found in *Kickboxer 3*. The good-hearted and politically correct David Sloan cannot accept the situation he experiences in Rio de Janeiro, where young women are being kidnapped and forced to work as prostitutes for American entrepreneur Franklin Lane. Sloan's characteristics and beliefs stand in opposition to this situation and he takes measures to transform this order into an order more compatible to the one he represents, i.e. an order where crime, oppression and lawlessness are not tolerated.

It is interesting to notice that the figure of the greedy, unscrupulous foreigner exploiting people from the Third World appears often in films located in Brazil. Since their characteristics are not consistent with their original space (a developed country like the United States), they flee to another space where they can freely express these characteristics. Lane found in Rio de Janeiro the ideal space to run his profitable business. As he affirms in one of the scenes, Rio is like the "Wild West", a place where one can make a lot of money without worrying about law, authorities and human rights. He could not run such a business in his homeland, otherwise he would be condemned both by law and moral. The same pattern can be observed in *The Rundown*, where American mine owner Hatcher gets wealthy by exploiting the work of "barefoot Indians", as he calls his Brazilian workers. Hatcher has yet another similarity with Lane: both believe they are doing the exploited a favor. For them it is acceptable to exploit those who are weaker, and exploitation is not seen as such but as integration of the unable and helpless to the market economy. They make clear for their workers that they should not complain but be grateful for having an occupation.

When a character is transferred to a space with a basic order opposed to that of his original space, he is forced to assume - at least for the time that he occupies this space - certain characteristics typical of this space. Without this temporary flexibility, the character is most likely to become a victim of the circumstances that prevail in the new space. Sloan temporarily adapted to the rules of the street in Rio de Janeiro in order to stay faithful to his principles of justice. Unable to ignore injustice, he takes a break from his role as an athlete and assumes the role of a vigilante. Coming from a space where law is respected and authorities are feared, Sloan is forced by the new circumstances to adapt, becoming an outlaw who does justice with his own hands.

Kickboxer 3 is classified under the rubric of *Heroes and Bandits* and will be analyzed in detail along with further examples in Section 3.2. The first category of films to be analyzed is *Latin Lovers*. In this section the ethnicity and nationality

of the characters play an important role, as well as the role of women in the narratives: what are the main differences between women who belong to opposing semantic spaces in terms of appearance, behavior and social status? An attempt will be made to identify the main characteristics that define the characters in each space, as well as the motivations for and consequences of border transgressions.

3.1 Latin Lovers

Brazilian director Lucia Murat reveals in her documentary *Olhar Estrangeiro* (Lucia Murat 2006, Brazil) that Brazil is a character in approximately 220 foreign films. The element “sensuality” is very often associated with Brazil in different expressions of popular culture and is present in several films criticized by Murat, e.g. *Blame it on Rio* and *Wild Orchid*. In an interview with Murat, writer Charlie Peters (*Blame it on Rio*) blames the studios for focusing on this aspect: “I think the studios are more guilty of this, because they end up taking the movie and deciding what to push. And I think they wanted to push that renegade sexuality and freedom in a libertine kind of way”. *Blame it on Rio* is, in fact, an illustrative example of a tendency of American films to present sensuality and libertinage as inherent characteristics of Brazilian culture. The juxtaposition with foreign characters makes these characteristics even more evident. The easiness with which Brazilians deal with nudity and sexuality in the films amazes American characters like Matthew, who acts the whole time as a stereotypical uptight white male who is unable to perform the most basic dance moves and feels uncomfortable in front of topless women at the beach. The scene where Matthew and his friend Victor explore the beach and are mesmerized by the topless women around them (Fig. 3.1) is not only a classic example of “Brazilian sensuality” but also a modern reproduction of colonial tradition: it is a reference to the first contact of Portuguese explorers with native Brazilians. As described in the notorious letter of explorer Pero Vaz de Caminha to the King of Portugal, the natives did not care to cover their genitals and exposed them with the same innocence with which they showed their faces. It is also with innocence that Isabella, Victor’s Brazilian lover, tells him that she has had 12 lovers in 12 days, and that “it is much better to make love to someone when you are not married”. Sexual freedom is presented as an innate characteristic of Brazilian people - a characteristic inherited from their ancestors, who have been welcoming foreign visitors since 1500 without caring to cover their bodies.



Figure 3.1: Victor (Joseph Bologna) and Matthew (Michael Caine) surrounded by topless women in Rio. Source: *Blame it on Rio*.

In each section the sequence protocol of a representative film in each category will be presented as a starting point for a more detailed analysis. The sequence protocol of *Blame it on Rio*, divided in six parts, provides significant material for analysis. The film tells the story of two friends, Matthew and Victor, who work together in São Paulo and decide to spend their vacation in Rio de Janeiro. Victor is getting divorced and Matthew's marriage is in crisis; they hope that the vacation in Rio will help them to solve their personal problems. However, Matthew's wife, Karen, decides not to join them and goes to Bahia instead. The situation gets complicated when Matthew has an affair with Victor's underage daughter Jennifer, who does not accept the break up and tells her father that she is broken-hearted.

Besides *Blame it on Rio*, the other films analyzed in this section are: *Woman on Top*, *Wild Orchid*, *The Money Pit*, *Next Stop Wonderland* and *Rio*.

SEQUENCE PROTOCOL: *Blame it on Rio* (Stanley Donen 1984, USA)

SEQUENCE 1: TORN RELATIONSHIPS:

01'55: Talking directly to the camera, Matthew explains that São Paulo is where all the work gets done, and Rio de Janeiro is where people have fun.

- 03'07: At the office, Victor complains to Matthew about his ex-wife.
- 04'00: Airplane lands in São Paulo. Victor welcomes his daughter Jennifer at the airport. Talking directly to the camera again, Matthew reveals that he and Karen have a crisis in their marriage.
- 05'45: Matthew, Karen and daughter Nicole pack the bags for the vacation in Rio. Karen tells Matthew that she is going to Bahia by herself and they have an argument.
- 09'00: On the way to Rio, Matthew looks through the airplane window. Cut to a scene of *Flying Down to Rio* (Thornton Freeland 1933, USA) in which women dance on a small plane that flies above Rio.

SEQUENCE 2: TOPLESS:

- 10'05: Air hostess announces the arrival in Rio. Aerial view of the Sugarloaf Mountain and the statue of Christ the Redeemer, with samba in the background.
- 13'00: After driving in the streets of Rio and enjoying beach scenes, they arrive at the holiday house, which is surrounded by forest and has exotic birds as part of the decoration.
- 17'55: Beach scenes. Palms, people playing and dancing samba, topless women. Matthew and Victor look around amused, meet friends Peter and Elaine. Matthew tells the camera about his difficulty with handling nudity.
- 20'05: A topless woman plays with a monkey on the sand, next to her a man plays the guitar. Victor and Matthew meet their daughters and are shocked by the fact that they are also topless. They get in the sea.

SEQUENCE 3: BLAME IT ON RIO:

- 21'25: Driving in the streets of Rio, they meet a group of people going to a wedding at the beach. Jennifer and Nicole decide to attend the wedding while Victor and Matthew go to a restaurant.
- 22'45: At the restaurant, Victor flirts with a woman. Matthew goes to meet the girls at the wedding, where people dance in carnival costumes. Jennifer invites Matthew to dance, he refuses.
- 26'55: Wedding guests undress and get in the sea. Jennifer convinces Matthew to follow them and kisses him. Nicole watches.

29'08: Jennifer and Matthew have sex on the sand. They are awoken by the arrival of Peter and Elaine. Matthew buries himself in the sand so that they don't see he is naked.

31'55: Victor and the woman from the restaurant, Isabella, smoke a cigar, talk about their previous relationships and get intimate at her apartment.

SEQUENCE 4: AFTERMATH:

33'45: Jennifer writes on her diary about the experience with Matthew. He tells her to forget what happened. They kiss.

37'50: After a stroll in the market, Matthew and Victor cook dinner and talk about their daughters. Victor tells Matthew about his pact with Jennifer, who is supposed to tell him when she loses her virginity.

44'30: Victor goes out. Alone at home, Matthew and Jennifer have sex again.

48'05: On the rocks of a waterfall, Jennifer gets advice from a "macumba lady" to conquer Matthew's love. Following her advice, Jennifer throws flowers at the sea to see if they come back. She gets hysterical and Matthew tells her they cannot be together.

52'20: Jennifer tells Victor she slept with an older man and is broken-hearted, but does not reveal his identity. In the room next door, Matthew hears the conversation and packs his suitcase. He tries to leave but is stopped by Victor, who asks him to go out with Jennifer and find out who the man is.

SEQUENCE 5: REVELATION:

57'30: Matthew takes Jennifer out to a panoramic trip to Sugarloaf Mountain and tells her about Victor's plans. He lies to Victor, saying that Jennifer did not want to reveal him the man's identity.

64'45: Matthew talks to his daughter Nicole about the situation and decides to search for "professional help": he visits a "macumba lady".

66'47: Victor finds Jennifer's diary and reads it to Matthew. He asks Nicole if she knows who the man is, she makes up a story about a night club singer.

70'55: Victor, Matthew and Jennifer dance at the night club. Victor gets in a fight with the singer. Neighbor Eduardo is the next suspect: at

his restaurant, Victor tries to beat him, but is stopped by Matthew. He reveals the truth.

79'45: Hiding from Victor, Matthew and Jennifer discuss the situation in the car parked in front of the holiday house. He tells her their love is impossible.

SEQUENCE 6: RECONCILIATION:

81'34: Nicole calls Karen and asks her to come to Rio because Matthew is in trouble. Matthew and Victor have an argument. Karen arrives at the moment they are starting a fight and Matthew tells her he cheated on her with Jennifer. Karen reveals she had an affair with Victor.

86'28: Nicole finds a farewell letter from Jennifer, who tried to commit suicide by taking an overdose of birth control pills. An ambulance takes Jennifer to the hospital. Karen talks to her and forgives her.

94'20: Victor and Karen talk about their affair, then she reconciles with Matthew and they decide to go to Bahia together.

97'50: Victor, Matthew and Karen leave after saying goodbye to Nicole and Jennifer, who stay in Rio. Matthew gives his last considerations to the camera: "You only live once, but it does help if you get to be young twice."

The sequence protocol allows for the identification of three main themes that deserve a further analysis: the frequent appearance of exotic animals, the role of the "macumba ladies" and the wedding ceremony. The first contact of the characters with the native fauna takes place at the holiday house, which is surrounded by vegetation and has parrots and other native birds as part of the scenario: they are in the garden and inside the house and surprise the guests by putting eggs on tables and chairs, what is interpreted by Matthew as a "sign of fertility". The opposition "unrestrained fertility versus controlled fertility", characteristics attributed respectively to Brazil and the United States, is reinforced in sequence six, when Jennifer tries suicide by taking all her birth control pills at once. While on the Brazilian side unrestrained fertility prevails, not choosing appropriate places and times to manifest itself, on the American side it is kept artificially under control. It is important to add that the semantic spaces that form the *sujetlos* text layer in *Blame it on Rio* do not correspond exactly to the topographic spaces Brazil and the United States. Although the characters are American, they live and work in São Paulo, which is identified in the beginning of the film as the place

where “all the work gets done”. São Paulo represents, in this case, characteristics that are commonly associated with the United States: discipline, industriousness and productivity. The basic space order is therefore formed by two opposing semantic and topographic spaces, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, which can be understood as an extension of American society and values in Brazilian territory.

Monkeys are presented as pets as common as dogs: they play at the beach with the owners and are even invited to wedding ceremonies. That monkeys belong in the jungle is a fact ignored by the writers of *Blame it on Rio*. In an interview with Lucia Murat, writer Larry Gelbart admits that he did not know that monkeys could not be found in an urban environment and that topless is not a common practice at the beaches of Rio: “Our story about Brazil is not a story about Brazil. We did little that depended on our knowledge of Brazilian culture. We had the flavor, but it was an American cake with a Brazilian frosting”.

This lack of appropriate knowledge of Brazilian culture is reflected in the wedding scenes. Gelbart tells Murat that, before writing the scenes, he had no idea what a Brazilian wedding ceremony is like, but he wanted the couple (Matthew and Jennifer) to be stimulated by seeing a marriage. The ceremony portrayed in the film is a mixture of carnival and Afro-Brazilian religious rituals and takes place at the beach at night. At the end, the guests take their clothes off and get in the sea. Based on general stereotypical assumptions about Brazilian culture, a sacred ceremony is transformed into an orgy. This particular scene is very revealing of the common understanding of Brazilian culture and society by American film writers, producers and directors.

The exotic/erotic atmosphere does manage to stimulate Matthew and Jennifer, who end up having sex at the beach. When Matthew comes back to himself, he is like a man slowly recovering sobriety after committing an immoral act while being drunk. It is clear that Matthew’s characteristics are not consistent with the events of the evening, but also that he does not have the strength to resist the new possibilities offered by Rio de Janeiro, also when they may cause guilt and anxiety. Sex with underage girls and infidelity are characteristics inconsistent with his morally correct character, but consistent with the customs of Rio; a return to consistency would only be possible through a change of characteristics (Matthew would lower his moral standards and consider infidelity and sex with teenagers acceptable) or the return to São Paulo (as previously mentioned, the return of a character to his original space is an efficient way to restore the consistency or the equilibrium of a narrative). That is the solution chosen by the writers: Matthew

reconciles with his wife and leaves Rio and its temptations behind. São Paulo represents here a piece of the United States in Brazilian territory, a place free of temptations where work and law are taken seriously.

The presence of exotic animals in several scenes reinforces the idea of Brazilian culture as being strongly influenced by nature and establishes the necessary reference to the jungle, which is another symbol frequently associated with Brazil. Moreover, the animals suggest an environment ruled by instincts, and the instincts of the characters play a fundamental role in the plot: one can argue that they are responsible for the main event which is the basis of the narrative of *Blame it on Rio*. Were Matthew and Jennifer not inebriated by the wedding atmosphere and had they not let their instincts predominate over their reason, they would have not slept together and there would be nothing to blame on Rio. They crossed the border from a space ruled by reason and industrial organization (São Paulo = United States) into a space ruled by nature and, consequently, by instinct (Rio de Janeiro). The parrots and monkeys appear regularly to remind the viewer that the rules of the civilized world do not apply to Rio, which appears to be a urban center in the middle of a big forest, a city distinct from all other cities because it seems in some aspects untouched by civilization.

The portrayal of “macumba ladies” transmits a similar message and ridicules religious practices that are very popular and respected in Brazil. Macumba, also known as Quimbanda, is the term used to describe two types of African spirit worship, Candomblé and Umbanda. Matthew and Jennifer appeal to “macumba ladies” (Fig. 3.2) to solve problems they did not have before going to Rio de Janeiro, and they would unlikely seek their advice in São Paulo. Their temporary belief in the power of macumba is another inconsistency in the narrative, just as their relationship. This inconsistency problem is solved in one of the last scenes where Matthew throws away an amulet given by Jennifer. This symbolic act represents Matthew’s farewell from a period ruled by the irrationality of instincts and superstitions and the return to the order where he belongs, characterized by rationality, faithfulness and morality.

Superstition is the main ingredient of *Woman on Top*, a romantic comedy that refers to Afro-Brazilian customs and beliefs, as well as to the exotic flavors of Brazilian cuisine, to spice up a rather shallow story about a Brazilian cook, Isabella, who is cheated on by her husband Toninho and goes to live in San Francisco with her transsexual friend Monica. There her talent is discovered by a TV producer, Cliff, who turns her into the star of a cooking show. The character



Figure 3.2: Matthew seeks the advice of a macumba lady to solve his problem with Jennifer. Source: *Blame it on Rio*.

of Isabella is played by Spanish actress Penélope Cruz, who incorporates the role of the passionate Latina quite well. Although the cast includes several Brazilian actors, all dialogues are in English. This is a common practice in American mainstream productions, but forcing Brazilian characters to speak English among them sounds unnatural and artificial, contributing to the film's lack of authenticity. In this context, the soundtrack, composed exclusively of Brazilian songs, sounds merely like an attempt to compensate the exclusion of Portuguese language from the plot.

Isabella and Toninho live in Bahia, a state in northeast of Brazil, where they run a seafood restaurant. While she works hard in the kitchen, Toninho flirts with female guests and sings bossa nova³. Despite receiving several job offers from abroad, Isabella's dream of leaving Bahia and becoming an internationally acclaimed cook "would melt away in Toninho's irresistible embrace". Despite the realization that Toninho is a lazy charmer, Isabella does not seem able to resist him. Their relationship is very physical and food plays an important role in keeping the attraction between them. In *Woman on Top*, food has a strong

³Bossa nova is a Brazilian music style popularized in the early 1960s by artists like Antônio Carlos Jobim, Vinícius de Moraes and João Gilberto. Although the rhythm evolved from samba, it is less percussive and has a strong jazz influence.

sexual element. Isabella and Toninho literally spice up their intimate moments with chilli peppers and oils. Isabella's cook show in the United States is called "Passion Food". In most episodes she appears wearing tight red dresses, since the color of passion goes well with the show's title. Cruz's character is extremely sexualized, and her talent for cooking is overshadowed by her appearance and sexy manner. Her scent seems to be irresistible for the opposite sex: while walking on the streets of San Francisco, she is followed by a legion of men who appear to be guided by their sexual organs, having lost the ability to think rationally. The Brazilian sex bomb has brought chaos to a place traditionally characterized by reason and order.

Isabella has yet other particularities besides her attractiveness and talent for cooking. She has motion sickness, what means that she must avoid elevators, public transportation and passenger seats. Moreover, she must lead when dancing and be on top during sex. Toninho tries to justify his unfaithfulness by arguing that he "has to be on top sometimes". As a typical macho, he cannot accept being dominated by a woman, and he believes that Isabella has an obligation to return home with him. He flies to San Francisco with his musicians in tow to search for Isabella. He finds her in the TV studio, "squeezing her coconuts for everyone to see". For Toninho, her new clothing style is not appropriate for her condition as a married woman. Isabella just ignores him. She had to flee Brazil and find refuge in the United States in order to explore her full potential as a cook and become an emancipated woman. She has not, however, internalized the characteristics that could turn her into a successful and independent businesswoman. Isabella is not guided by reason, but by emotions, and she only has her love towards Toninho under control because she has made a deal with Yemanjá, the goddess of the sea, who is portrayed in the film as a mermaid. Thanks to Yemanjá's intervention, Isabella has been able to repress her love for her husband. Neither Isabella nor Toninho have any power to sort out their relationship and make decisions: they are mere marionettes in Yemanjá's hands. Because Toninho has insulted Yemanjá while in Bahia, after discovering that his wife had run away, the goddess punished him by keeping all the fish to herself. Day after day the fishermen came back from the sea with empty nets, forcing Toninho to close his restaurant. Because of Yemanjá, he lost his wife's love and his business - and she is the only one who can give them back.

Toninho represents the opposite of Cliff, an average American guy interested in fitness, dating and business. At first Cliff sees Isabella as a lottery ticket, but he

ends up succumbing to her charms and turns to Monica for advice. She teaches him a lesson about Isabella and her homeland, and summarizes the message behind the portrayal of “Brazilianism” in the film: “Brazil is more than a country, Brazil is a sensation. It’s a mood you can’t describe, you can’t define, you just can feel it. It starts in the south, in Porto Alegre, and it makes its way up to Recife. It’s the drums of Candomblé, it’s the samba of carnival. Isabella is Brazil, and Brazil is Isabella. If you want her, don’t plan or prepare, just feel”. Isabella is, therefore, the personification of everything “Brazilian”. According to this logic, being Brazilian means being superstitious, passionate, irrational and sensual. It means having the opposite characteristics attributed to Cliff, who is focused and ambitious. Cliff is nothing like Toninho, the spontaneous, charming, unpredictable Latin lover who tries to win his woman back with moonlight serenades.

After her attempt to find self-fulfillment and love in the United States, Isabella recognizes that she belongs in Brazil, and that she can only find happiness in Toninho’s arms. In the last sequence, they cook together and some kind of “magic” happens which neutralizes Yemanjá’s curse. Now Isabella has recovered her love for Toninho and the fishermen’s nets are full again. With Yemanjá’s help, Isabella and Toninho live happily ever after on the Brazilian seaside. After a break in the equilibrium of the narrative caused by Toninho’s infidelity and Isabella’s departure to the United States, a final state of equilibrium was reached through the couple’s reconciliation and their return to Brazil. Differently from other female characters who have their characteristics transformed after trespassing the border to another semantic space, Isabella has kept her integrity throughout the whole movie and even quit her job in the TV station when her opinion was ignored. San Francisco was not able to change Isabella’s superstitious and emotional ways as Rio de Janeiro changed Emily’s (*Wild Orchid*) prudish behavior.

The main female character of *Wild Orchid* changes her behavior pattern after being transferred from the United States, a space ruled by morality, to Brazil, associated with libertinage and sexual freedom. The young lawyer Emily leaves a small town in Kansas to work in Kansas City, where she is assigned to work in a project in Rio de Janeiro. Emily is conservative not only regarding her professional choice, but also her appearance: no make-up, hair put into a pony tale, plain clothing. The border crossing from the United States to Brazil is introduced by drums music in the background, while a plane from former Brazilian airline Varig crosses the blue sky. This scene is followed by traditional aerial views of Rio de Janeiro, showing the statue of Christ the Redeemer, the Sugarloaf Mountain and

Copacabana beach. This is where Emily reappears, staring fascinated through the car window at scenes of beach life. At the hotel she is welcomed by a black midget wearing a yellow carnival costume. The explosion of colors that contrast significantly with her wardrobe continues at the hotel reception, which is “decorated” with dark-skinned women in colorful long dresses. Now that the American characters have crossed the border, the separation between the topographic/semantic spaces “United States” and “Brazil” is established through colors - not only the skin color reveals where the characters come from, but also their clothing. As serious professionals in the field of law, Emily and her boss, Claudia, wear discrete colors and suits at all times, and so do the businessmen involved in their project. This dress code emphasizes the otherness of Brazilian characters such as Claudia’s assistant Flavio, who is played by a black actor and wears bright colors in all occasions.

Emily’s first contact with Brazilian exuberant and unrestrained sexuality takes place in the ruins of an old hotel where she is supposed to make an inventory. While wandering through the empty corridors and rooms Emily catches a couple having passionate sex against a wall. Both are black and have athletic bodies; the man is already naked when Emily arrives, and the woman has a red dress on which is ripped by the man in the heat of the moment. Emily looks shocked but do not seem able to control her voyeuristic instinct; when she finally has it under control, she runs away. Emily’s transformation into a more fun-loving, laid-back personality - which is achieved by the end of the film - is catalyzed by sex. She is exposed to various sexual stimuli until she feels prepared to engage in sexual activity herself.

This transformation is also push forward by Emily’s love interest James, an American millionaire living in Rio. On their first date, James takes Emily to a restaurant where the main attraction is not the food, but an orgiastic masquerade ball that takes place in the backyard. In opposition to the beach orgy portrayed in *Blame it on Rio*, which was disguised as a wedding celebration, this one was presented as an ordinary event, not justified by any special occasion. At the mask ball, Emily experiences the second event that marks the transformation of her sexuality: in a mystical atmosphere, the guests - all wearing masks - dance sensually to the sound of drums. The dance reaches its peak when a couple has sex on a table, as in some kind of ritual (Fig. 3.3). Disturbed by the explicit scenes, Emily runs away again. Sex seems to be an infallible element of mysterious rituals in American cinema, being present not only in commercial films but also

in works of respected directors such as Stanley Kubrick's film *Eyes Wide Shut* (Stanley Kubrick 1999, UK/USA). This recurrent association of sex with the unknown and the forbidden indicates the predominance of a conservative attitude towards sex in American society and confirms the tendency to attribute sex-related characteristics to other cultures, as an attempt to keep the own culture pure.



Figure 3.3: A masquerade ball in Rio: drums, dance and explicit sex. Source: *Wild Orchid*.

Emily's next date with James takes place in a beach party in the afternoon - the location and the time reveal a lot about how the relationship of Brazilians with work is portrayed in the film. First of all, in the majority of sequences where Brazilians play a role, they are not portrayed in work situations but in their leisure time, for example at the beach, at parties, celebrating carnival or, like in the hotel scene, having sex. Those who work are subordinate to American characters, who are well educated and therefore able to get better jobs - Brazilians work as hotel receptionists, construction workers, waiters, and prostitutes. Among the Brazilian workers, Flavio is the only one who speaks English, what does not contribute to make his role in the story more relevant.

When a Brazilian guest tries to rob a friend of James, he must intervene. The character played by Mickey Rourke is an unconventional hero. He not only stops

a robbery but also helps his female friend to make up with her husband, who had lost sexual interest in her. As a wannabe sex therapist, James is very successful: he makes sure that Emily has no choice but to watch the German couple passionately reconcile in the limousine that takes them back to the city. Her transformation from chaste American woman to sex goddess has reached an advanced stage: that night she shows up at the restaurant wearing a mask and a sexy dress and is mistaken with a Brazilian prostitute by an American businessman. In her first bold move since her arrival in Rio, she decides not to contradict him and follow him to a hotel room. By succumbing to tropical temptations and losing her innocence, Emily gives up the main characteristic that kept her attached to her homeland. This is the first step towards restoring the equilibrium of the narrative: influenced by the environment, Emily is changing her characteristics and merging into the space “Brazil”.

Cross-dressing for carnival is Emily’s next norm transgression. After a wild night of samba dancing in the streets, Emily and Claudia invite a stranger to their hotel room: a tanned, handsome volleyball player who happened to be passing by in front of the hotel in the early hours of the morning (Fig. 3.4). This sequence reinforces two widespread ideas regarding Brazil: one, in Brazil there are no limits for sex fantasies - especially during carnival, everything is allowed, even inviting a handsome stranger to your room. Two, Brazilians are easy to have - not only women, but men as well. The man just stares at Emily and Claudia with his pretty eyes, but does not make any questions. When asked to undress, he obeys immediately. As a good submissive Latin lover, he does not even complain when a jealous James invades the room and ends the threesome. Just like the other Brazilian characters, he is there to serve the American bosses - with or without payment, with or without clothes.

Emily’s transformation is completed in the next sequence, where she and James overcome their differences and have passionate sex. The shy, chaste Emily has officially become a sex goddess under the influence of Rio de Janeiro and its irresistible temptations. The idea that Rio de Janeiro is the ideal environment for such a development is the only argument that justifies why the city was chosen as location for *Wild Orchid*. The plot is so simplistic that it could have been developed anywhere else in the world, or even within the United States. However, without Rio’s atmosphere the exotic factor would be missing. The same applies to *Kickboxer 3*. The adventures of Sloan and Xian could as well take place in Bangkok or Cape Town, but these cities are not so engrained in the collective memory like



Figure 3.4: Emily (Carré Otis) and Claudia (Jacqueline Bisset) invite a stranger to their hotel room. Source: *Wild Orchid*.

Rio de Janeiro. Moreover, although Bangkok struggles with its negative reputation as a favorite sex tourism destination, no other city has become a synonym for sex and freedom like Rio. This is the result of the repetition and recreation of stereotypes in different media over the years, giving origin to a particular image of a mythical Rio de Janeiro in the collective memory, a magic city where no desires are forbidden and everything can happen. The city is not only often portrayed in films but is at least once a year (around February, during carnival) a hot topic in international news broadcasting. The regular portrayal of Rio in non-fictional media lends credibility to the portrayal in fictional media and legitimates the choice of Rio as a film location.

A similar logic was employed in *The Money Pit*, which tells the story of a young couple, Walter and Anna, who faces financial ruin and a relationship crisis after buying a dilapidated house. Although Brazil plays a small role in the plot (just a few minutes of the story take place in Brazil), the film is worth mentioning because it reinforces the stereotype of Brazil as the ideal refuge for criminals. Walter's father escaped to Brazil taking a large sum of stolen money with him, a crime that contributed to his son's financial ruin. The first sequence shows his

carnival-inspired wedding ceremony at the beach, which is similar to the ceremony showed in *Blame it on Rio*, with the presence of a “macumba lady” and guests wearing carnival costumes. The bride is a much younger, good-looking Brazilian woman. Walter is informed about the wedding by a postcard and is appalled by the age gap between his father and step-mother: “How old is that girl? Don’t they have laws in Brazil? Don’t they have any police?”. It is interesting to notice that, instead of asking why such a young girl would marry an old man, he blames Brazilian law for allowing them to get married. When it comes to Brazil, questions of morality seem to be superfluous, possibly because Brazilians are believed to have lower moral standards. That such a young woman gets involved with an older man does not seem to shock Walter; what shocks him is the fact that there is not a law prohibiting this scandalous relationship, or prohibiting his outlaw father to live there on dirty money (in *Kickboxer 3*, there is also no law prohibiting Lane to force women to work as prostitutes for him).

Once again, the choice of Rio de Janeiro as location is justified by its reputation as a place of pleasure, in opposition to New York (United States) as a place of work. Both cities have, however, a common characteristic that partially explains why they serve as location for a large number of films: they have particular buildings and landmarks that are easily identified by audiences, e.g. the Empire State Building in New York and the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio. Especially in mainstream productions, efforts are made to make the identification of locations and grasping the story line easier for as many audiences as possible - viewers all around the globe with the most diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

Although *Next Stop Wonderland* was filmed in Boston, Brazil is represented in the film by Brazilian researcher André da Silva, one of Erin’s love interests, and music - the soundtrack is a collection of bossa nova songs. The protagonist Erin is a melancholic nurse in her late twenties who searches for a new love after being abandoned by her long-time boyfriend. Before finally meeting Alan, her soul mate, she goes through disastrous dates and considers going to Brazil with André. Her moments of both hope and melancholy are accompanied by bossa nova songs, sometimes with lyrics in Portuguese, sometimes in English. Erin meets André at the hospital: he contracted malaria in South America and she is one of the nurses taking care of him. Despite of his health condition, he immediately starts to flirt with Erin and to sing bossa nova for her. They go on a date together and, although they only have known each other for a couple of hours, André invites her to go to Brazil with him. He wants to leave the United States as soon

as possible because he can no longer cope with American mentality: people in America only study and work all the time, while Brazilian people always find time to enjoy the beach and take long walks with someone they love. It is no coincidence that he and Erin met at her workplace, and that he tries to conquer her with the attractive argument that there is much more to life than just work. André's attempts to seduce Erin constitute one of the events that break the equilibrium of the narrative, and his return to Brazil - without Erin - is one of the preconditions for the restoration of this equilibrium.

Erin is, at first, attracted to André's passionate attitude and by the perspective of having a more relaxed lifestyle, but she soon returns to reason and fascination becomes indignation: "You are joking. We are strangers!" But as a good stereotypical Latin lover, André is being serious: in his homeland, a couple of hours is enough time to fall in love and to start making plans with the loved one. Moreover, kissing in the first date is not a taboo for Brazilians, as Erin soon finds out. In her loneliness, Erin is extremely flattered by André's sudden passion, but since her capacity to act "Brazilian" is limited to her music taste, her reason-oriented American personality cannot accept that a relationship that started in a hospital room develops so quickly. While she keeps telling André that he is crazy, he makes plans to spend his whole life with her, makes travel arrangements so she can fly with him to São Paulo, gives her flowers and sings bossa nova (any similarities with Toninho from *Woman on Top* are certainly not a coincidence). On the way to the airport, where André is waiting for her, she meets Alan, who is the opposite of her Latin lover - responsible, serious, reasonable. In the plane, André does not have time to resent Erin's absence: he is too busy flirting with the woman sitting next to him. His attitude indicates a certain weakness of character and disregard for social conventions, characteristics associated to other Brazilian characters in films like *The Money Pit* (young woman marries much older man) and *Wild Orchid* (couples have sex in public places).

Bossa nova and Latin lover André are the factors that establish a fragile yet significant connection between the United States and Brazil. Images of Brazil are not shown in any moment, but the feeling of a distant land where love is easily found and life is lived as in a fairy tale are present throughout the 96 minutes of the film. The songs that follow Erin in her frustration do not evoke melancholy, but rather hope, suggesting a more relaxed and undramatic way to deal with misfortunes. This positive attitude can be seen in André's behavior. When he first met Erin, he had just been diagnosed with malaria, but the diagnose did not make

him upset or stopped him from being charming. Erin, on the other hand, had been unable to smile since the separation from her boyfriend, and was more sarcastic and bitter than the usual. André was the personification of a country whose music she loved - he was funny, passionate, impulsive and light-hearted. He represented the promise of a lost paradise that has been present since the first minutes of the film. For a moment Erin believed that this lost paradise where love was true and uncomplicated was outside of Boston, that she would have to cross the border with André in order to achieve it - but she was wrong. The paradise about which her favorite bossa nova artists sang was not a distant, tropical promise, but a reality she could experience in her hometown. After turning Erin's world upside down with his impulsive and passionate ways, André brings equilibrium back to the narrative by returning to Brazil, where he could continue to be a flirting, charming Latin lover and to sing bossa nova to his love interests.

The main idea behind the films previously analyzed is that Brazil has a kind of "magic" atmosphere capable of influencing the behavior of the most conservative people, especially regarding their sexuality. *Blame it on Rio* and *Wild Orchid* illustrate this stereotype quite well. Another preconception present in some of the films is the disregard of Brazilian people for social norms and the law. In *The Money Pit*, a Brazilian woman marries an American thief who is old enough to be her father, without showing any signs of concern regarding social conventions - their wedding is attended by several cheerful guests and celebrated with fireworks, indicating that both the age gap and the origin of the man's fortune are not an issue in Brazil. In *Next Stop Wonderland*, André makes a mistake by ignoring the "laws of dating" in American territory. He not only kisses Erin on their first date, but also invites her to go to Brazil with him and plans their whole life together. It is unlikely that such impulsive and unreasonable behavior be rewarded in a narrative of American popular culture, known for its conservative character. Only those who follow the rules are rewarded (in the last scene of *The Money Pit*, Walther's father buys a house in Brazil from the same woman who sold the ruined house in New York to his son, suggesting that he will be punished for his actions).

Although Erin at first considers the idea of going to Brazil with André, she soon enough recognizes that this kind of impulsive behavior is not consistent with her characteristics. The same kind of "temporary insanity" caused by close contact with Brazilian culture is experienced by Matthew (*Blame it on Rio*), who grows increasingly tired of the troubles caused by Rio de Janeiro's libertine atmosphere and cannot wait to return to São Paulo. The city has transformed him into a

man he does not recognize, a man who easily succumbs to the temptations of the flesh. A similar transformation, however, is welcomed by the protagonist of *Wild Orchid*, who also sees her sexual behavior change in Rio de Janeiro. All in all, one can argue that Latin lovers - either represented by characters like André or by places like Rio - play a significant role in American productions, adding some spice to the bland dish of mainstream cinema.

A film with the short but meaningful name *Rio* completes the film analysis in this category, showing that the formula of Latin lovers can also be used to sell entertainment for children. *Rio* is colorful, musical, and it offers the complete package for viewers searching for a escape from boredom: love, crime, danger, and nature. The semantic structure is simple and establishes clear distinctions between the topographic/semantic spaces Brazil and United States. The plot of *Rio* eliminates any possibilities for the emergence of symbolic gray areas, and it refrains from providing historical and social background and from questioning the status quo - a film about the trafficking of exotic animals from the Third to the First World could be an appropriate platform to discuss animal rights and the plundering of natural resources in developing countries. Mainstream narratives tend to avoid questioning the status quo and discussing controversial issues, therefore it is not surprising that most of the films discussed in this chapter fail to establish a connection with real-life problems and situations. This pattern can also be observed in *Lambada*. It is understandable that *Rio* deals with serious issues such as poverty, criminality and animal trafficking lightly as it is an animation film made not only but especially for children. Therefore it must make an effort to be easily graspable and uncomplicated, and this effort has resulted in a diversified parade of stereotypes that assigns this film a prominent position in the analysis.

The main characters of *Rio* are two parrots, Blu and Jewel, who are brought together in order to reproduce and save their species. Blu lives in a small town in Minnesota with his owner, book shop owner Linda. Taken to the United States as a baby by smugglers, Blu was found and adopted by Linda in a cold, snowy winter day. Already in one of the first scenes Linda assumes her heroic role, promising Blu to take care of him. She not only saves the bird from certain death but also humanizes him, treating him more like a protective mother than a pet owner. Although we must take into account that *Rio* is a production intended for children, the relationship between Linda and Blu is, even for a children's film, awkward. Linda has no social life of her own; when she is not in the book shop, she is taking care of Blu, forcing him to take vitamins, serving him hot

chocolate, and abdicating of trips and holidays in order to make him company. Linda and Blu's well-organized and predictable routine is shattered by the arrival of Túlio, a Brazilian scientist who claims that Blu, as the last male specimen of his species, must go to Brazil to mate with Jewel, the last female. Túlio's visit is the first contact of Linda and Blu with another world full of promises, dangers, and adventures. Túlio's character and attitude establish an immediate contrast with Linda's shy and introverted nature: he is clumsy, talkative and enthusiastic, and he succeeds in convincing Linda to take Blu to Brazil not by presenting his best arguments, but by being insistent and charming.

Linda and Blu's safe and predictable routine ends when they dare to cross the border to the opposite topographic/semantic space. Although *Rio* is actually Blu's homeland, he has spent most of his life in Minnesota and has consequently adapted his characteristics accordingly; he has merged into a space characterized by rationality, order and control. In the process, Blu has repressed his instincts: although he is a healthy bird, he is not able to fly. The plot of *Rio* focuses on the experiences that Blu must go through in order to free himself from the rules and conventions imposed upon him in order to be able to follow his instincts and learn to love and fly. If we should compare Blu to one of the characters analyzed in this section, we could argue that he and Emily (*Wild Orchid*) go through similar transformations - before they can act according to their instincts, they must remove several layers of moral restraints, social conventions and other instruments of repression. However, this metamorphosis can only take place in a special environment, which is provided, in both cases, by the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Already upon his arrival in Rio de Janeiro, while Túlio drives with him and Linda along Copacabana, Blu gets acquainted with two male birds, Nico and Pedro, who are exactly his opposite: extroverted, charming, and smart. Nico and Pedro let Blu know that it is carnival, the best time to flirt, fall in love and have fun. From this scene on, the theme of carnival dominates the plot. Túlio's co-worker, Dr. Barbosa, is seen in Copacabana wearing a tiny two-piece costume, suggesting that not even serious scientists are able to resist the call of samba. If adapting to Rio would already be a difficult task in normal conditions, the fact that the city is basically immersed in chaos during carnival makes this task even more challenging. Adapting to the new circumstances, however, is not the intention of Linda and Blu, who plan to return home as soon as their job is done.

Linda and Blu ignore at first the widespread myth that in Rio absolutely

everything is possible, but they soon realize that things in Rio rarely go according to plan. Because the security guard of the research center is more concerned about dancing samba than taking care of the birds, Blu and Jewel get stolen and end up in the hands of an unscrupulous smuggler. The thief is a dark-skinned child called Fernando, who is orphan and homeless. Like street urchin Marcus (*Kickboxer 3*), Fernando has resorted to stealing out of despair, driven by the lack of alternatives and perspectives. If *Rio* were a dramatic film intended for an adult audience, Fernando's story would be a great opportunity to lend realism and dramatic depth to the plot - or, to use Debord's terms, to go beyond the surface of spectacle and dive into history and Brazilian social reality. As an animation film for young viewers, *Rio* opts for staying on the surface and assigning Fernando a secondary role in the plot. His function is to help Linda and Túlio to find the birds he has stolen before the smuggler takes them out of Rio.

Although it is laudable that the writers of *Rio* have included a less glamorous aspect of the city in the plot, the juxtaposition of Fernando's drama with the negligence of the adults around him and the general disinterest of the Cariocas⁴ for anything that is not related to carnival or football suggest that Fernando cannot hope for a better future. He will probably grow up to be a criminal like his boss Marcel. For Marcel, Fernando has the necessary qualities to follow in his footsteps. The film transmits the idea that criminality is a natural choice for many Brazilians, since apparently there is no way out of poverty and the slum - unless, like in *Kickboxer 3*, a benevolent foreigner decides to change the lives of the poor and neglected. *Rio* does not want to waste any time with social critique and uses the slum only as an exotic location for the desperate search of Linda and Túlio for the stolen birds.

While Fernando guides Linda and Túlio through the narrow, labyrinthine streets of the slum, Blu and Jewel look for shelter and help in the jungle. There they meet a friendly toucan, Rafael, who promises to take them to Luiz, a bulldog who has the necessary tools to cut the foot chains that keep them attached to each other. Rafael is a charmer, a "Don Juan" among the birds, versed in the art of love and flirtation. He is the one who takes Blu out of his emotional inertia and teaches him how to get closer to Jewel and win her heart. Because Blu is still unable to fly, their journey to Luiz's garage is long, adventurous and dangerous. Blu and Jewel are chased by mean bird Nigel, who is one of Marcel's accomplices,

⁴Cariocas are inhabitants of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

and by sneaky monkeys. The monkeys of *Rio* are greedy, unmoral creatures only interested in stealing valuables from tourists and saving their skins from Nigel's tyranny. The monkeys surprise Blu, Jewel and their friends during a "bird party" where Blu starts to get in touch with his natural instincts, moving his body involuntarily to the sound of music.

Despite the help from bulldog Luiz and the birds, Blu and Jewel get caught again and are taken by Marcel and his accomplices to the airport. Because the streets are closed for the carnival parade, the malefactors disguise their vehicle as an allegorical car and join the parade. Hoping to find Blu and Jewel, Túlio and Linda follow the smugglers wearing bird costumes, and in the confusion Linda ends up on top of an allegorical car, being asked by the director to "shake her tushi". To which she replies: "But we don't shake our tushies in Minnesota!". Linda is not willing to change her beliefs and characteristics in order to fit in the semantic/topographic space she is temporarily occupying. Even though she is wearing a carnival costume and being mistaken with an authentic Brazilian samba dancer, the change is only superficial: she is still a shy, introverted and prudish book shop owner from Minnesota who has ended up in a wild carnival parade by chance. If Blu were not a fundamental piece of her world, she would already have undone the border transgression that gave origin to the inconsistency. Until the last minute of the film, Blu's behavior indicates that it is not possible for him to change his characteristics in order to feel like home and survive in a chaotic place like Rio. He is too different from the other birds; he is not only unable to fly, but he also cannot reason, dance or have fun like his friends do. He even goes so far as admitting that he hates samba because all songs sound exactly the same. It is only in the last moments of the film that Blu manages to free himself from the burden of being an overtly rational, humanized bird and, following his heart and his instincts, learns to flap his wings and fly.

Blu's journey into becoming a more passionate, instinct-ridden bird is enough to classify *Rio* under the category *Latin Lovers*, but many mature viewers were certainly disappointed about the fact that Linda and Túlio's relationship did not develop into a romantic liaison. Once again, one must remember that *Rio* is a comedy targeted at young viewers, and it is not surprising that the writers have decided to focus on a love story between birds. Nevertheless, a number of conservative parents in the United States have expressed discontentment with erotic references in *Rio* in online platforms [National Catholic Register, 2011]. If on the one hand the disapproval of the risqué humor and colorful language used

in *Rio* seems exaggerated, on the other hand the commercial success of the film in the United States and Europe indicates that the fascination exercised by Rio de Janeiro and everything the city represents has overcome barriers of age to reach young viewers who are still in the process of building their picture of the world. Films like *Rio* introduce them to the discourses that they will find again later in cultural texts made for adult audiences, texts that focus explicitly on sexual freedom and sensuality as essential elements of particular cultures, including the Brazilian. By associating sex with the Other, the own culture remains pure. If the writers of *Rio* had decided to take Jewel and some of Rio's eroticism and chaos to Minnesota, there would have been much more criticism. It is unclear, in the last scene of *Rio*, if the birds stay in Brazil, but one can guess that Blu returns home with Linda after giving his contribution to the perpetuation of his species, thus reestablishing the equilibrium of this mainstream narrative.

3.2 Heroes and Bandits

Films filed under this category center their narrative on “heroes” who travel from the United States to Brazil in order to accomplish a particular mission. This kind of narrative follows the model of American productions set in Africa, where a “hero” from a developed country is transferred to a country ruled by chaos, poverty and injustice in order to help the less fortunate to escape their tragic fate - a transgression that eventually has deadly consequences and cannot be undone, like for example in *The Constant Gardener* (Fernando Meirelles 2005, UK/Germany) and *Blood Diamond* (Edward Zwick 2007, USA). The formula of “white men saving the poor and uncivilized from violence and exploitation” is a classic motive in Western cinema, allowing filmmakers to explore two elements that are very popular and attractive for audiences: national pride and heroism. The American flag, for example, is a symbol present in a wide range of genre films made in the United States. Although the image of an American flag whirling in the wind can be justified by the plot, the overexposure of this image and its inclusion in films of genres as opposed as drama and comedy has at the same time trivialized its meaning and created a sort of resistance against what can be understood as an exaggerated attempt to promote American nationalism and sell it as a global good. The flag can be observed at least once in *The Incredible Hulk* and *Kickboxer 3*, which are analyzed in this section along with *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*.

In *Kickboxer 3*, American kick-boxer David Sloan and his trainer Xian go to Rio de Janeiro to take part in a competition. The explicit amazement of the visitors about the tropical atmosphere of the city is the first aspect that delineates the division between the world from which David and Xian come from and the former capital of Brazil. A question that arises is: why was Rio de Janeiro chosen as a location for the development of this story in particular? David's adversary is Argentinean Eric Martinez, so *Kickboxer 3* could have also been filmed in Argentina. It is unlikely, though, that David would have had the opportunity to exercise his heroism and sense of justice in the land of tango, known as one of the most "European" Latin American nations. Heroes willing to save oppressed citizens are much more needed in countries like Brazil, commonly associated in popular culture with lawlessness and corruption. The main fight won by Sloan was not that against Martinez in the arena, but against the exploitation of Third World women. With the help of Xian and of his inexhaustible muscles, Sloan manages to dismantle a prostitution network in Rio de Janeiro. The visualization of the development of events in *Kickboxer 3* helps to identify the film's semantic structure and significant sequences.

SEQUENCE PROTOCOL: *Kickboxer 3 - The Art of War* (Rick King 1992, USA)

SEQUENCE 1: LANE'S BROTHEL:

01'05: A young woman with a bloody face runs away from a man with a knife.

01'40: Lane greets the guests at his private brothel.

03'06: The girl gets caught and taken back to the mansion, where Lane shoots her in front of the other girls as a lesson.

04'21: Panorama of Rio de Janeiro's most famous landscape: the statue of Christ the Redeemer and the Sugarloaf Mountain. Samba in the background. Sloan and Xian talk in the airplane. Cut to the dead body of the young woman on the beach.

SEQUENCE 2: WELCOME TO RIO:

05'20: Images of the beach: surfers, women in bikinis. Sloan and Xian take a stroll on the beach, watch capoeira.

07'00: Sloan and Xian have lunch. Street urchin Marcus steals Sloan's camera and runs away. Sloan runs after him and gets the camera back.

09'47: Back to the restaurant. Sloan pays lunch to Marcus and his sister Isabella.

11'30: They go to the hotel and make an appointment for the next day.

13'05: Statue of Christ the Redeemer. Marcus and Isabella are back in the slum.

SEQUENCE 3: THE FIGHTERS:

14'16: The friends meet at the hotel and go to a charity event. Sloan prepares to fight and meets Brazilian kick-boxer Miguel Machado.

16'40: Sloan fights his first adversary and meets Argentinean rival Eric Martinez, who provokes him and beats Miguel down.

19'58: Lane, Martinez' manager, apologizes and invites Sloan to a party.

21'25: Marcus shows Sloan and Xian the slum and tells them his sad life story.

22'25: Sloan and Xian buy the sister a new dress.

SEQUENCE 4: THE WILD WEST:

22'56: Party at Lane's mansion. Music, games, dance.

25'00: Lane tells Sloan and Xian about his success and the opportunities in Rio and invites Sloan to become a business partner.

26'06: A man punches a woman in the face, Sloan intervenes and beats the guy down, then is complimented by Lane.

26'47: Sugarloaf Mountain at sunset. Isabella tells friends about the party. Two armed men kidnap Isabella.

27'40: Marcus asks Sloan for help, they go to the police station but are ignored.

29'50: Xian looks for a potential informant in a night club. Half-naked women dance. Prostitute Margarida gives him a clue.

32'10: Sloan and Xian interrogate a man at a samba school. They start a fight and get arrested.

SEQUENCE 5: HUNTING DOWN THE ENEMY:

36'47: At Lane's mansion, a doctor confirms that Isabella is a virgin and is therefore worth a lot of money in the prostitution business.

37'43: Lane pays the bail money and gets Sloan and Xian out of jail. He gives them a ride and tries to bribe Sloan to lose the fight.

42'10: Marcus, Sloan and Xian buy guns in the slum.

44'23: Lane negotiates Isabella's price with a partner. A police officer tells Sloan that Branco, Lane's partner, has seven security guards.

47'45: Before entering Branco's house, Sloan kills a guard in the garden.

49'00: Sloan asks the cook about Branco and kills two guards in the kitchen.

52'50: Body count: seven. Sloan finds Branco and his wife, who tells him that Lane has Isabella.

SEQUENCE 6: LANE'S TRAP:

54'17: Branco tells Lane about Sloan's actions.

55'30: Sloan and Xian arrive at Lane's mansion. Sloan kills a security guard.

57'26: Sloan threatens Lane. The friends are caught in a trap.

60'12: Sloan and Xian are held hostages at Lane's house. Lane submits Sloan to a torture-like training to weaken him and make him lose the fight against Martinez.

62'30: Lane watches Martinez training, makes bets and talks to Xian about his business.

65'14: Sloan is left in the middle of the sea and must swim back. The torture continues: he must ditch a deep hole with a shovel, then he is dragged by a motorboat through a rope.

70'10: Sloan and Xian are brought back to the hotel. Xian collects plants and snake poison at the jungle to make a healing potion for Sloan.

SEQUENCE 7: THE FINAL FIGHT:

72'48: Lane calculates the bets with his bodyguard and gets threatened by his partner Vargas, who wants his money back.

74'52: Sloan arrives at the crowded stadium. Isabella is watching. The fight against Martinez starts.

80'35: Lane tries to escape with Isabella. Sloan wins the fight.

81'40: Xian confronts Lane and his bodyguard and gets Isabella back. The men run away.

82'34: The friends are back at the hotel. Sloan and Xian pack to leave. Sloan tells Marcus and Isabella that they are going to pay for their studies. Isabella tells them about the other girls at Lane's brothel.

83'30: The friends go back to Lane's house and save the other girls. Lane blames Sloan for his ruin and tries to shoot him.

87'25: Marcus stabs Lane dead. The police officer cleans the knife and throws it away. Sloan and Xian say goodbye to Marcus and Isabella.

89'20: The police officer offers Sloan and Xian a ride to the airport.

Some of the scenes described above illustrate with accuracy the basic discourse upon which the filmic representation of Brazil is based. In the second sequence, when street urchin Marcus gives the camera back to Sloan, it is possible to glimpse the social abyss that separates the two characters: Marcus' answer to the kick-boxer's threat of turning him to the authorities is: "Next time I'll kill you". For Marcus, the struggle for survival outside of the law and social rules is a daily routine; for Sloan, this encounter is the first evidence that life in Rio has a different dynamic than his homeland. The rules of survival in the concrete jungle resemble those valid in the real jungle: they favor the survival of the strongest and fittest and conflicts are solved through force. Moreover, there are no authorities to offer protection or fair judgment, since the authorities that Xian and Sloan meet in Rio are either corrupt or negligent, suggesting that victims are helpless and must deal with problems on their own.

Sloan's heart is too pure to be contaminated by the individualism and indifference that seem to prevail among the people and authorities in Rio. His heroic moments are complemented by acts of charity, as exemplified in sequences two, where they offer Marcus and Isabella a meal, and three, where they buy a new dress for Isabella. Xian's and Sloan's disposition for charity gets even more evident when compared with the attitude of local characters such as the hostess of the charity event. Ironically, she gets visibly disgusted by the presence of Marcus and Isabella and instructs a waiter to feed them and get them out of the guests' view.

Isabella is a beautiful young woman, a fact not ignored by brothel owner Lane, but any possibility of a romantic connection between her and Sloan is suppressed by the language barrier and by Sloan's protector role – his concern for Isabella is not of a romantic but rather of a paternal nature. While the hierarchy in this relation is clear – Sloan has the power to change things, Isabella is a powerless victim of the circumstances –, an eventual romantic relation between both characters would require deeper transformations. One of them would be forced to merge into the opposing semantic/topographic space in order to make a relationship possible and thus reestablish the equilibrium of the narrative. Either Sloan would have to change his characteristics to adapt to Isabella's environment, or Isabella would be forced to go with Sloan to his homeland and change her

characteristics - learn English, etiquette, and rules of social conduct valid in the United States.

Sloan's objective, however, is not to merge into the topographic/semantic space "Brazil", but to change it; for that he is not supposed to mingle with the members of this space more than it is necessary to accomplish his mission and keep his role of protector and hero. The need of a "hero" like him in Rio de Janeiro, a city apparently characterized by lawlessness and the passivity of its authorities and population, is emphasized by two Brazilian characters who do not hide their indifference in relation to the fate of their fellow citizens. When Marcus and Sloan ask the police to help them find Isabella, all they get is conformity: that's life in Rio, the life of a street kid is worth nothing, says the police officer. And at the samba school, their interest for Isabella causes surprise: "Tell me about the girl, she's American? Then why do you care about what happens to her?". Subtlety is definitely not a quality of *Kickboxer 3*: the plot is simplistic and stereotypical and since the first minutes it is clear who is there to save and teach, and who is supposed to be saved and educated.

Although some audiences may perceive the plot of *Kickboxer 3* as verisimilar, it is questionable how close the story is to Brazil's social reality. What can be said with certainty is that most filmic narratives do refer to real-life situations in order to gain credibility, which is an important feature also for fiction works. The way this "reality" is presented, and which aspects of it are emphasized, depends on the medium where it is going to be transmitted, the production context and the target audience. Assuming that *Kickboxer 3* was produced taking into consideration the cultural knowledge and expectations of American and European audiences, it is understandable that the plot refers to aspects of Brazilian culture and society that are well-known among Western audiences. The city of Rio de Janeiro has been traditionally associated with beach culture, beautiful landscapes and carnival, but also with favelas (slums), urban violence and social inequalities. In 1993, the story of the Candelária massacre in Rio got headlines in newspapers around the world, confirming in a shocking way an image already rooted in the Western collective memory. On July 23 of that year, eight homeless children and youths were killed next to Candelária church by a group of policemen. The killing of innocent homeless children is the central theme of *Boca* (Zalman King and Walter Avancini 1994, USA/Brazil), which tells the story of an American female reporter who travels to Rio during carnival to investigate the murders. Rio de Janeiro is a dangerous place for poverty-stricken children - that is a fact confirmed by

statistics⁵ and can as such be used as a material basis for a fictional narrative.

Rio de Janeiro's largest and most populated slum, Favela da Rocinha, is the hiding place chosen by Bruce Banner (Hulk) to escape from the US military officials who want to misuse his powers. After a gamma ray experiment gone wrong and a fury explosion that sent his girlfriend - the daughter of a US General - to the hospital, Bruce hides at Rocinha in order to learn to control his power and to search for a cure to his contamination. The first 30 minutes of *The Incredible Hulk* show Bruce's struggle to survive in the primitive environment of a slum in Rio de Janeiro. Because the film insists to focus on the non-glamorous side of the city, it refrains from showing typical tourist images like the Sugarloaf Mountain and the statue of Christ the Redeemer. The first image of the city is an aerial view of Favela da Rocinha, accompanied by a subtitle that reveals the exact location and the sound of dogs barking and children screaming. In a dark, sparsely furnished apartment, Bruce tries to learn Portuguese by watching children programs on an old television, searching for words he does not understand in a Portuguese-English dictionary. His only companion is a dog; the apartment's atmosphere screams of poverty and decay. In an equally poor-looking training room, with dirty walls and broken windows, Bruce takes self-control classes by a Brazilian teacher, who tests Bruce's self-control by slapping him in the face. The teacher is not different from other Brazilian men depicted in the film: he is big, bald and dangerous-looking. As Bruce the scientist, Bruce would not have a chance against them. Only as Hulk he has the necessary strength and attitude to fight against the malicious Brazilians.

In order to make a living, Bruce works in a lemonade factory, where he is bullied by male co-workers. The factory, just like his apartment, is an uninviting place: it has poor lighting, mysterious fumes coming from all sides, and a precarious infra-structure. While fixing a broken machine, Bruce hurts his finger and some blood lands in a bottle, which ends up in the fridge of an American costumer and gives American authorities a clue regarding Bruce's location. It is interesting to notice that, while living in the slum, Bruce was able to escape all modern surveillance systems and remain anonymous, only being identified, like an animal, through a bodily fluid. In the slum, like in the jungle, he seems to be just another nameless "animal" struggling to survive.

⁵Between 1987 and 2001, nothing less than 3.937 children and teenagers died from firearm injuries in the city of Rio de Janeiro. To have an idea, in the same period 467 minors got killed in the conflicts between Israel and Palestine [Pegorim, 2007].

In his humble apartment, Bruce has built a small laboratory where, with the help of a virtual friend, he tries to find the cure for his poisoning. His experiment, however, is not successful. The US military follows Bruce's trail to the slum and hunts him in the labyrinthine streets of Rocinha. Bruce crosses sport grounds, climbs rooftops, and hides behind a bar before entering the factory, where he is followed by a bunch of angry male co-workers and by the US soldiers. His Brazilian co-workers are big, sweaty and blood-thirsty. Provoked both by the Brazilians and by the Americans, Bruce can no longer control his anger and becomes Hulk, acquiring the necessary strength to escape. When he wakes up the next day, he is wearing shreds and lost in the jungle in Guatemala, far away from Rio de Janeiro.

Although only the first 30 minutes of Hulk play in Brazil, the choice of Rio de Janeiro's most notorious slum to serve as hiding place for the character of Edward Norton deserves a more detailed analysis. With the whole world to choose from, the writers of *The Incredible Hulk* decided to send Bruce to a slum in Rio de Janeiro. Why? A possible explanation is the high level of anonymity that such a heavily populated urban conglomerate can offer. For a person who wants to hide from an enemy, an urban center like Rio de Janeiro or New York seems to be an obvious choice. In New York, however, Bruce would sooner or later fall under the surveillance system of modern Western society, unable to avoid all security cameras and to leave no vestiges of his existence behind. In a city like Rio de Janeiro, he has the extra advantage of being a foreigner, combined with the lack of surveillance mechanisms in one of the poorest areas of the city. For Bruce's enemies, seeking refuge in a Brazilian slum seems to be an absurd idea, since before his blood was found in a lemonade bottle it did not occur to anyone that he might be hiding in Rio de Janeiro. It did not occur to them that, in order to remain anonymous, a scientist like Bruce would choose to sacrifice his life standards, struggling to survive daily in a hostile environment, barely being able to speak the local language and to pay his bills. One can argue, therefore, that Bruce's decision to hide in a slum in Rio de Janeiro was smart and served his objectives well. To call this decision original would be, however, a mistake. Although Bruce is not a criminal in the strict sense of the word, *The Incredible Hulk* just follows the tradition of portraying Brazil as the perfect getaway for criminals, cheaters and other characters running away from a person, an institution or a situation - a tradition classified by Amâncio [2000, 33] under the category "Afonso Ribeiro", as explained previously.

There is yet another factor that justifies the choice of Favela da Rocinha as Bruce's hiding place: the fascination of foreign audiences for "favela movies". Having slums as location, this kind of film explores the aesthetic of poverty and violence, offering viewers a voyeuristic view of the lives of people living under the existence minimum and resorting to crime and various tricks to make ends meet. For Brazilian audiences, "favela movies" show an unpleasant but well-known reality and tend to glamorize violence. For foreign audiences, films like *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles 2003, Brazil/France) and *Elite Squad* (José Padilha 2007, Brazil/Netherlands/USA) portray a dimension of poverty unknown to viewers from developed countries and offer an interesting alternative to traditional Hollywood action movies - what also partially explains the success of a film like *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle 2008, UK). The slums of São Paulo were chosen as the scenario for the PC game *Max Payne 3*, which focuses on the quest for justice by a worn out American ex-cop in the underworld of São Paulo. The slums of Rio have been used as scenario for a number of video clips of popular American artists such as Michael Jackson (*They don't care about us*, 1996), Snoop Dogg featuring Pharrell (*Beautiful*, 2003) and Beyoncé featuring Alicia Keys (*Put it in a love song*, 2010). It is not mere coincidence that Favela da Rocinha is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Rio de Janeiro: every month approximately 3.500 foreign tourists, mostly from Europe and the United States, visit the famous slum [Maia, 2010]. Furthermore, the faces of poverty in developing countries and the people who inhabit the slums are exotic: mostly dark-skinned, the slums' residents portrayed in Brazilian favela movies confirm the widespread stereotype of how a "typical Brazilian" looks like.

City of God was the first favela movie to conquer foreign audiences, being nominated for the Oscar in four categories and winning several prizes in international competitions. The film opened the door for a spin-off series, *City of Men* (Paulo Morelli 2007, Brazil)⁶. *Elite Squad*, a film about the conflicts between the police and drug dealers in a slum in Rio de Janeiro, became notorious for extremely violent scenes and won the Golden Berlin Bear in 2008. In Brazil, the hype surrounding the film was so big that a sequel was made, what is rather rare in Brazilian cinema. Other favela movies that reached the German market, although without much commotion, were *Streets of Rio* (Alexander Pickl 2008, Germany) and *Last Stop 174* (Bruno Barreto 2008, Brazil). Genre films made in

⁶The series was not transmitted by German television but was made available for sale and rental on DVD.

Brazil, however, lack exoticism and fail to awaken the interest of international distributors. The romantic comedy *Se eu fosse você* (Daniel Filho 2006, Brazil), whose sequel was released in 2009, was a huge success in national theaters. The main characters, however, are played by actors of European descent, and the plot focuses on an upper-middle-class family - elements also found in Hollywood blockbusters. The competition with Hollywood films is probably the best explanation for the lack of interest for such productions, despite their high qualitative standards.

The portrayal of indigenous peoples also adds an exotic ingredient to genre films and can therefore be found in a number of mainstream productions. Likewise, the “good savages” represent easy victims to economic exploitation and villainy, being constantly in need of Western heroism. Native Brazilians are the main characters of *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*, which tells the story of a Brazilian indigenous princess who travels to the United States in order to gather support to stop the destruction of her homeland, the Amazon rainforest. The film attempts to hide a weak and predictable script behind a noble cause, but fails terribly. Among the films analyzed in this chapter, *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada* is one of the weakest in terms of plot and acting, if not the weakest. Although the film has a strong sensual factor, what would justify its inclusion in the category *Latin Lovers*, the qualities attributed to the main characters, who can be easily classified in two main categories - heroes and villains -, justify its inclusion in the same category as *Kickboxer 3*. Despite the obvious differences, both films do have one thing in common: American entrepreneurs are portrayed as arrogant, calculating people who do not hesitate to use others in order to reach their objectives. In *Kickboxer 3*, Franklin Lane makes fortune as a pimp, exploiting the bodies of Brazilian women for money; in *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*, an American corporation plans to destroy the home of a tribe in the Amazon to make money, while a rich American family hires Latinas to do the household, making clear that they are only servants who do not have a place in their family and society. The dialogues that express these ideas are so primitive and caricatural that, instead of sounding offensive, they sound ludicrous, making it impossible to draw any kind of social criticism out of them. They do, however, serve the objective of this analysis well: to identify the division of the represented world in two opposing semantic spaces and their respective characteristics.

The separation between the world inhabited by Anglo-American people and that inhabited by Latinos is emphasized by dialogues like this one between Jason,

a rebel who turns his back to his family to date Brazilian indigenous princess Nisa, and his mother Katherine. They have an argument when Jason and Nisa come back home from dancing and Katherine notices that Nisa is wearing one of her dresses:

KATHERINE: And we don't want you fraternizing with the hired help!

JASON: We went dancing, we didn't go to bed!

KATHERINE: Well, I should hope not. There's enough of those people in the world without you fathering any more.

JASON: Will you try to keep it down, she might hear you.

KATHERINE: I want her to hear me and I want her out of my dress!

JASON: About the dress...

KATHERINE: What about it? I hope you realize its a Christian Dior original and it cost me more than that maid makes in a year. So get her out of it!

Katherine sees Nisa's presence in her country as an intrusion that can only be justified if she, who actually "belongs" to that country and "deserves" to live in it, can take advantage of her in some way. Nisa is allowed to stay as long as she provides Katherine with cheap labor. The interaction between the different worlds represented by the women does not go beyond this point. Nisa is not being forced to work by violence like Lane's (*Kickboxer 3*) and Hatcher's (*The Rundown*) exploitation victims, but she is still a victim of the circumstances for not possessing the necessary knowledge and savvy to get along in the concrete jungle. Once she has acquired this knowledge, she is no longer a victim but a smart manipulator who uses her best weapon - sex - to achieve her goal.

Brazil, represented here by the Amazon rainforest, is the first space presented to the viewer through an aerial view of the Amazon, accompanied by subtitles - "Brazil, Amazon - Mankind is destroying the rainforest" - and Brazilian music. The song to which the members of an indigenous tribe dance is, however, not indigenous at all. It is a typical Capoeira rhythm, which is a mixture of dance and martial arts invented by slaves brought from Africa in the state of Bahia in the 17th century. The soundtrack is not the only inconsistency in the representation of native Brazilians, what is not surprising taking into consideration that the script of *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada* was written in 10 days and the film was produced within 90 days [The Internet Movie Database (IMDb), 2010], leaving no time for research on the rituals, dances and customs of native Brazilians and

concerns about accuracy. The first scenes in the jungle are a torture for any viewer with basic knowledge on Brazilian indigenous peoples. The king, queen and princess of the tribe wear white cotton tunics, while other members wear a kind of clothing that resembles a Hawaiian sarong. Some play drums - an instrument that also does not fit in the picture - and others, including princess Nisa, dance sensually. A closer look at the ethnicity of the tribe members leaves no doubt that no effort was made to give this sequence some credibility. There is not a single actor or actress whose appearance would indicate they are descendants of a Latin American indigenous tribe. Some are slightly dark-skinned, in opposition to the “royal family” (Nisa and her parents), who could as well play such a family in an European context. Joa, the tribe’s shaman or “witch doctor”, is responsible for some of the most embarrassing moments in the film. Joa does not speak, just groans, and has the ability to heal and to hurt people by making them hold a little brown bag. Joa is bald, but has hairy chest and armpits. Native Brazilians have generally very little or no body hair.

The first crash between “Brazil” and “United States” happens during the tribe dance, which is interrupted by the arrival of trucks of the Petramco corporation, whose director, Benjamin Maxwell, requests the natives to leave the land and gives them a piece of American capitalist mentality: “It’s a shame to clear this jungle, it’s so pretty. But business is business.” By crossing the border from the United States to Brazil and disturbing the peace of Nisa’s tribe, Maxwell disrupts the equilibrium of the narrative and encourages Nisa to cross the border herself. On one side we have the pure and naive natives, who find themselves above Western materialism and just wish to live in peace in the jungle, with their exotic dances and rituals. On the other, we have the greedy, arrogant, environmental-unfriendly American capitalist as a modern version of the colonial master who subdued native peoples across centuries of colonial exploitation. Maxwell represents not only the United States, but the Western capitalist/colonialist/imperialist mentality as a whole. To survive in such an environment requires some malice and cleverness, and that is what Joa and Nisa are missing when they arrive in the United States with hopes to talk to Petramco’s chairman and convince him to stop destroying their forest. They bring a naive attitude and qualities that are valid in their homeland, but not in the United States. The inconsistency of their characteristics results in the failure of their original plan.

As a film with Brazilian characters, *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada* also has a superstitious touch: at the company’s lobby, Joa tries some tricks to attract

the chairman's attention, causing small explosions with a kind of magic stick, and gets arrested. Later on, he distracts the cops and magically manages to free himself from the handcuffs. Joa has crossed the border to a topographic/semantic space where he is not likely to find any understanding, and he is not willing to change his exotic ways in order to adapt. Nisa, on the other hand, is ready to play the game according to the rules of this new space, as long as she gets a chance to transmit her message. For that, she accepts the roles that women like her - Latina, poor and lacking formal education - traditionally play in American popular culture: maid and prostitute, to be used respectively by rich housewives and their unfaithful men.

Nisa finds work at the mansion of Katherine and Bradley Anderson through Carmen, a Mexican maid who finds her lost in a park. Katherine is a snob, prejudiced upper-class housewife who is not able to differentiate Mexicans from Brazilians and cannot accept his son's passion for dance. Jason sleeps all day and dances all night, usually with his girlfriend Ashley, who, as the other American women in the film, do not engage in sexual activity: she and Jason do not even kiss. But Nisa and Carmen, the hot-blooded Latinas, do. In her first night at the mansion, Nisa is surprised by Jason while dancing sensually in front of the mirror and does not show any sign of shame (Fig. 3.5); he then takes her out to dance. Nisa teaches him to dance lambada, adding that the dance was forbidden in Brazil for being too sexy - what is, in reality, not true.

Back at the mansion, Jason's parents decide it is time for a serious talk and insist that he should not get involved with the maid because she is "different". For the Andersons, Latinas are only good for cleaning and cooking. Hurt by the conversation, Nisa runs away and ends up at the red light district of Los Angeles, where she quickly finds work as a dancer, becoming the main attraction of a night club: "Nisa - The Queen of the Jungle". Her Brazilian nationality helps her to get the job, because her boss is convinced that "all Brazilians can dance". Just like the Andersons, club owner Mickey cannot resist the temptation to use Nisa for her own profit. Jason seems to be an exception in this space where using the weaker for one's own gain is a common, socially accepted practice, and as an exception to this rule he can be considered a hero.

Jason and Joa eventually rescue Nisa from the club and, after being thrown out and labeled as barbarians by Jason's parents, the trio seeks refuge at Carmen's house, where they are greeted with "mi casa es su casa". As a Latina, Carmen stands out in the film not only because of her sexual openness, but also because



Figure 3.5: Nisa (Laura Herring) dances sensually in front of the mirror while Jason watches. Source: *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*.

of her anti-capitalist mentality, which becomes even more evident when compared to Katherine's attitude. While Katherine seems to be very attached to social and cultural hierarchies, Carmen opens her house not only to her "equals" (Latinos like Nisa and Joa), but also to Jason, who has a higher social status. In Carmen's world, however, there are no hierarchies. The maid immediately starts to hit on Joa, with whom she spends the night, despite the fact that they do not understand a word of what each other says. While Carmen and Joa share a couch in the living room, Jason and Nisa have sex in the bedroom. Reinforcing the stereotype that Latinos have a higher sex drive than white people, as well as lower moral standards, the film refrains from portraying sexual encounters between Anglo-American characters. As mentioned previously, Jason and his previous girlfriend, Ashley, do not even kiss - on the other hand, he and Nisa get intimate quite quickly, first through dance and then through sex. At no moment Nisa tries to

slow him down or to suggest that they should wait until they get to know each other better - she is, as the audience expects her to be, a hot-blooded woman who does not repress her desires, and Carmen is not different. In the world created by *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*, Latinas cannot only dance wonderfully and sensually but they can also have sex with whom they want, when they want - and not feel guilty about it.

More sexy scenes with Jason and Nisa follow, showing their rehearsal for a dancing competition. If they win, they will appear on national television and have the opportunity to tell the truth about Petramco corporation and save the Amazon. They win and, in order to avoid bad publicity, Maxwell kidnaps Nisa. Proving that he is not only a cold and calculating capitalist but also a pervert, he forces her to dance lambada for him (Fig. 3.6). Distracted by her sexy moves, he fails to notice Jason's arrival, who manages to free her and take her to the club, where they do their last dance and tell the audience to boycott Petramco. The restoration of the narrative's equilibrium was achieved through the defeat of the villains and the successful efforts to save the Amazon. The happy end was made possible mainly by Nisa's good looks. She was not especially clever or intelligent, and did not have the capacity to impose herself and convince others of her ideas. But her beauty helped her to get jobs and to win Jason's support, a man who served as a shield between her fragile self and a world full of malice, greed and prejudice. Nisa turns from victim to manipulator using her appearance to win the sympathy of men able to guide and protect her during her journey. Despite her role as a heroin, Nisa is not different from other Brazilian women in the films analyzed in this section: she is also powerless and dependent on men. However, she has no fear and no inhibition to use her best weapon - a desirable body - to get her message across.

The films analyzed have yet other aspects in common. In all of them, the world is divided in two topographic/semantic spaces: Brazil and the United States. Each space has particular characteristics: Brazil is defined by poverty and lawlessness, while America has strict rules and is inhabited by both heroes and villains; the latter, however, are eventually punished or forced to leave because their behavior is not consistent with the rules. While America is the source of both threat (villains) and hope (heroes), of characters moved either by greed or by benevolence, Brazil is characterized by a hopelessness waiting to be challenged by American heroes attracted to this space by the promise of anonymity (*Hulk*), sex (*The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*) or by a thirst for justice (*Kickboxer 3*). Despite different



Figure 3.6: Nisa is forced by her kidnapper to dance lambada. Source: *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*.

production years, companies and story lines, the films are very similar when it comes to the representation of Brazil: in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro or the Amazon, the Brazil presented by these films is poor, primitive and exotic. Combined with an extra dose of adrenaline, these aspects will also be brought to discussion in the next section.

3.3 Thrill Seekers

Thrill and adventure are, next to poverty and sensuality, frequently associated with Brazil in texts of popular culture. Foreign characters travel to Brazil in search of adventure and excitement and often experience more adrenaline-loaded moments than expected. Moreover, as the films analyzed in this section show, the thrill they look for is usually accompanied by great danger. This danger is commonly posed by nature (films like *Anaconda* and *The Relic* explore this aspect) or by people. Brazilians often become dangerous when they resort to crime in order to make a living. Criminal acts in films portraying Brazil usually happen in

the context of hopelessness and poverty, which was the case of the young thief Marcus, who is saved from a life of crime by David Sloan in *Kickboxer 3*. The motivation for crime in *Turistas*, however, is of another nature. Dr. Zamora, a Brazilian doctor who helps children in the slums, kills and steals the organs of foreign tourists for his ideals, not for money. As he explains to one of his victims, the organs will save the lives of poor Brazilians who, unlike American or European patients, are unable to pay thousands of dollars for a kidney. Stealing the organs of rich, spoiled American tourists is a way to revenge the exploitation of Brazilian people and the plunder of the country's natural resources by developed nations over the years.

Turistas is, among the analyzed films in this category (*The Rundown*, *Anaconda*, and *The Relic*), the most representative example because it explores both the natural and the human danger and includes yet other aspects worth of analysis: the representation of Brazilian women in American mainstream cinema and a number of ethnocentric ideas regarding Brazilian society and people, which are mostly expressed by the character of American tourist Alex, who is traveling across Brazil with his sister Bea and friend Amy. After a bus accident they meet British travelers Finn and Liam and Australian adventurer Pru. The group of English-speaking young tourists has a pleasant time at a paradisiacal beach until they become the target of Zamora's gang. The sequence protocol emphasizes the film structure, which is typical of teen slasher thrillers - other examples of the genre are *Hostel* (Eli Roth 2005, USA) and *Wolf Creek* (Greg McLean 2005, Australia) - and provides enough material for the analysis, which will focus on three previously mentioned aspects: danger, sensuality, and social stereotypes.

SEQUENCE PROTOCOL: *Turistas* (John Stockwell 2006, USA)

SEQUENCE 1: ACCIDENT:

01'20: Opening credits. Samba in the background, images of women in bikinis at the beach, Christ the Redeemer, carnival scenes. Cut to fragments of newspapers and government documents concerning "violent crimes" and "disappearance of American tourists", mixed with images of slums and poverty.

02'20: A bus with tourists and locals travels in a road in the middle of the jungle. Focus on the careless driver, a woman breastfeeding a baby, and a sleepy British tourist (Liam).

- 03'10: Alex complains about the driver and tells Bea he is worried for being so far from a hospital “with doctors who operate instead of amputate”.
- 03'53: A girl in a bikini gets up to check the luggage compartment above Finn’s seat, who gets visibly excited about the approximation.
- 05'00: The bus driver almost runs over a group of people on the road and causes an accident. The passengers manage to get out through the windows seconds before the bus falls down a cliff.
- 06'27: The foreign tourists get acquainted while rescuing the bags from the destroyed bus.
- 07'20: Mad at the driver because of the accident, Alex yells at him and tells him he should pick bananas instead of driving a bus. He meets Australian tourist Pru. Liam and Finn realize they were traveling in the wrong bus.
- 09'20: While the passengers wait for the next bus on the roadside, Bea gets in trouble for taking a picture of a girl. Pru calms down the girl’s father and explains that there is hostility against foreign tourists because of stories published in sensationalist newspapers about children being kidnapped by foreigners for their organs.

SEQUENCE 2: PARADISE:

- 11'58: After following a path in the jungle the tourists arrive at a small oasis, a bar at the beach. Amy wants to swim topless but Alex convinces her to wear a T-shirt.
- 14'30: Pru and Alex order drinks at the bar and meet the accomplice of Dr. Zamora, Camila. Alex stays true to his principles and drinks only a coke without ice, afraid the water may cause dysentery.
- 15'05: The tourists meet a couple from Sweden who is camping at the beach. They decide not to take the next bus and do the same.
- 16'35: In a slum, Dr. Zamora examines a child and gets a call from Camila. She tells him about the arrival of more “gringos” (foreigners).
- 17'10: Tourists and locals play football at the beach. Pru is approached by Zamora’s nephew Kiko, who claims he wants to practice his English.
- 19'25: In a small, sparsely furnished room, two of Dr. Zamora’s accomplices - Jaburu and a drugged woman - watch TV. Dr. Zamora arrives and forces them to do another job for him, despite protests.

- 20'00: Party at the beach. Dancing, drinking and flirting to the sound of samba-rock. Aroléia, the waitress, insinuates herself to Finn and kisses him. They go to a room and have sex. After that, to Finn's disappointment, Aroléia takes money from his purse.
- 24'55: On the dance floor, Camila kisses Liam. The Swedish couple is passed out. From the corner of the eye Alex sees Jaburu watching the party from a distance. Pru gets dizzy and the image gets blurry.

SEQUENCE 3: HELL:

- 26'08: Sunrise at the beach. The tourists lay on the sand, Liam still holds a caipirinha glass. Alex wakes up Bea and tells her they got robbed.
- 27'40: With hands and feet tied, the Swedish travelers are carried as pigs through the jungle by four of Zamora's accomplices. Three of them are black. While they smoke a pipe, the couple tries to escape. The woman manages to escape but dies after falling from a cliff.
- 30'05: Alex, Liam, Finn, Pru, Bea and Amy try without success to get help in a village nearby. Alex finds the motorcycle that belonged to the Swedish tourist and a boy wearing his cap. They chase the boy and Liam throws a stone at the boy's head. They get in a fight with the locals and are rescued by Kiko.
- 34'00: Kiko takes the group to his house and tells them that there is no police station in the area and that they must leave the village before the father of the hurt boy finds them. He promises to bring them in safety to his uncle's house.
- 37'00: Overview of a dense jungle. The group walks through the jungle and discusses the events that preceded the incident.
- 38'06: Outside of a torn down bar, Zamora's gang looks at pictures of the tourists on the stolen cell phones and plans the next move. Zamora buys a snack from a kid, then kills one of his accomplices by sticking a wood spit in his eye as a lesson.
- 40'45: Kiko and the tourists jump a waterfall and swim in an underwater cave complex. Despite the bad situation they are in, they are delighted by the experience.
- 45'00: Kiko tells Bea he has never had foreigner friends before and shows the first signs of regret. He suggests they return to the village, but the tourists are tired and decide to walk further to Zamora's house.

47'00: The group jumps another waterfall, Kiko hurts his head and gets unconscious. They carry him to the house.

SEQUENCE 4: THE BUTCHER'S HOUSE:

48'30: The group arrives at the house in the middle of the jungle. They search the house for medical supplies and find out it is equipped with security cameras, a library, food, medicines and first aid supplies. They close Kiko's wound with a stapler and take him to bed.

53'00: Alex finds foreign passports in a drawer and inspects the house.

54'50: The group eats dinner and shares impressions about the house.

56'05: While the others sleep, Alex watches the security cameras. The dogs start to bark loudly and Zamora's helicopter lands in front of the house. Kiko awakes and tries to convince Zamora to spare his friends.

59'00: One of Zamora's accomplices, the drug addicted girl, tells the tourists to run away. The situation gets tense and a member of the gang stabs Alex in the leg.

60'25: Amy awakes on a surgery table. Pru, Alex and Bea are kept captive in the dogs' cage. Zamora tells Amy and Finn, who is tied up on the table beside her, that stealing their organs is his way to revenge the exploitation of Brazil by rich nations.

64'15: Bea and Alex free themselves from the ropes using a Swiss knife. Zamora keeps talking about his mission and his hate for foreigners while taking out Amy's organs. Finn watches the procedure in terror.

67'15: Zamora catches one accomplice making out with a woman in the kitchen and they have an argument. The man goes to the dogs' cage to get another victim and is surprised by Alex, who attacks him with the knife. Alex, Pru and Bea escape. Liam returns to the house to rescue Finn.

71'45: Zamora finds the body of his accomplice by the cage and alerts the others. The fugitives are chased in the jungle by Jacaré. They hide. Finn and Liam get shot while trying to escape, Alex and Kiko run away.

SEQUENCE 5: THE SURVIVORS:

77'20: Kiko, Alex, Pru and Bea try to escape from Zamora and his men through the cave complex. They are chased by Zamora, Jaburu and Jacaré under the water. Kiko gets shot and dies.

- 84'30: The underwater chase continues. Bea loses her flashlight and is attacked by one of Zamora's men, but manages to kill him with his own weapon.
- 86'35: Jaburu and Zamora keep searching the survivors in the cave. Alex surprises Zamora and beats him up. Almost dead, Zamora tells Jaburu to kill the survivors but he turns against his boss and shoots him, letting the survivors escape.
- 89'50: The survivors meet a couple of children and get help and food from a family.
- 90'05: In a small airport, Alex and Bea get in a plane to Salvador. Alex overhears a conversation between a couple: she wanted to take the bus, he wanted to take the plane. He tells them: "Take the plane". The plane takes off. Inside the plane, he looks apprehensive through the window.

Alex' statements reflect his preconceptions about the country he is visiting against his will. After the accident, he tells the bus driver to pick up bananas instead of driving a bus - for Alex, working at the harvest of the popular Brazilian fruit seems to be the ideal job for non-educated people. When they order drinks at the beach bar, Alex insists that the drinks be served without ice, and although he does not mention the word dysentery, it is obvious that he fears the water might be contaminated. A similar scene can be found in *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu 2006, France/USA/Mexico): American tourists Susan and Richard Jones have a meal in a restaurant in Morocco and she prevents him from drinking cola with ice by dropping the ice cubes on the floor. In both examples the tourists want to taste some of the exoticism of the foreign country and to live an adventure but they are too attached to their first world standards to open themselves totally to the new experience, and that includes taking risks such as consuming non-bottled water. Alex makes another revealing comment while he and his friends search for help in a village after being robbed: "I've heard the police is worse than the criminals". If we draw a picture of Brazil based only on Alex' assumptions, we have a country where people are only good at banana picking, the water causes diseases and is not possible to trust anyone, not even the police.

The role of Brazilian women in the film does not contribute to improve this negative picture; on the contrary, it adds another item to the list "reasons why not to spend holidays in Brazil". Camila, the waitress, hides a cold, calculating

character behind a friendly façade. The warm, hospitable way she treats her customers is a well-planned strategy to ensure that they will stay at the beach long enough to be caught by Zamora's accomplices. The real intentions of prostitute Aroléia are just revealed after she seduces Liam. The whole seduction process takes only a couple of minutes - time enough for an exchange of looks between the two, followed by a kiss and then sex. Liam's enthusiasm about Aroléia's determination ("I love Brazil!") becomes disappointment when her friendly smile gives place to a bored expression and she takes money from his wallet ("I thought you liked me!"). Despite the friendly façade, Camila and Aroléia are not interested in mingling with the foreigners, but in taking advantage of them. They follow the same principle defended by Zamora, the doctor who steals organs from rich tourists to give them to poor fellow countrymen: foreigners must be punished for exploiting Brazil - they must pay either with money or with their lives.

The Robin Hood mentality behind the kidnapping and killing of foreign tourists is an aspect that differentiates *Turistas* from other teen slasher films where murder is motivated by trivial reasons (like in *Hostel*, where torture is presented as a hobby) or justified by the killer's mental insanity or search for personal revenge. Moreover, the idea to locate an organ trade network in a tropical paradise is bizarre and innovative. However, the differences between *Turistas* and other films of the genre stop here. The formula is well-known and often employed: young people in search of pleasure and adventure in an unknown territory end up facing fear and death. And then they have the urge to return to their homeland, which might not have much to offer in terms of adventure and excitement but is safe and predictable. The return to the initial space - to familiarity and safety - is a common solution used to restore the equilibrium of mainstream narratives, and it was the conclusion chosen by the writer of *Turistas*.

The protagonists of *The Rundown* do not share the same fate of Alex' friends, but also face several adventures and dangerous situations during their stay in the Amazon. "Retrieval expert" Beck is sent to Brazil on a special mission: to bring wannabe archaeologist Travis back to his father in Los Angeles. Once Beck crosses the border to the semantic/topographic space Brazil, the initial equilibrium of the narrative is disrupted; the plot is based on Beck's attempts to restore this equilibrium by returning Travis to his original space. Beck's adventure starts on the way to the town of Eldorado, where Travis was seen for the last time: the right wing of the small plane has been fixed with tape, the pilot almost lands on a herd of cattle. At the dusty small town of Eldorado, Beck finds out that

the local population is being exploited by American mine owner Hatcher, who is also interested in locating Travis because he knows the way to the ancient gold statue Gato do Diabo (devil's cat), which is worth more than his gold mine. Mariana, the leader of the local resistance group, wants to sell the statue in the black market and use the money to free her people from Hatcher's tyranny.

Beck and Travis get lost in the jungle while trying to escape from Hatcher's men and find out that the rules valid in their original space (the United States), as well as their characteristics, will not help them to survive in the jungle. Nature, represented in the film by the Amazon rainforest, is willful and unpredictable: those who ignore its particular rules must eventually deal with the consequences. Although Travis has been in Eldorado longer than Beck, he still has not merged into this space and therefore has not adapted and transformed his characteristics accordingly. He still misses the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure his well-being in such an unknown, dangerous environment. After getting trapped and attacked by wild monkeys (Fig. 3.7), they are made hostages by the rebels until Mariana comes to their rescue.



Figure 3.7: Beck (Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson) faces a great danger in the Amazon: wild monkeys. Source: *The Rundown*.

As a strong-willed woman, Mariana is an exception among the female characters previously analyzed in this chapter. In opposition to most Brazilian women portrayed in the films, Mariana does not act as a victim of the circumstances eager for some help and compassion: she runs a bar by herself, is not afraid of men or their guns, and she leads the rebels who want Hatcher out of Eldorado. She

has more courage than most male characters, and is also smarter: after finding the gold statue, she gives Beck and Travis a fruit that paralyzes their muscles and runs away with the long-searched statue. The sequence that shows the trio searching for Gato do Diabo could as well be in *Indiana Jones*: the statue was hidden in a cave behind a waterfall, there were inscriptions on stone indicating the way to it and the cave's structure collapsed soon after the trio managed to find their way out. The idea of an ancient gold statue hidden in the heart of the Amazon lacks any historical and anthropological basis, since the natives were not aware of the value and possible uses of gold until the Europeans arrived, and golden handicrafts are not one of their traditions. The possibility to create such stories and lend them credibility is one of the reasons that justify the choice of Amazon as a film location. The forest is large, full of secrets, and populated by people with mysterious habits and traditions. An archaeological finding such as Gato do Diabo can only be credible to audiences that get their knowledge of indigenous peoples solely from mainstream media.

As one would expect from a film that belongs to the mainstream and employs formulas and discourses that are well-established in Western collective memory, Mariana and the rebels only manage to defeat Hatcher's private army after Travis and Beck arrive. Although she is given some credit in the fight against Hatcher's tyranny, Beck and Travis are presented as the benevolent foreign heroes who risk their lives to free a group of people they have nothing to do with, and it is this lack of familiarity between the Americans and the people of Eldorado that makes their deeds even more praiseworthy. Mariana fights because she belongs to that people; Beck and Travis fight because of convictions. They are American heroes who feel they have the duty to help the oppressed, defenseless people of Eldorado. The awareness about the people's hopelessness and defenselessness generates different reactions among American characters: while Beck and Travis feel compassion and a sense of responsibility, Hatcher sees an opportunity for business and cheap labor - Third World countries have been a source of raw materials and cheap labor for developed countries for centuries, and "outsourcing" is no longer a trend but a rule in the global market. Hatcher is not only the main employer in Eldorado, but also the law: repeating the lawlessness stereotype, there is no police or any other kind of authority in Eldorado, except Hatcher and his army. In his imperialist mind, people should not only respect his laws but also feel grateful for his attempt to introduce them into the "modern world": he was the one who has put a roof over the heads and "a coin in the pocket" of those "barefoot indians". After justice

has been done and the people of Eldorado can enjoy freedom again, Beck and Travis return to the United States, thus restoring the equilibrium of the narrative and ensuring the happy end expected by the audiences.

Despite the rather caricatural representation of an imperialist mogul, Hatcher's views do find an echo in reality. Colonialism was based on the assumption that Europeans were superior to the original inhabitants of America, Africa, Asia and Australia and had therefore a natural right to take the land and subdue the people. Jesuit missionaries in the colonies believed they were doing the natives a favor by forcing them to abandon their faith and embrace Christianity. The globalization of economy was a further step towards the legal exploitation of natural and human resources in the former colonies of the world (Third World countries). *Turistas* borrows the anti-colonialist discourse to make the plot a bit more verisimilar, suggesting that the resentment of Third World people towards the First World might end in violence. It is as if Dr. Zamora's organ-stealing gang had decided to revenge the exploitation and abuse experienced by Brazilians in *Kickboxer 3* and *The Rundown*, two films that could have had a different ending if the exploited had taken action, instead of waiting for external help. The colonialist critique in *Turistas* is, however, deliberately superficial; unlike *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*, which actually tries to transmit a message and fails, the anti-colonialist approach in *Turistas* just serves to justify Zamora's actions and make the story more credible. *The Rundown* also does not try to send a message and avoids being over-critical towards the global economic system: it is only entertainment with a happy end and an unrealistic solution for an issue that is very real.

The jungle as a place of mystery and danger is the starting point of the thriller *Anaconda*, which follows a National Geographic team in search of a mysterious indigenous tribe, the "people of the mist", about which they plan to film a documentary. They embark on a boat journey through Amazonas river taking Brazilian boater Mateo as a guide. During a storm they rescue poacher Paul Sarone, who turns out to be a greater danger than the natural threats they face during the journey. At first the boat crew does not believe Sarone's stories about Anaconda, a giant snake that kills and eats people, despite the "signs" found throughout the forest: wooden statues of snakes, which are supposedly worshiped by indigenous peoples, and a barrier that divides the river in two. Ignoring the crew's claim that removing the barrier would disturb the ecological balance of the river, Sarone blows the barrier with dynamite. As a result of the explosion, the boat is invaded by snakes, causing panic among the film crew members. Unlike

them, Sarone knows the tricks to survive in the jungle and does not fear its creatures and mysteries; he is familiar with that environment and therefore has a knowledge that the National Geographic team was not able to acquire in years of anthropology studies and documentary making. University education and rules of civilization do not help the crew to find the tribe camp and get rid of Sarone - they only manage to reach these objectives after embracing the rules of the jungle, according to which only the strongest and smartest are able to survive.

Several American characters who adventure themselves in Brazil, for one or other reason, experience a return to primitivism - they must adapt their values and characteristics to those valid in Brazil in order to deal appropriately with new challenges and situations. Suddenly they realize that the ways to solve problems and disagreements in Brazil is very different to those they are used to. When certain characters experience an absence of authority, they fell free to express instincts that tend to be repressed or kept under control in Western societies. *Kickboxer 3* and *The Rundown* offered examples of American characters who found in Brazil the ideal environment to build businesses based on the exploitation of the weak. These can also be sexual instincts, as discussed in the analyses of *Wild Orchid* and *Blame it on Rio*. The survival instinct seems to bring the worst out of characters. In the last sequence of *Turistas*, Alex almost beats Zamora to death, stepping out of the role of victim to become perpetrator. Even a former priest like Sarone could not avoid the return to a primitive state. After years living in the jungle, Sarone no longer feels compassion or recognizes any social conventions. He is no longer a social animal, he is just an animal who takes the necessary measures to survive in a hostile environment - that these measures violate the most basic rules of social behavior does not seem to bother him. Like the Anaconda, Sarone is a predator with a violent nature. The boat crew is, in the beginning, still too attached to social rules and moral principles in order to understand how they are supposed to deal with a threat like Sarone. Calling the police or offering the best arguments will not work, so they must be smart, play tricks, and descend to Sarone's primitive level.

When Sarone takes over the boat and takes the crew hostage, they realize there is no authority they can ask for help: just like Beck and Travis (*The Rundown*), the team of Dr. Cale has to fight against the only "law" in the jungle - that of the strongest, who is, in this case, Sarone. The only Brazilian on the boat, Mateo, is of no help either - he is an accomplice of Sarone and the first victim of the Anaconda. In the film, the only characters who are "free of sin" are the natives

whose existence is not confirmed until the last minutes. Mateo, who should act as a guide, was a poacher and a swindler, and so was Sarone. The crew, at first peaceful and concentrated on the documentary, is also forced to abandon this peaceful position and to make use of violence to overcome both human (Sarone) and natural (Anaconda) threats. Once again, the viewer is offered a simplistic solution for a conflict: violence.

Sarone forces the crew to change the course of the boat and search for the Anaconda instead: he expects to sell the specimen for a large sum of money. The motivation of the characters is another aspect that reveals to which space they belong: Mateo and Sarone belong to the Amazon/Brazil, and their criminal and dishonest behavior is influenced by the lack of authority and strict laws in this primitive territory. Moreover, their territory is stricken by poverty, a characteristic that also fosters illegal activities such as poaching. The combination of lawlessness and lack of employment opportunities, combined with greed and a violent nature, result in characters like Sarone and Mateo. The American filmmakers, on the other hand, are not undertaking a journey in the jungle motivated by money, but by a much more respectable reason: the passion for science. Their superiority also lays on the fact that, while Sarone uses and even kills people to reach his objectives, they are there merely to portray and study people, without taking anything away from them.

Anaconda makes use of three main stereotypes to build a credible plot: 1. the jungle is inhabited by dangerous creatures and full of unpleasant surprises; 2. in the Brazilian jungle, like in the rest of the country, lawlessness is the rule; 3. Brazilians - living both in the city and in the jungle - are poor and willing to engage in illegal activities for money. Although Sarone is a former priest originally from America, he has become a “Brazilian” by incorporating their rules and mentality. He does not have anything in common with the film crew members, except for the language. He has no regard for animals or for his fellow men, whom he covers with monkey blood and uses as baits for the Anaconda. Sarone, however, underestimates the power of nature and gets killed and eaten by the snake he tried to catch.

The film crew survivors trap the Anaconda and set it on fire to escape - a violent death is always more thrilling than any solution reached through strategic thinking. Dr. Cale, who spends most of the time unconscious after being bitten by a poisonous beetle, wakes up to find out that both threats - human and natural - are dead. Now that primitivism and the law of the strongest have been overthrown,

science and reason - personified by Dr. Cale - can dictate the rules again. The death of the character who broke the equilibrium of the narrative marked the transition to a final state of equilibrium. To complete the mainstream idea of happy end, the crew finds the mysterious tribe and sails along the river at sunset. All in all, *Anaconda* reinforces the idea of lawlessness and of jungle as a dangerous place, and although Anacondas do exist in South America, they prey on aquatic animals, not humans.

The last film in this category also focuses on a deadly beast, but unlike the *Anaconda*, this one is totally fictional. Kothoga, a primeval monster from the Brazilian jungle, is exported to Chicago by an American anthropologist in *The Relic*. In the first sequence, Dr. Whitney is seen taking pictures of an indigenous ritual in Brazil. Natives dance and sing around a fire, which is the only source of light in the dark night. The darkness adds an extra dose of mystery to the ritual. Close-ups of a statue of Kothoga are shown several times; thanks to Dr. Whitney, this statue - and the Kothoga himself - will be transferred to the Museum of Natural History in Chicago. An old native woman makes a tea with leaves and Dr. Whitney drinks a cup of this mixture, which has an immediate effect on him: he has hallucinations and screams of fear, as a native woman with a painted face (representing the Kothoga) approaches him (Fig. 3.8). Visibly disturbed, Dr. Whitney reaches the harbor and embarks clandestinely on the next ship to Chicago. When the ship arrives in the United States, police is called: all crew members are dead, but there is no trace of Dr. Whitney.

In *The Relic*, the disequilibrium in the narrative is caused by not one, but two border crossings that generate two different but equally relevant events. The first crossing is undertaken by Dr. Whitney from his initial space (United States) to an opposing space (Brazil). Dr. Whitney takes the principle of merging into the opposing semantic space to the extreme by actually merging with a creature that belongs to that space. His transformation is the first remarkable event that shatters the equilibrium of the narrative. As a rule, when a character returns to his original space, the equilibrium of a narrative is restored. Dr. Whitney's return to Chicago, however, is the second event of the film, which completes the disruption of the equilibrium. This is due to the fact that Dr. Whitney has been transformed in decisive ways: he does not return with the same qualities he had when he left - as a researcher -, but he returns as a completely different entity. He has lost his humanity and his identity in Brazil, returning to America as a primeval monster that spreads panic and fear.



Figure 3.8: A native woman terrorizes Dr. Whitney. Source: *The Relic*.

Once again we have the story of a scientist that goes to Brazil in search of a thrill and ground-breaking anthropological findings and finds fear and death instead. Like the National Geographic team in *Anaconda*, Dr. Whitney is attracted by the danger and the mysteries of the jungle and its people, but despite his title and academic knowledge, he is not prepared to deal with the unknown threats he finds after crossing the border to Brazil. His accumulated knowledge is not of any help when it comes to natural dangers like the hallucinogenic tea and the Kothoga. In all films analysed in this section, Brazil is presented as an extremely dangerous place where both human and natural predators wait for the next prey. However, while the film crew survivors manage to leave this dangerous space taking only footage with them, Dr. Whitney exports the source of danger to his homeland - and the struggle of good American citizens to destroy this foreign danger is the main idea behind the plot. Although this assumption might go a bit too far, one could argue that the invasion of the Kothoga can be seen as a metaphor for the flow of illegal immigrants to the United States, and that the damage it causes in the museum and the lives it takes represent the belief of some members of American society that immigrants pose a menace to the country's

cultural integrity and economy. What is certain is that the stereotypical and inaccurate portrayal of Brazilian natives in *The Relic* tends to provoke fear and rejection, what is regrettable taking into consideration that indigenous peoples are underrepresented in national and international media.

Before disappearing in a Brazilian ship, Dr. Whitney has sent crates full of anthropologically relevant artifacts to the museum. In one of them lies a statue of Kothoga, the “son of Satan”. According to Dr. Frock, another anthropology enthusiast, Kothoga was born after members of a South American tribe made a deal with Satan to vanquish their enemies. Dr. Green, the museum’s biologist who has an aversion to superstition, does not believe in the story and decides to analyze the leaves found in the second crate, which, unlike the statue, might actually have some scientific value. The conflict between superstition and reason is present throughout the whole film. The museum hosts an exhibition on superstition in different cultures, which is criticized by Dr. Green because of the lack of scientific interest (“science must destroy myth”) and defended by the museum’s director because it attracts many paying visitors. The statue of Kothoga, of course, is part of the exhibition.

When the museum’s security guard is found decapitated in the bathroom, Lieutenant D’Agosta establishes a connection with the murders in the ship and tries to cancel the museum’s gala dinner in order to avoid more victims, without success. While the gala takes place, the police hunts the beast in the museum’s basement, but cannot stop it from making more victims. Dr. Green analyzes the Kothoga’s blood and finds out that the Kothoga is actually Dr. Whitney, who suffered a mutation because of the leaves and needs to eat human brains to stay alive. Dr. Whitney brought the evil from Brazil directly to his work place, and became a victim of it himself, challenging the idea that superstitions have no root in reality. The beast that represents a foreign superstition, however, must sooner or later succumb to the supremacy of reason. Violent attempts by the police to kill the creature fail, but Dr. Green’s logic thinking does not: based on the results of the analysis, she finds out that the creature must be either frozen or burned to death. She attracts Kothoga to a storage room, sets the room on fire and hides in a water tank. Kothoga’s reign of terror is over: Western reason has prevailed over tropical bestiality.

The analyses presented in this section offered an overview of the representation of Brazil in American action, adventure and thriller films. In the four productions analyzed, Brazil is presented as a dangerous place where both natural and human

enemies threaten the survival of foreign characters, who at first do not have the necessary malice and knowledge to defend and protect themselves. Those who manage to return to primitivism and adapt themselves to the new rules, however, manage to survive: Alex in *Turistas*, Beck and Travis in *The Rundown*, Dr. Cale and his assistants in *Anaconda*. The situations of danger and fear experienced by the characters can be interpreted as a survival test that is supposed to assess the ability of characters to adapt and survive in an environment with different rules. In these films, crossing the border from the United States to Brazil means to leave security, lawfulness and order behind and enter a wild, primitive territory associated with lawlessness, adventure and mystery. The presence of American characters in Brazil originates drama and confusion, and the represented world just comes back to normality once these characters have returned to their place of origin. In none of the films analyzed American characters had the opportunity or the will to remain in Brazil any longer than the necessary to accomplish their tasks and get their share of adrenaline. Although their homeland might lack in adventure and excitement, there they are safe from cruel organ dealers, giant killer snakes and brain-eating beasts. In the last section of this chapter, a summary of the main conclusions drawn out of the film analysis will be presented.

3.4 Sluts, Beasts and Bastards

In the previous pages a total of 13 films divided in three categories were analyzed. The analysis has provided significant outcomes that allow for the formulation of general conclusions regarding the image of Brazil in American mainstream cinema. These conclusions are based on the realization that the world represented in the analyzed films is divided in two main topographic/semantic spaces: the United States of America and Brazil. The border that separates these two spaces is not merely of topographic nature but is reinforced by the opposing characteristics attributed to each one of them. As previously discussed, the choice of Brazil as a location or a reference in the films is an efficient dramatic solution because the oppositional characteristics attributed to the United States and Brazil make it easier to develop a credible story line, creating a narrative with a simple and easily graspable structure. It is important to add that the American film industry did not create the ethnic and cultural stereotypes it helps to disseminate: it repeats and re-creates stereotypes that are already present in Western collective memory. However, as one of the world's most powerful media industries, it does

play a fundamental role in promoting and reinforcing such stereotypes, and it does so by repeating the same pre-conceived ideas regularly. This is mainly a strategic decision motivated by the perspective of worldwide distribution and profit maximization, since the use of cultural and ethnic stereotypes makes it easy to tell, in limited time, a gripping story that can be easily grasped by audiences with varied backgrounds. Taking this aspect into consideration, it is not surprising that the films mentioned in this chapter share so many characteristics.

Taking the risk of oversimplifying, one can argue that the Brazil painted by the American film industry is populated by sluts, beasts and bastards. Brazilian women often earn a living as prostitutes (*Turistas*) or are simply easy to have (*The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*, *The Money Pit*, *Blame it on Rio*). Brazilian men are not better in this aspect, since they are often hired by Americans to support them in illegal activities (*Anaconda*, *Kickboxer 3*). Brazilians are in general presented as dangerous and dishonest people, or as victims of injustice who live in poverty and need the help of foreign benefactors to break the vicious cycle of oppression (*The Rundown*, *Kickboxer 3*, *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*, *Rio*). Brazil is not only home to permissive, beautiful women, dishonest men and poor bastards, but also to mysterious and dangerous beasts. American characters must be athletic and smart to survive hysterical monkeys (*The Rundown*), Anacondas and primeval monsters born from a pact with the devil (*The Relic*). Brazil has not only a dangerous human and animal population, but also a magic atmosphere able to deeply influence people's sexual behavior. These sudden changes are welcomed by some (Emily in *Wild Orchid*) and rejected by others (Matthew in *Blame it on Rio*). All in all one can say that, in the world created by American mainstream films, a stay in Brazil is never uneventful and does not end without consequences. The consequences can be deadly (*Turistas*, *Anaconda*, *The Relic*) or be expressed in changes in the qualities of the characters. These changes are not necessarily permanent; in many cases they are temporary changes that enable characters to come to terms with the new challenges and situations encountered in Brazil.

Based on the outcomes of the film analysis, it is possible to identify a number of oppositional characteristics that are often attributed to the topographic/semantic spaces United States and Brazil. Poverty is commonly associated with Brazil, in opposition to the wealth enjoyed by many American characters. Poverty is sometimes identified as a cause of criminality, which is also linked to the lawlessness presented as an inherent characteristic of Brazilian society. These characteristics are emphasized when juxtaposed with the opposing characteristics ascribed to

America: lawfulness, order and justice. The predominance of reason is another aspect that is presented as a fundamental part of American culture, in opposition to superstition and the predominance of emotions attributed to Brazilian culture. Finally, an opposition that appears regularly in narratives that include Brazil and the United States is libertinage and morality. While Brazilians are often portrayed as promiscuous and indifferent to moral rules, American characters are generally virtuous and sexually repressed.

The summary suggests that this representation regime can also be analyzed from a Freudian perspective. Brazil incorporates exactly the opposite characteristics that are valid in the United States, indicating that the border transgression is motivated by the forbidden but irresistible will to die (Thanatos or *Todestrieb*) and to experience pleasure (Eros or *Lebenstrieb*). The anxiety generated by opposing forces in the human psyche - desires whose existence is undeniable but that are considered taboo in a particular society and the awareness that these desires must be repressed - can be seen as a main motivating factor to cross the border to a topographic/semantic space with opposing characteristics, i.e. a different taboo system and social and moral norms. Freud [2009, 43] defines taboo as follows:

“Taboos are very ancient prohibitions which at one time were forced upon a generation of primitive people from without, that is, they probably were forcibly impressed upon them by an earlier generation. These prohibitions concerned actions for which there existed a strong desire. The prohibitions maintained themselves from generation to generation, perhaps only as the result of a tradition set up by paternal and social authority. But in later generations they have perhaps already become ‘organized’ as a piece of inherited psychic property. (...) The persistence of taboo teaches (...) that the original pleasure to do the forbidden still continues among taboo races.”

The negation of the tabooed pleasure is not exclusive of Western societies, but can also be observed in “primitive” societies like the Australian Aborigines, which were Freud’s main object of study in this area. One can argue, however, that the Western taboo system offers more eloquent examples of how the repression of desires results in an anxiety neurosis. Stekel [2002], one of Freud’s most distinguished pupils, argues that “culture is repression”, meaning that “repression enables us to live the life of a civilized man who is willing to comply with all the ethical and social demands of his age” [Stekel, 2002, 5]. Repression is therefore a necessary, but

often harmful, element for a harmonious life in society. In this context, anxiety is understood as a “wish of the inner man that is always censored and rejected by the moral self”. It is a binary construction: on the one side we have “a sign of social obedience in the service of culture” (repression), and on the other dwells “a rebel in the power of the life of impulse” (desire) [Stekel, 2002, 20-21]. Crossing the border to a space where the forbidden desire ceases to be a taboo can be seen as an attempt to alleviate anxiety and to experience pleasure free of guilt. Those who cross the border not in search of sensual pleasure but in search of danger are also, in a way, looking for pleasure, if we consider Freud’s assumption that death means achieving “the pleasure of non-existence”. Death represents, in this sense, a liberation from social and legal restraints; after fulfilling the obligations imposed by life in society and the human condition, each individual just wishes to “die in its own way” [Freud, 2011, 22]. From this perspective, the characters that meet death in Brazil also experience a sort of liberating pleasure.

It would be arbitrary to argue that the American film industry has only produced stereotypical and prejudicial filmic representations of Brazilian culture and society. During the research and selection of films for the analysis, it was possible to identify at least two productions that did not fit in the category “mainstream” and that differentiate themselves from other films because of their plots, which are more critical and complex than the majority of plots examined in this chapter, and because of the apparent effort to avoid typical images and stereotypes associated with Brazil. The semantic structure of these two films does not follow the scheme employed in the other films, i.e. it is more complex than the structure characterized by two opposing semantic/topographic spaces separated by a clear border and populated by subjects with clearly defined characteristics. These films are an exception to the rule because the inconsistency provoked by the border transgression is not reversed; in opposition to the majority of mainstream productions, the narratives come to an end without a return to equilibrium. Moreover, the location “Brazil” does not play such a fundamental role in the development of the story; differently from some of the works previously analyzed, a film like *Journey to the End of the Night* focuses on the personal fate of its characters, and not on the location. However, this film is not stereotype-free: the analysis shows that it does make use of some typical ideas about Brazil (such as lawlessness) that are also present in mainstream productions. Nevertheless, it can be considered as a positive example of a rather accurate and unusual American film set in Brazil.

Journey to the End of the Night is not a favela movie but also explores the aesthetic of poverty and violence, portraying a night in São Paulo's underworld, which is populated by illegal immigrants, drug dealers, prostitutes and other misfits trying to survive in the concrete jungle. São Paulo at night is portrayed as a non-glamorous, dangerous, badly lit place ruled by sex, drugs and violence. These are the main elements that form the plot of the film, which tells the story of one night that changes the lives of the characters forever. Rosso, an American immigrant who owns a brothel in São Paulo, plans to sell a suitcase full of cocaine to Nigerian sailors in order to retire and live on the Brazilian coast with his wife Angie (an ex-prostitute) and their son Lazar happily ever after. His older son, Paul, is supposed to inherit the brothel and keep business going. But Paul, who is Lazar's real father, has other plans: to steal the drug money and run away with Angie and Lazar. However, the plan fails and, when the journey to the end of the night is over, Rosso and Paul are dead. Wemba, a dishwasher from Nigeria who is given the task to negotiate with the African seamen, survives the ordeal with blood on his hands: his friend Monique gets shot and dies while they run away from Paul's accomplices. Just like Angie, Monique is a victim of a man-dominated world. After being cheated on and beaten by her boyfriend, she sees herself with nowhere to go and ends up taking a deadly ride with Wemba. Even after quitting prostitution, Angie continues depending on men: although she is emotionally attached to Paul, she married Rosso to achieve financial security, and both men feel free to make decisions on her behalf.

Since there are no well-known icons that could help viewers to identify the city where action takes place, and an aerial view in the evening makes it difficult to identify the location, the first scene is accompanied by a subtitle that reads "São Paulo, Brazil". A film shot in Rio de Janeiro would not require subtitles, but just a view of the beach, a slum or the statue of Christ the Redeemer (as seen in *Kickboxer 3*, *Wild Orchid* and *Blame it on Rio*). Choosing São Paulo as location, however, has freed the director from the obligation of showing beautiful views and given him the opportunity to focus on the characters' conflicts and to make a modern *noir* film. Joyful music rhythms like samba do not fit in *Journey to the End of the Night*; the main theme is a classic, melancholic song. The São Paulo portrayed in the film does not sleep; the neon lights keep the night workers awake and life pulses in the streets. One of these workers is transvestite prostitute Nazda, whose fate is interconnected with that of Rosso, Paul, Angie, Monique and Wemba. As a half-woman, Nazda is humiliated and hurt by Paul, joining

the circle of pain and hopelessness; as a half-man, however, Nazda refuses to accept humiliation in silence and seeks revenge. Another important character is a blind fortune teller who represents the superstitious aura which is often attributed to Brazilian culture (another example are the “macumba ladies” of *Blame it on Rio* and events portrayed in *Woman on Top*). The fortune teller is visited by Rosso and by Monique’s grandmother, who becomes aware of her granddaughter’s imminent and unavoidable death. Although female characters are extremely powerless, the power exercised by male characters is limited; male or female, the characters of *Journey to the End of the Night* cannot interfere decisively in the dramatic events of the night.

The film has yet other worth mentioning aspects related to Brazilian stereotypes. The first one regards Rosso’s immigrant status in Brazil. At one point he reminds Paul that he cannot go back to the United States, what suggests that he might be wanted by American authorities. Besides reinforcing the stereotype of Brazil as the ideal refuge for foreign criminals, the film also confirms the idea of lawlessness by including a corrupt detective in the plot. Having one of Rosso’s prostitutes as an informant, the detective learns about the drug deal with the Africans and demands half of the profit from Paul; even without being asked, he justifies his low moral by complaining about his salary, consolidating the idea that honest work is not the usual way to earn a living in Brazil. What to expect of a country where one cannot trust the authorities? In such an environment, people tend to make justice with their own hands - like Sloan in *Kickboxer 3* and transvestite Nazda, who kills Paul at the brothel.

The roles attributed to each nationality in *Journey to the End of the Night* are revealing: the African sailors are dangerous, tough men interested in dealing with drugs, what indicates low moral values, greed and/or disregard for the law. The suitcase filled with cocaine belonged to a Russian customer killed by his jealous wife at Rosso’s brothel - it is not difficult, at this point, to imagine a connection with the Russian mafia. Brazilian characters are victims, prostitutes or accomplices - in all cases, they have no self-determination and are used by foreign characters (Rosso and Paul) for their own objectives. Paul does not only use Brazilians to reach his own goals, but also does not hesitate to direct his anger to the weaker ones, letting homophobic and racist comments out. For Paul, Wemba is a “motherfucking nigger” who will certainly run away with the drug money. He calls Nazda a “fucking freak she-male” and cuts her cheeks with a knife, defying her to “make money with that face”. Above all, she is a victim of a

male-dominated society, condemned to live on the margins of this society because she does not fit, has no money or education, let alone the perspective of a better future - not even by marrying a wealthy foreigner, like Angie. Among the victims and villains portrayed in the film, only one “hero” stands out, and that is Wemba, the Nigerian dishwasher, who, in the end, proves to be faithful to his boss and manages to save Angie and Lazar from the bloodbath in the brothel. The lack of a happy ending (or a final state of equilibrium) and the attribution of hero status to a rather marginal character in the story - who is not an American citizen - are other aspects that make this film stand out among the analyzed films.

There is yet another film worth mentioning in this section. This film represents exactly the opposite ideology than that identified in the film analysis: the message of this film is anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist (missionary work can be seen as religious imperialism) and even anti-capitalist. *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* is based on the homonymous book by Peter Matthiessen and tells the story of two couples of American evangelical missionaries who try to convert indigenous peoples to Christianity in the Brazilian Amazon. Leslie and Andy have been in the Amazon for a couple of months before Martin and Hazel arrive with son Billy. The new arrivals are supposed to take over a mission that has been deactivated since a priest was killed by natives of the Niuruna tribe, who have been resisting all attempts of conversion. In opposition to Leslie, Martin has an anthropological interest towards the natives and has learned some indigenous expressions in order to better communicate with them. Martin and Hazel are not the only new faces in the village: American adventurers Wolf and Lewis Moon, who has Native American blood, are forced to stop at the village to get gasoline for their plane and have their papers confiscated by Comandante Guzman, the authority in town. While the American missionaries are the faces of imperialism, Guzman represents the “savage capitalism” without regard for human or land rights. Guzman knows there is gold in Niuruna land and wants the natives out dead or alive. He promises Wolf and Lewis to give their papers back so they can resume their journey if they throw bombs on the tribe’s camp. Wolf, who claims natives are “jungle rats”, does not hesitate to accept the proposal. Lewis has moral concerns about it.

The film does not only stand out among other American films set in Brazil because of the consistent critique to imperialism, but also because of its aesthetic qualities. The representation of native Brazilians in *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada* and *The Relic* seems even more inappropriate when compared to the accurate and respectful portrayal found in *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*. In

the latter, many natives were played by actors of indigenous descent, and the characterization of actors of other ethnic groups was flawless, e.g. Boronai, the leader of the Niurunas, who is played by famous Brazilian actor Stênio Garcia. Moreover, it was actually filmed entirely on location in Amazonia. The film also refrains from dividing characters into heroes and villains, as seen in *The Rundown* and *Kickboxer 3*, for example. There are no real heroes in the story, only victims. Leslie and Hazel, who are fervent evangelicals, might in a first glance fit in the category “villains”, but they are actually victims: deceived by the illusion that spreading God’s word among the natives is a good deed, Leslie must watch with frustration the failure of his mission and the increasing hostility of Andy towards him. Hazel loses her son, her husband and her sanity in the jungle.

Another aspect that makes this film stand out is that it is not afraid of profound and passionate discussions about religion, politics and human rights. Differently from the failed attempt to transmit an environmental-friendly message in *The Forbidden Dance is Lambada*, the film has thought-provoking dialogues that do not give the impression of having been artificially included in the plot to give it an ideological tint. One of the most meaningful discussions found throughout the film happens between Lewis and Martin in a bar, while the men drink and Wolf dances with a prostitute. Martin talks enthusiastically about his new discoveries regarding the Niuruna language. Lewis takes the opportunity to question the missionary’s work and faith: “You really like Indians, don’t you? Their language, their customs, they interest you. So why do you want to change them? If the Lord made them the way they are, why do you people want to make them different?”. Martin, on his turn, confronts Lewis and Wolf’s plan to drop bombs on the Niuruna. Lewis argues that the natives are better off dead than converted by the church, or contaminated by white people diseases such as syphilis and alcoholism. There are, as said, no heroes in this story, but if we were to name the main victims, they are the Niuruna, who have to fight against a religion they have no interest in, diseases their bodies cannot heal, and invasion in the name of a precious metal they have no use for. As the weakest group in the hierarchy, the natives are abused by the foreign characters they have contact with. The missionaries treat them as potential servants of God in need of civilizing education. Lewis treats them as potential companions, ignoring the fact that his presence among the natives is doomed to bring them illness and death.

Lewis is a half-blood Native American searching for his identity in a world populated by mercenaries and missionaries. Instead of bombing the Niuruna’s

camp, Lewis jumps from the plane and joins the tribe. Because he has literally fallen from the sky, the natives assume he is a sacred entity, Kisu Mu. When they listen to the missionaries talking about Jesus, they understand they are talking about Kisu Mu. This means that Lewis is no longer a lost soul wandering about the Amazon: he is the messiah. Lewis quickly wins the respect of the tribe members, learns their language, and finds himself a wife, who gives birth to a son. But his idyll among the natives does not last forever. Lewis kisses Andy and brings the flu virus with him to the camp. The illness spreads quickly and claims many lives before he can convince the missionaries to give them medicine. The flu epidemic is followed by an air raid that drives the survivors away and sets the camp on fire. Martin, who went to the camp to warn the natives, has a moment of enlightenment: "It would have been better for them never to have known us". Martin's faith has eroded gradually during the events. His son Billy died of black swamp fever, his wife Hazel has gone insane, and he could not overcome the natives' resistance to conversion. And because he has too late admitted that their presence in the Amazon was neither beneficial for nor desired by the natives, he meets a dreadful fate as well, being killed with an axe by one of the "converted" natives. Lewis flees from the camp and shoots a tribe member dead. His last words are: "You are not Kisu Mu. You are a white man."

Lewis personifies the suffering inflicted upon native peoples through colonization. He faces an identity crisis for which there is no ideal solution: he is trapped in a limbo between two worlds, without actually belonging to any of them. He does not see himself as a white man and has not found his place in white society, but he is too "white" - or "westernized" - to completely mingle into a native tribe. He is seen with mistrust in both groups because of his mixed ethnicity, and he goes back and forth between the two worlds but is not able to settle down in any of them. When he thinks he has found his true identity as a member of the Niuruna tribe, he is overtaken by his past on the other side of the fence - the white man's side. The missionaries believe to be doing a heavenly favor to the natives by converting them, since this seems to be the best way to civilize and avoid killing them. To let the natives live in peace with their customs and traditions is an option that is never mentioned. In the manual of white cultural supremacy, it is not even an option. Leslie and his disciples must convert as many natives as they can, whatever it costs. Because words do not seem very appealing, they bribe the natives with kitchen utensils, knives and mirrors, just as the Portuguese did when they arrived in the 16th century. The circumstances changed, but the

mentality did not. Those who do not learn to live and to believe like the white man are doomed to fall into “devil’s darkness”, as Leslie puts it. The leader of the missionaries sees bribing as a legitimate strategy to win the natives’ sympathy and attention. “That’s for their own good”, he tells a skeptical Martin. “It’s the first contact that counts”.

All in all, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* is a film that, in opposition to the films previously analyzed, does not only mean to entertain but to be critical towards imperialism, intolerance and the persistent tendency of dominant cultures to judge and portray other cultures according to their own biased perspective. It is also a proof that the American film industry is indeed able to produce texts that are faithful and respectful to foreign cultures and critical of the status quo. Such films are, however, rather exceptions in a sea of predictable, prejudicial, stereotype-filled productions that keep attracting masses to theaters and filling the shelves of video rental shops. The large amount of films and other media products available in the market generates an illusion of diversity, when in fact there is a significant decrease in the diversity of discourses audiences can choose from.

The ethnocentric regime of representation that was born during the Age of Discovery and continues to dictate the image of Third World countries in texts produced by the developed world is not the only factor responsible for the dissemination and perpetuation of cultural and ethnic stereotypes. Media concentration also plays a fundamental role in the stagnation of representation strategies for the Third World. The main issue is not that the prevailing representation of developing countries like Brazil has not evolved substantially since the colonial era, but that alternative representations produced by these countries are silenced before they get a chance to reach international audiences. With a few powerful media corporations dominating the global market, the cultural lives of people all over the world are subject to decisions taken by these companies. The next chapter will be dedicated to identify the main conflicts caused by an increasingly concentrated media scenario, to elucidate the effects of media concentration on cultural diversity and to discuss the implications of media concentration for developing nations.

4 Cultural Imperialism and Media Concentration

The concentration of media ownership has reached record levels in the last decades of the 20th century and keeps growing in the 21st century. Today a handful of politically and economically powerful corporations control the global marketplace of ideas, having the final word on which contents will be made available to audiences in all continents. They choose the films that will be promoted worldwide, and what the budget will be. They choose the formulas and approaches that hold the promise of large profits at the global level, the themes that are likely to have the most cross-national and cross-cultural appeal, the ideas that are worth investing on, the projects that deserve a chance of being produced and broadcast and those that, for one reason or another, must be buried still in the conception phase. Despite the overwhelming offer of media products in the global market, it is questionable if quantity is, in this case, a synonym for diversity. As it will be discussed in the next pages, the current structure of global media, which in terms of ownership are not diverse at all, indicates that certain cultural influences and discourses tend to predominate over others and that economic and technological restraints limit considerably the number of voices that get to be heard in the global marketplace of ideas. The voices that get silenced are usually those of minority cultures and ethnic groups, as well of nations that are either still developing their media industries or that are still struggling with their colonial past and do not have a minimally developed communications and information infra-structure, let alone a cultural industry able to participate in the global media system.

In the previous chapters, the stereotypical representation of Brazilian culture and society in American mainstream cinema was discussed and its relation to colonialist and imperialist discourses was analyzed. The present chapter aims to elevate the discussion about the practice of stereotyping in the context of cultural imperialism to another level by investigating the economic and politic factors involved in the misrepresentation of Third World countries by developed nations. Although the globalization of communications is commonly seen as a beneficial phenomenon that will eventually turn the world into an idyllic “global

village”¹ where everything and everyone is interconnected and injustice, ignorance and inequality are things of the past, the current scenario indicates the opposite direction. Despite its democratic promises, the current global media system reproduces social, political and economic inequalities that have been established during the Age of Discovery. Taking the risk of sounding overly pessimistic, one can argue that, just as the image of former colonies like Brazil has not evolved significantly in the last couple of centuries, the position of these countries in the global hierarchy has remained virtually unchanged. Despite significant improvements in the economy and political status of many of these countries - Brazil is a positive example as the world’s 7th largest economy and its good diplomatic relations with most nations, developed and in development -, it is the developed industrial nations, especially Western European countries and the United States, that dictate the rules of international economy and politics. This includes the rules of global media.

The international media system is characterized by a strongly unbalanced flow of information and ideas. While a few large corporations located in a few developed nations increase their sphere of influence steadily and constantly, most developing countries struggle to achieve some level of participation in the global exchange of cultural goods and ideas. The globalization of communications has in fact facilitated this exchange and given nations that were politically, economically and symbolically insignificant valuable opportunities to transmit their messages and to be acknowledged as members of the “global village”. These opportunities, however, are mostly enjoyed by countries with the necessary expertise, financial means, infra-structure and tradition to produce messages and media products that are well-accepted and assimilated internationally and cross-culturally, and that occupy a privileged position in the political, economic and cultural hierarchies. It is not by chance that the United States is the indisputable leader of the global media system, and that its cultural industry has very few competitors when it comes to enter new markets and to distribute products globally. Films, TV shows and music produced by US companies became the representatives of a

¹The term “global village” was coined by Marshal McLuhan and appeared for the first time in his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962). In this book McLuhan predicts the advent of Internet and describes the global expansion of electronic media as a “cosmic membrane that has been snapped around the globe by the electric dilation of our various senses”. This has resulted in the emergence of a “global village”, a “small world of tribal drums, total interdependence, and super-imposed co-existence” [McLuhan, 2011, 37]. The term is used here in a utopian sense, meaning an interconnected global community characterized by justice and equality.

global culture that is turning increasingly homogenized and far-reaching and is threatening to the survival of local cultural expressions and industries. The US film and TV industry, for example, has reached a level of technological excellence and international acceptance which most media industries, even those of developed nations, can only dream of. Moreover, it is an industry with tradition, which has developed formulas and languages that are enjoyed by audiences with the most varied sociocultural backgrounds and that has established itself as one of the most lucrative businesses inside and outside the United States.

The global dominance of US-American media results from a combination of tradition, technology and business savvy. In a global neoliberal market economy, it is understandable that those who have the financial means, the know-how and a high degree of influence in the political arena are able to exercise their power in the global exchange of cultural products and ideas as well. As mentioned previously, the US media industry is the global leader in the field, and the gradual absorption or elimination of competitors by a stronger rival is a common practice in neoliberal economies. Since this industry is superior to its competitors in several aspects, a reduction in the number of industries actively participating in the global media system is a natural consequence of this economic selection process.

The phenomenon of economic and cultural imperialism raises certain questions: should media be treated as regular commodities, such as sneakers and cell phones? The symbolic nature of media products, their cultural significance and social impact indicate that media belong to a different category of products and should not be subject to the same rules applied to other goods. Media educate, form and change opinions, confirm and deconstruct stereotypes, reinforce and weaken prejudices, establish the agenda of what is worth discussing and what must be ignored, dictate trends, entertain and represent, for many people, the only window to the outside world, to places that will never be visited in person, to cultures that will never be experienced in loco, and to lifestyles that will never be achieved. They indicate what is socially acceptable, fashionable, and desirable. In an ideal democratic world, international media would comprise contributions from as many nations, cultures and ethnic groups as possible, forming a diverse system where representations of different cultural expressions and lifestyles are available, the status quo is continuously challenged, and minorities also have the opportunity to transmit a message. As a system subject to the laws of the market and political influence, global media reflect the world's power structure and concentrate on a number of discourses and formulas that are profitable, widely accepted and

approving of the status quo.

It is undeniable that media consumers have more options today than at any other time in history. This is one of the arguments offered by Compaine [2000], who is skeptical of critics of media concentration and cultural imperialism, to defend the hypothesis that the dominance of media by a few large corporations does not necessarily mean less diversity. He argues that one cannot claim that media concentration silences alternative voices because “there is no acceptable guideline for what constitutes too few voices”. It is also not realistic to suggest that media must be structured in a way that enables any individual or group to have “unlimited access to whatever medium for whatever purpose for whatever period of time they so desire” [Compaine, 2000, 568]. The affirmation sounds exaggerated, but with that the author tries to express his belief that a democratic media system independent from market forces is not viable or imaginable.

It is incontestable that an unregulated media system guided by capitalist principles is unlikely to acquire a democratic character and show a legitimate concern for real diversity and popular participation. Compaine [2000] fails to acknowledge the special nature of media products, which requires that they do not be left to the vagaries of the market, and analyzes issues of media ownership from a purely economic perspective. He praises the approach of the Chicago School, which focuses on the potential benefits of concentrated media ownership rather than on “the possible non-economic consequence of these activities” [Compaine, 2000, 554-555], adding that the economic infrastructure does support the “pleasant fantasy” [Compaine, 2000, 567] of independent, multiple-owned media outlets. Moreover, an economic approach such as the one defended by the Chicago School is based on criteria that “tend to be relatively identifiable, quantified and validated”. In a neoliberal world characterized by increasingly competitive markets, it is not realistic to defend the multivalued approach, according to which “ideals such as localism, multiple voices and access are at least as important as the economic efficiency of cable systems or newspaper production”. Compaine also rejects criteria such as “public interest”, which are too “subjective” [Compaine, 2000, 557], and adds that increased diversity and access do not imply greater quality; in his opinion, consumers have today more than enough choice, with a large array of media products available that “seem to fill increasingly smaller niches of all variety and quality” [Compaine, 2000, 574].

Although the offer of media products is indeed overwhelming, Compaine’s understanding of the dynamics of global media is limited and must be comple-

mented by the not so objective aspects involved in the conception, production and distribution of media products. As previously mentioned, cultural goods such as films, TV shows, music and print media have an important educational and social role and therefore should not be treated as regular commodities. The lack of regulation in the global exchange of cultural goods and services has led to a situation where a few large corporations, most of them based in the United States, control the production and distribution of media in a global scale, and with that the content of messages disseminated among international audiences. The important issue here is not the motivation behind this position of dominance and control; for the purpose of this discussion it does not play a role if such position was reached simply by an outstanding ability to conduct business and develop high-end technology or by imperialistic motivations. The fact is that media produced in the United States or by US firms abroad have become the global media par excellence, the common ground upon which citizens/consumers² from different nationalities, ethnic groups and sociocultural backgrounds meet, the cultural basis that gives people topics to talk about and indicates what lifestyles are worth being pursued and what behavioral patterns are acceptable. Media are not ideologically neutral, and they have power. By not acknowledging this power, the author reduces media to ordinary commodities without a symbolic content and supports the current structure of global media, which is highly concentrated and unbalanced. While the high quality and technological excellence of media products from leading US firms is, with a few exceptions, unquestionable, to assume that only media giants are in a position to produce cultural goods that are technically excellent, culturally relevant and economically viable is inaccurate.

A broader and more critical analysis of media concentration is offered by Croteau & Hoynes [2006, 6-7], who recognize that a scenario where “just a few companies dominate the production and mass distribution of ideas, culture, and information raises (...) significant concerns and dilemmas”. The main dilemma in the business of media is to combine its main functions: to generate profit and to serve public interest. In a media system dominated by powerful corporations and the interests of capital, it has become increasingly difficult to accomplish both missions. As the authors point out, in the public sphere model, media are

²Since it does not make sense, in our Western capitalist society, to talk only about citizenship and citizen rights, but it is also undesirable to reduce citizens to consumers, the term preferred in this chapter will be a combination of both, suggesting an individual that is aware of his rights and duties both as citizen and consumer.

expected to “reflect the range of creative visions and ideas that constitute a society’s vibrant culture” and to raise awareness about public issues, helping citizens to better understand their society, their country and the world, and how all these levels are interconnected, so that they can take action based on this knowledge. Providing “essential cultural resources for responsible citizens” is the “essence” of the public sphere model, which usually stands in direct opposition to the generation of profit, which has become the media’s favored mission.

The complex relationship between media, government and corporate interest and the difficulties in finding a middle-term between economic viability and public interest raise questions concerning the appropriateness of governmental regulation of media, the efficacy of such a regulation and its possible benefits. Where does regulation end and censorship start? Will the market eventually regulate itself and become more diverse and less concentrated, or can one only expect increased concentration and decreased diversity in a media system ruled by market forces? What are the consequences of media concentration for developing countries, indigenous communities and ethnic minorities? Why is it important to be represented in international media and to be able to participate in the global flow of communication and information? These are some of the issues that will be investigated in the next sections. In order to structure the discussion coherently, first the nature of media products will be discussed in connection with the market and public sphere models of media. Then the highly concentrated structure of media industry in the United States will be dissected and its consequences for the global media system will be presented together with a short overview of the political decisions that led to the “merger mania” in the 1980s and 1990s, reducing the number of companies responsible for the production of media products sold inside and outside the United States. The implications of media concentration for citizens/consumers and for the world’s cultural diversity, issues concerning the “free flow” of information and the international reputation of developing countries will also be investigated.

4.1 Market Model versus Public Sphere Model

In *The Business of Media*, Croteau & Hoynes [2006] discuss the characteristics and the strengths of two models that can be applied to understand and analyze the media business: the market model and the public sphere model. According to the first, media should be treated as regular commodities subject to the dynamics

of offer and demand. Governmental regulations are superfluous, since consumers in the marketplace will “ultimately force companies to behave in a way that best serves the public” [Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, 17]. Following this logic, the power is in the hands of consumers/citizens, who will put a process selection in motion by welcoming particular products while rejecting others, making media producers aware of their preferences and desires and eventually getting exactly what they want. It is questionable, however, if the media are in fact in a position to give people what they want, and this is due to the special functioning of the media business. As the authors point out, media companies operate in a “dual product market”, selling two different kinds of products to two different sets of buyers: first, films and TV shows are sold to consumers, and then consumers are “sold” to advertisers. The dual character of the media business makes the popular assumption that media are able to self-regulate because they must give people what they want lose credibility: before they respond to audiences’ demands, they must respond to the demands of their main sponsors: the advertisers. This explains why often television programs with low ratings are renewed while popular shows are canceled: “If a program with modest ratings reaches a demographic group that is especially attractive to advertisers, it may be renewed in favor of a program with higher overall ratings but with demographics that are less appealing to advertisers” [Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, 28-29]. One can deduce, therefore, that TV programming will focus on high-income audiences who are more likely to consume the products advertised. Demographics also play an important role in this process, since advertisers have a preference for younger audiences, who are “valuable and potentially brand-loyal consumers”, and low interest in viewers aged 50 and higher.

The dependence on advertisers and the focus on wealthy, consumption-oriented segments of the public shatter the myth that media are responsive to audiences’ demands and suggest that the market model is not the ideal framework to study and understand media issues. Although they are imbued with the mission to educate, inform and entertain the public, media businesses must ensure their economic viability and, in the process of generating profit and avoiding losses, many are forced to neglect their primary function to fulfill the expectations of advertisers and respond to market pressures.

Although corporate media are able to “produce good stuff”, as McChesney [2000, 32-33] explains, they are rarely the “obedient servants” of the mythology that they either “give the people what they want” or risk financial ruin. This

mythology exaggerates the power that “the people” actually have in selecting and defining media programming. McChesney summarizes this issue by arguing that it is true that demand creates supply, but supply creates demand as well: “Media conglomerates are risk-averse and continually return to what has been commercially successful in the past. Over time, this probably creates a demand in the fare that is commonly presented”. The decline in foreign films in movie theaters in the United States is the example offered by the author to illustrate this assertion. Foreign films accounted for over 10% of the box office at US theaters in the mid-1970s; a decade later, the percentage sank to approximately 7%, and in the late 1990s to less than 5%. According to the assumption that the media system simply gives people what they desire, one could assume that the extinction of foreign films from US theaters is nothing more than a reaction to public demand: Americans have simply lost the interest in foreign films. The main reason behind this phenomenon, however, is more complex and is related to the expansion of chain-owned megaplex movie theaters: “With far lower costs, these multiscreen cinemas drove nearly all the one-screen theaters out of business, the very theaters that had specialized in foreign fare”. In this particular example, supply has caused the extinction of demand.

Megaplex chain theaters have adopted an aggressive tactic to secure market dominance and eradicate competition. As a precondition to grant screens to foreign films, megaplex chain theaters would require filmmakers to invest “massive amounts” of money to market the film in the US, the same amount a large US studio usually spends on marketing. This requirement was, of course, totally unrealistic for foreign filmmakers, who rarely work on a budget as generous as that of mainstream US productions, and eventually led to the elimination of foreign films from US theaters. As a result, McChesney [2000, 34] adds, “a new generation has come along with no idea that foreign films even exist”. This example also abolishes the common assumption that quantity and diversity are directly linked. American moviegoers may have quantity, but it is highly doubtful that they have real diversity. Film studios and theater complexes, often owned by the same large media corporation, are eager to minimize risks and maximize profits and opt to invest in productions that are likely to be commercially successful, i.e. films with actors well-known to the public, based on well-established formulas and dealing with light themes. Even when a mainstream film deals with illness, death, armed conflict, tragedy and/or politics, the viewer can expect a superfluous examination of the controversial or difficult topic and a happy end that silences any possible

doubt about the righteousness of the status quo.

The exclusion of foreign films from US theaters also raises a question regarding the adequacy of the concept of free flow of information, which has been historically fiercely defended by the United States and Great Britain, especially during the 1970s and 1980s when Third World countries tried to push for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) within UNESCO. The simple suggestion of establishing media regulations so that Third World countries could participate more actively in the international flow of communication and information, in a time when media were becoming increasingly globalized, was enough to prompt both the United States and Great Britain to withdraw from UNESCO, respectively in 1984 and 1985. The NWICO debate and the complex relationship between UNESCO and the United States will be discussed in more detail in next section, but it is sensible to mention this issue here to show how democratic principles can be misused and misinterpreted to justify the concentration of media ownership and to protect corporate and political interests. Absence of governmental regulation is defended as a basic precondition for a media landscape that is uncensored, welcoming of different opinions and points-of-view and able to provide the people with exactly the kind of content they desire. The market model offers, from this perspective, the ideal basis for a media system that is, at the same time, profitable and responding to public demands. The harsh reaction to what was interpreted as a menace to the free flow of information, seen as an indisputable basic right to be enjoyed by every nation, was actually a reaction to the prognosis of having obstacles placed in the way of expanding their political, economic and cultural sphere of influence through the media.

And expanded they have. American media have made the best out of the globalization of communications and have penetrated virtually every country in the world, establishing US consumer culture as the global culture par excellence and posing a serious threat to the survival of locally produced media. As McChesney [2000, 80] points out, the US film and the TV programming industries are “absolutely booming at the global level”. For instance, the major film studios and TV production companies generate approximately 60% of their revenues outside the United States. Because of the extension of their distribution systems, these companies face little competition. Small companies and independent filmmakers have few chances to survive in such a highly concentrated media environment; the only choice for a firm or independent professional willing to enter the market is to buy one of the existing media giants - what is not really a possibility, since

small competitors are unlikely to have “a spare \$10 or \$20 billion” - or to forge a link with one of them. The choice is limited, considering that the global film industry is dominated by seven firms (that belong to larger media conglomerates) and the global music industry, which generates 70% of its revenue outside of the United States, is controlled by only five companies.

The global leadership of the US film industry, however, does not remain unchallenged. India, for example, not only has the most prolific film industry in the world, but the domestic film market is dominated by Indian productions. To have an idea, in 2008 a total of 1,132 feature films were released in India. Films in Hindi, which are part of the internationally prominent Mumbai-based film industry known as Bollywood, accounted for 20% of the films produced in 2008. In the same year, national films held for 92% of the market share [European Audiovisual Observatory, 2010, 58]. According to Rajadhyaksha [2008, 18], the first decade of the 21st century was characterized by an increasing participation of Bollywood films in the global market: “There is a craze for ‘Bollywood’ masala that quite exceeds what we’ve ever seen before; from Tokyo to Timbuktu people are dancing to Indipop, names such as Shah Rukh Khan are circulating in places where people may never have heard of Indira Gandhi, and (...) there is apparently money to be made”. Several companies have already perceived the potential of “diasporic markets” and a demand for Bollywood productions. As Kavoori & Punathambekar [2008, 5] point out, the introduction of Bollywood fare in overseas markets has been achieved through theatrical releases, satellite television and online delivery systems. The digital Hindi movie channel B4U (Bollywood for You), launched in 1999 in Great Britain, is currently available on eight satellites in over 100 countries in Europe, North America, Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East. Moreover, networks such as Zee Network, Star Plus and Sony Entertainment have increased the hours dedicated to Hindi programming in order to reach “diasporic” audiences.

Also known for its traditional and prolific film industry, France has a tradition of promoting protectionist measures to support its domestic film industry and resist American cultural influence. In 2009, 230 films were produced in France [European Audiovisual Observatory, 2010, 23]; in the same year, 677 films were produced in the United States. It is important to add that 2009 was a especially challenging year for the US film industry because of the difficult economic climate and the strike of the Writer’s Guilds of America in 2007 and 2008; the US studios usually produce between 700 and 900 feature films a year. The period

2005-2007 was especially productive for the US film industry, which released over 900 films a year. The reduction in the number of releases also reflects the phenomenon of “blockbusterization”, which is a trend among major studios to focus on “big budget blockbusters” that represent safe investments with large profits both in the domestic and in the international market [European Audiovisual Observatory, 2010, 43]. The fear of “blockbusterization”, combined with the French tradition of cultural protectionism, is summarized in the concept of *exception culturelle* (cultural exception), which was introduced by France in GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)³ negotiations in 1993. Buchsbaum [2006, 7] explains that the “GATT battle” was a conflict between the United States, who wanted to “include cultural production in the liberalization of trade”, and Europe, who saw the US proposal as a threat to the system of quotas for the screening of European films established in 1989 (Television without Frontiers Directive). The European “victory” in this issue merely “kept the audiovisual off the table”, but did not have more permanent and far-reaching consequences such as an international agreement on cultural works, which could serve as a guideline for solving controversies regarding their status.

Buchsbaum [2006, 13] is critical of the *exception culturelle*, arguing that the initiative rejected the identification of films as goods, but failed to offer an alternative categorization. Because of the association of the term with French “defiance”, the term has been gradually substituted by the more neutral and politically correct expression “cultural diversity”. This is the term used in the context of discussions about the role of cinema in France. Buchsbaum [2006, 16] argues that cinema enjoys a “special status” in France, being considered a valuable asset of its cultural heritage. Despite its high cultural status, the French film industry has a fragile and unstable economic foundation. In order to counter this problem, the government and the National Center of Cinematography and the Moving Image (CNC) encourage increasing concentration in the exhibition and distribution of films, thus reproducing, in the national level, the global neoliberal media system they oppose. Nevertheless, cinema has established itself as “the most outspoken, and successful, antagonist to the United States free trade ideology” [Buchsbaum, 2006, 19]. Despite the efforts to protect and foster the domestic film industry, there is a clear trend towards the increasing preponderance of US productions. In 2009, the admissions for domestic films decreased 13.5% (from

³GATT was inaugurated in 1947 and extinguished in 1993, being replaced by the WTO (World Trade Organization) in 1995 [BBC News, 2012].

45.3% of the national market share in 2008 to 36.8% in the following year). In the same year, the market share of US films grew 21.8%, reaching 49.7% of the market. With increasing media concentration in the national and international levels, the film market in France seems to be moving towards the unavoidable predominance of US films. This is already a reality in Germany, where national films retain a market share of only 27.4%, and 15 of the top 20 films in 2009 were US productions [European Audiovisual Observatory, 2010, 25].

The main feature of the global media system is not “transnational control over exported media content”, but rather the increasing control of transnational corporations (TNCs) over media distribution and content within nations [McChesney, 2000, 80]. While in the 1980s and 1990s national media systems were characterized by nationally owned radio, television and newspaper industries, the expansion of global media in the late 20th and early 21st century has led to a completely new scenario. Although newspapers remain a domestic matter, television structure and content have changed “almost beyond recognition”. McChesney [2000, 80] summarizes the new face of television outside the United States as follows:

“The rise of cable and satellite technology has opened up national markets to scores of new channels and revenue streams. (...) [T]he primary providers of these channels are the media TNCs that dominate cable television channel ownership in the United States and have aggressively established numerous global editions of their channels to accommodate the new market. Neoliberal ‘free market’ policies have opened up ownership of stations as well as cable and satellite systems to private and transnational interests.”

As enthusiastic defendants of the principles of “free market” and “free flow of information”, the United States and its powerful media conglomerates are the main beneficiaries of an economic and cultural globalization process supported by neoliberal arguments. Quoting the *Wall Street Journal*, McChesney [2000, 81] refers to TNCs as “cable colonialists”, exercising their economic and symbolic power to occupy as many foreign territories as possible. Despite initiatives by Australia and European countries to establish domestic media content quotas and other mechanisms to “protect and promote domestic cultural production” [McChesney, 2000, 82], the tendency is that national media systems bend to the pressures of commercialism and the global media system, becoming increasingly dominated by TNCs. This trend is often supported by commercial media lobbies in

the national level that promote the opening of borders to transnational corporate interests over the maintenance of trade barriers, which are supposedly harmful to consumers. European nations have historically “enjoyed prominent and well-financed national public broadcasters”. Nevertheless, the current trend in Europe points to the direction of escalating neoliberalism and commercialism in the media sector. The author offers an illustrative example of this transformation. Concerned about the rapid expansion of US-based media firms and aiming at protecting European-made media content, the EU almost passed a law, in 1997, establishing that 50% of TV content be European-made. The initiative, however, was called off by an aggressive lobbying campaign coordinated by large European media firms connected to US capital and dependent on US media programming. As a result the law was reformulated, becoming “virtually meaningless” and signaling to a greater disposition of the EU to spread “commercial values” [McChesney, 2000, 83] rather than to adopt policies to promote and protect nationally and locally produced media.

Media produced in the local, regional and national levels in general not only better reflect the needs and tastes of audiences but are also an important factor in fostering domestic economic growth. Moreover, they play an important social role, reinforcing existing identities and promoting a feeling of belonging through the portrayal of a particular group on the screen. Although it is undeniable that a truly diverse media programming cannot comprise only national productions, it is also true that the predominance of media produced by companies from a single country can jeopardize attempts to design a program that is not only economically practicable but also stands out in terms of quality and relevance for the public. In order to illustrate this assumption, the TV program of a number of commercial and public TV channels in Germany and Brazil will be briefly analyzed. The analysis will be based on the hypothesis that all media, even those that are explicitly profit-oriented, strive to offer consumers products that are well-made, entertaining, informative, socially, politically and/or culturally relevant and capable of inducing reflection on relevant issues. Considering that quality is a slippery concept, it will be understood here as a combination of aesthetic features, technological excellence (as in opposition to amateur productions) and meaningful content, measured according to the perceived educational, informative and/or entertainment effect.

The following excerpt of a weekly TV magazine shows the daily program of four German TV channels, two public and two private-owned, on September 20,

2011 (Fig. 4.1) and October 15, 2011 (Fig. 4.2). A brief analysis of the program offered by the broadcasters on the given dates should emphasize the formats and content priorities established by commercial and public broadcasters and illustrate a profit-oriented and a public service approach to media programming, showing how media concentration expresses itself in media content. The commercial television broadcasters chosen for this analysis are RTL II and Kabel eins. The shareholders of RTL II are RTL GROUP S.A. (35,9%), Heinrich Bauer Verlag KG (31,5%), Burda GmbH (1,1%) and Tele München Fernseh GmbH & Co. Medienbeteiligung KG (31,5%) [RTL II, 2012]. The Tele München Group is not only a major shareholder of RTL II, one of the most commercially successful free TV channels in Germany, but is also involved in multiple media businesses in several countries, exemplifying the typical structure and omnipresence of large global media conglomerates. For instance, the Tele München Group operates in broadcasting, being a major shareholder of RTL II and Tele 5 in Germany and of ATV in Austria, in the production and distribution of media content with companies such as TM International, Concorde Home Entertainment and Prisma Entertainment Production [Tele München Gruppe, 2012c], and in movie screening with CinemaxX Group, which “operates 46 cinema centers with 339 screens and approximately 88.000 seats in Germany and Denmark” and “was the first German cinema company with stocks traded on the market” [Tele München Gruppe, 2012a].

TM International was one of the companies involved in the production and distribution of *The Relic*, one of the films analyzed in Chapter 3. One of RTL II most popular reality shows, *Frauentausch*, is produced by Prisma [Tele München Gruppe, 2012b]. It is reasonable to assume that there is a direct correlation between the business interests of the broadcaster’s shareholders and the content aired. The extensive list of media businesses under the umbrella of the Tele München Group is an example of vertical media concentration, where a large conglomerate owns several firms involved in the production, distribution, exhibition and commercialization of a particular type of media product. Horizontal concentration happens when a corporation owns a variety of media products, e.g. television, film, radio, publishing and the Internet [Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, 98-100]. The implications of vertical concentration will be discussed later.

Kabel eins is owned by the ProSieben-Sat.1 broadcasting company, which also includes, in Germany, the open TV channels ProSieben, Sat.1, and sixx. The company operates 27 TV channels in 10 European countries, reaching more than 67

DI

20. September

Tipp **Mit den besten Tipps des Tages**

Ihre Sender im

KABEL 1

5.45 Unsere kleine Farm (Wh.) 3:711-202

6.55 Informercials 4:441-484

7.55 Charmed (Wh.) 6:337-778

8.55 Quincy (Wh.) 3:051-049

9.55 Unsere kleine Farm (Wh.) 3:140-204

11.55 Die Bill Cosby-Show (Wh.) 4:936-136

12.55 Alf Comedyserie, USA 1990 4:969-952

13.55 Two and a Half Men 2:78-339

14.50 Meine wilden Töchter Comedyserie, USA 2005 (Wh.) 2:167-372

15.20 Meine wilden Töchter Comedyserie, USA 2005 – 24. Der Tag der Ziegen (Wh.) Achley (Nicole Richie, L. und Bridget (Kaley Cuoco) müssen am Mittwoch gemeinsam nachsitzen.

15.50 What's up, Dad? Comedyserie, USA 02 – 28+29. Lass dich überraschen (1+2/2) (Wh.) 1:076-339

16.45 News Nachrichten 3:164-049

16.55 Two and a Half Men Comedyserie, USA 2006 – 5. Ein guter Schläfer (Wh.) / 6. Odipus (Wh.) Charles Freundin Lydia ist eine echte Zicke und ein Ebenbild von Evelyn.

17.50 Abenteuer Leben Infomag. 2:923-943

19.15 Achtung, Kontrolle! 2:162-556

RTL II

5.40 Hör mal, wer da hämmert! Comedyserie, USA 1997 9:780-339

6.00 Das 1-2-3-TV Auktionshaus Werbung 3:211-865

8.00 Informercial Werbung 3:271-933

9.00 Frauentausch Dokusoap 3:202-117

11.00 Berlin – Tag & Nacht 3:78-463

12.00 X-Diaries – love, sun & fun 4:99-759

12.30 Der Trüdeltrupp – Das Geld liegt im Keller Dokusoap 5:98-407

14.00 Die Schnäppenhäuser – Der Traum vom Eigenheim 9:923-223

15.00 Immer wieder Jim Comedyserie, USA 2002 – 19. Der Umtausch (Wh.) Jim will einen kaputten DVD-Player umtauschen, findet aber die Quittung nicht. / 20. Nostalgie-Anfälle (Wh.) 1:556-407

16.00 King of Queens Comedyserie, USA 01 – 21. Der Liebestöber Doku mag Carries Duft nicht. / 22. Echte Wohltäter (Wh.) 1:599-323

17.00 Family Stories Dokusoap (3x) 643-Sahne ist mein Leben! (2) 2:162-556

18.00 X-Diaries – love, sun & fun Dokusoap – Als Melissa Ex Sascha an ihrem Arbeitsplatz auftaucht, behauptet sie, einen neuen Freund zu haben. Auf Ceylan ist sie sauer, weil sie Sascha die Adresse gegeben hat.

19.00 Berlin – Tag & Nacht 3:78-463

20.00 RTL II News Nachrichten 3:55-198

MDR

7.00 LexiTV – Wissen für alle 2:399-662

8.00 Verbotene Liebe 6:178-846

8.45 Sturm der Liebe (1377) 2:45-156-846

9.35 Bei uns entdeckt 3:165-223

9.50 Günther Jauch 2:743-285

10.50 Windrose Magazin 3:96-002-240

11.20 Mach dich ran! Spielshow 9:147-198

11.45 MDR um zwölf 4:90-300-49

12.30 Fakt ist... Talkshow 6:873-846

13.15 Unternehmen Oktopus 7:690-949

14.00 Dabei ab zwei Infomag. 1:440-594

14.30 LexiTV – Wissen für alle Windjämmer – Stolz der Meere Windjämmer bedeutet so viel wie „Schiffe, die sich an den Wind drücken“. Victoria Hermann beschäftigt sich mit der Geschichte der Großsegler, die viele Menschen mit Schwindel und Ferkel verbinden.

15.30 Der MDR-Garten Infomag. 1:429-001

16.00 Hier ab vier Infomagazin 1:430-730

16.30 Hier ab vier Infomagazin 2:842-952

17.00 Hier ab vier Leichter leben Gelenkschmerzen mit Dr. Thomas Dietz

17.40 Hier ab vier Infomagazin 1:040-759

18.00 MDR aktuell 2:795-402

18.07 Brisant 2: Boulevardmag. 2:059-488

18.50 Unser Sandmännchen 3:179-488

19.00 Ländermagazin 6:728-401

19.30 MDR aktuell 2:795-402

19.50 Einfach genial! Magazin 3:468-759

RBB

7.10 Abendschau Nachrichten 9:295-488

7.40 ZIBB Magazin 2:618-204

8.35 OZON unterwegs 2: Mag. 3:900-556

9.05 Abgestimmt und ausgehört Wahl-Nachlese 61:331-914

9.50 Mein Mann ist dement 3:750-285

10.20 nano Wissensmagazin 3:167-662

10.50 Unser Sinne Doku 3:817-339

11.05 Unser Sinne Doku 7:576-402

11.20 Sturm der Liebe (1377) 2:45-168-407

12.10 Rote Rosen (1108) 6: 92:872-372

13.05 Schloss Einstein 8 (Wh.) 51:929-946

13.30 In aller Freundschaft 2: 3:313-759

14.15 Planet Wissen Wissensmagazin – Thema: Staub – Ursprung des Lebens

15.15 Reisebueche Doku D 2010 3:873-830

15.15 ARD-Buffet 6: Rategabe 80:284-575

16.50 kurz vor 5 Infomagazin 9:146-391

17.05 Elefant, Tiger & Co. (211) 1:473-827

17.05 Die Amurleoparden Vatte hat eine Totgeburt / Lama Horst muss zum Zahnarzt / Jens Hirmer will sich Alpaka Harry verkörpern / Padana bringt einen kleinen Orang-Utan zur Welt / Die Graukopflarkaschke verträgt sich nicht mit anderen Vögeln

17.55 Unser Sandmännchen 3:179-488

18.00 rbb um sechs Regionalmag. 1:132-594

18.30 ZIBB Magazin 2:618-204

19.30 Regional-Magazin 1:046-575

20.00 Tagesschau 2: Nachrichten 1:487-778

20 UHR

Dokusoap



20.15 Die strengsten Eltern der Welt Dokusoap, D 2010 – Bei Familie Miligras in Sibirien gibt es kein fließendes Wasser. Hier sollen Janine (L.) und Sascha erzogen werden. 3:736-310

22.20 K1 Magazin „Fakten, die bewegen“ – so lautet das Motto der Sendung mit Kim Heinze im a n n (Foto) damit sind vor allem Servicethemen gemeint. 7:007-440

23.25 K1 Reportage Luxus ohne Limit Das Leben der Superreichen Das Kamerateam begleitet New Yorker Millionäre beim Urlaub in den Hamptons. 2:526-962

0.15 Achtung, Kontrolle! Dokusoap – Hottest Mallorca 1:436-688

1.40 Abenteuer Auto Magazin 3:322-792

2.55 K1 Reportage 6:161-808

2.40 Meine wilden Töchter Comedyserie (Wh. von 14.50 Uhr) 2:839-570

4.00 Meine wilden Töchter 6:594-112

20 UHR

Dokusoap



20.15 Zuhause im Glück – Neuer Einzug in ein neues Leben Dokusoap – Als Melissa Ex Sascha an ihrem Arbeitsplatz auftaucht, behauptet sie, einen neuen Freund zu haben. Auf Ceylan ist sie sauer, weil sie Sascha die Adresse gegeben hat. 1:199-136

22.15 RTL II Spezial. Das Magazin „Zuhause im Glück“ 4:320-488

23.15 Außergewöhnliche Menschen Reportage NEU 8:033-620

0.10 Autopiste Doku, USA, 2007 4:972-860

1.15 Außergewöhnliche Menschen Reportage, GB 2008 8:008-605

2.05 Ärger im Revier Soap 6:572-963

2.15 Gefährliche Nachbarn Thriller, CDN 2005 (Wh.) Mit Megan Gallagher, Claudette Mink 8:586

Magazin



20.15 Umschau Magazin 7:820-846

Moderation: Ana Plasencia (Foto)

20.45 Mitteldeutschland von oben 2: Dokumentation, D 2011 NEU 3:108-575

Von Eisenach bis Leipzig

21.15 Echt! Wissensmagazin 5:741-914

21.45 MDR aktuell 2:795-402

22.05 Gesundheit DDR! (1) NEU 3:789-020

2-täg. Doku, D 2011 – Neue Ärzte braucht das Land (2.Teil: 27.9.)

22.50 Polizeiruf 110 2: DDR 90 8:440-827

(Wh.) Ball der einsamen Herzen Mit Peter Borgelt – Die Gagnovon Kren (Peter Reusse, mit Barbara Schnitzler) und Hont rauben einsamen Damen das Herz und ihr Geld. 99Min.

0.15 Der Staatsanwalt hat das Wort Krimiserie, DDR 1988 (Wh.) 49:029-841

1.35 Brisant 2: Boulevardmag. 2:289-976

2.15 Herbstromane in der Sächsisch-Böhmischen Schweiz Dokumentation, D 2008 89:245-150

20 UHR

Dokumentation



20.15 Geheimnisvolle Orte 2: NEU Dokumentation, D 2011 5:371-993

AN Wannsee Der Wannsee ist ein Ort mit Geschichte. In vielen Villen nisteten sich Nazis ein, die jüdischen Besitzer mussten fliehen. Auf die Wannseekonferenz fand hier statt.

21.00 Klipp & Klar Gespräch 3:783-662

Marco Seiffert moderiert den politischen Bürgertalk, der sich mit aktuellen Themen befasst.

21.45 rbb aktuell Nachrichten 2:997-662

22.15 Thaduese Gespräch 2:581-865

22.45 Somersault – Wie Parfüm in der Luft 9: 93:385-952

Drama, AUS 2004 (Wh.) Mit Abbie Cornish, Sam Worthington – Heidi findet aus ihrem ländlichen Zuhause und landet in einem Winterskiort. Hier sucht sie die Liebe. 99Min.

0.25 Vom Pionier zum Millionär (2) 5-täg. Doku, D 2009 19:189-624

1.10 Lygia Doku, D 2009 49:029-976

1.40 Eltern – unehrerfahrend, hilflos, überfordert Reportage 5:391-353

2.10 Abendschau Nachrichten 68:199-711

2.40 Brandenburg aktuell 68:189-334

Figure 4.1: TV programming in Germany on September 20, 2011. Source: TV Piccolino 19/11, 10.09-23.09.2011.

million households daily [ProSiebenSat.1 Media AG, 2012]. The public broadcasters Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR) and Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB) are public-law institutions representing, respectively, the federal states of Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt and Thüringen and Berlin and Brandenburg. Financed mainly through the collection of public broadcasting fees by the federal government, the programming of MDR and RBB is characterized by very little advertising and a program with focus on regional news, events and culture. The first example shows the program aired on September 20, 2011 (Tuesday). A first look reveals that both commercial channels, Kabel eins and RTL II, rely heavily on reality shows, a common practice in American TV broadcasters as well. Many of the formats exhibited in Germany are based on shows created in the United States. The *Dokusoap*⁴ *Die strengsten Eltern der Welt*, for example, shows the experiences of rebellious German teenagers in exotic places, where they must deal with anger and other behavioral issues. The show follows the steps of *Brat Camp*, launched in Great Britain in 2004 and also aired in Australia and the United States [Channel 4, 2004]. Interestingly, RTL II has its own version of the show, called *Teenager außer Kontrolle*. Reality TV formats are known for being relatively cheap to produce and for a tendency to bring high ratings, thus representing a low-risk investment in a system concerned about the reduction of risks and multiplication of profits.

The strong dependence on US fare and reality TV formats and the insignificant amount of time dedicated to news are the main aspects that stand out in the program of Kabel eins. The first ten hours of programming (from 5.45 am to 5.50 pm) are almost completely dedicated to US family series and sitcoms, starting with *Unsere kleine Farm* (original title: *Little House on the Prairie*) and ending with *Two and a Half Men*. The series marathon is only interrupted for advertising (*Infomercials* at 6.55am) and a ten-minute news bulletin at 4.45 pm. The evening program is a succession of *Dokusoaps* and other documentary-like programs such as the *K1 Reportage* at 11.25 pm, reporting on “the life of the super rich” and the sumptuous holidays of New Yorker millionaires. Such a program not only lacks informative content, but it also lacks relevance for most German audiences, since only a few privileged viewers can identify themselves with the lifestyle of wealthy Americans and the local interest factor is missing. Although documentaries that portray unfamiliar or foreign cultures and lifestyles may have a strong educational

⁴From the German: *Dokumentar-Seifenoper*, or documentary soap opera, a scripted reality show.

potential and teach viewers lessons about the life outside of state and national borders, it is doubtful that a portrayal of wealth and luxury in the United States plays any educational role rather than praising a lifestyle that is unattainable for most viewers, unless such a portrayal is done in a critical way, what is rarely the case with mainstream commercial broadcasters.

Although RTL II recognizes the importance to focus on local interest, it also fails to attend to viewers' informational and educational needs. The broadcaster dedicates a total of 15 minutes of its daily programming to news reporting (*RTL II News* at 8 pm). The morning and afternoon program consists of *Doku-Soaps* made in Germany and US sitcoms. RTL II has specialized in reality TV formats that range from the portrayal of real people in real-life situations (*Frauentausch*⁵, *Zuhause im Glück*) to scripted shows like *X-Diaries*, a “Dokunovela” described by Hildebrandt [2010] as a hybrid TV format that combines the dramatics of a soap opera with the authenticity of a Dokusoap. *X-Diaries* shows the adventures and sexual escapades of German tourists (played by amateur actors) in popular holiday destinations in Spain. Despite the overall low quality of the program and strong criticism by journalists and media experts, *X-Diaries* is a commercial success with an average of 0,76 million viewers [Quotenmeter.de, 2012]. The popularity and profitability of reality TV formats is confirmed by the prime time program: the show *Zuhause im Glück*, aired at 8.15 pm, is followed by a short documentary at 10.15 pm that presents a look behind the scenes of *Zuhause im Glück*, following up on the families helped by the show where a team renovates dilapidated houses of families dealing with health issues or financial ruin. Exploring emotional situations and personal fates is a favorite strategy of reality TV to captivate viewers and is successfully employed by RTL II in several programs.

While RTL II programming focuses on light entertainment and follows a voyeuristic approach based on personal stories told through scripted reality TV, MDR goes in the opposite direction and concentrates on news reporting and fictional productions and documentaries made in Germany. German fiction is represented by the soap operas *Verbotene Liebe* and *Sturm der Liebe* (respectively at 8.00 am and 8.45 am), the film *Polizeiruf 110* (10.50 pm) and the crime series *Der Staatsanwalt hat das Wort* (0.15 am). Although celebrity news and other light themes are also part of the program (*Brisant* at 1.35 am and 6.07 pm), reporting on themes of local interest and social relevance predominates, for example in the

⁵The American version of the program is called *Wife Swap*.

programs *MDR um zwölf*, *Dabei ab zwei*, *Hier ab vier*, *MDR aktuell* and *Umschau*. Scientific themes are presented to the average viewer in programs like *LexiTV - Wissen für alle*, *Einfach genial!* and *Echt!*. Health, gastronomy, politics, economy, history, culture and consumer rights are favourite themes in MDR programs, indicating that the public broadcaster is concerned with fulfilling its informational and educational role, as well as offering entertainment options that reflect local values and traditions.

The same program pattern found at MDR can be observed at the public broadcaster for Berlin and Brandenburg, RBB. While science is mostly a taboo topic for private broadcasters such as Kabel eins and RTL II, RBB also attempts to bring it closer to the viewers through programs such as *OZON unterwegs*, *nano* and *Planet Wissen*. News bulletins are aired several times a day (*Abendschau* at 7.10 am, *Tagesschau* at 8.00 pm, *RBB aktuell* at 9.45 pm and *Brandenburg aktuell* at 2.40 am) and complemented by documentaries (*Reisewege*, 3.15 pm) and reporting on specific themes, e.g. sports and animal rights in *kurz vor 5*, as well as economy, culture, politics and local themes in *ZiBB* and *Regional-Magazin*. Whereas there is a clear focus on national productions and regional themes, foreign productions also find their way into RBB's program, e.g. the film *Somersault* (Cate Shortland 2004, Australia) at 10.45 pm. All in all it can be argued that RBB is also aware of the mission of public broadcasters, i.e. to provide the public with programs that are enlightening and informative, to offer diverse and intelligent entertainment options and to keep viewers informed about developments that affect society as well as environmental, political and social issues.

The second example used to point out the main differences between private and public broadcasters and to illustrate consequences of the adoption of a market or public sphere model of media is the program of the above mentioned broadcasters on October 15, 2011 (Saturday). A brief comparison of the Tuesday and Saturday programs indicates that there are few variations in program content in different days of the week.

The Saturday morning program of Kabel eins consists of US cartoons for children. From 11 am until 8.15 pm, the viewer is bombarded with a series of *Dokusoaps* that focus on emotional situations and family conflicts (*Die strengsten Eltern der Welt* and *Schluss mit Hotel Mama*), cars (*Abenteuer Auto* and *Abenteuer Tuning*) and law enforcement (*Mein Revier* and *Achtung Kontrolle*). The single news bulletin included in the program (4.20 pm) lasts only ten minutes. *Mein Revier* and *Achtung Kontrolle* show the routine of policemen, custom officials

SA 15. Oktober

Tipp Mit den besten Tipps des Tages

Ihre Sender im

KABEL 1

7.40 Tom & Jerry ab 6 (Wh.) 3:46-399
7.55 Scooby-Doo ab 6 (Wh.) 1:33-283
8.20 Checker Magazin ab 8 8:40-738
8.45 Ben 10 ab 8 (Wh.) 9:72-912
9.15 Ben 10: Uti. Alien ab 8 (Wh.) 9:48-080
9.40 Fantastic Four ab 8 (Wh.) 2:78-947
10.05 Spider-Man ab 8 (Wh.) 8:23-828
10.30 Star Wars: Clone Wars ab 10 1:202
11.00 Die strengsten Eltern der Welt
 Dokusaoop – Aylin (16) 1:376-806
13.10 Schluss mit Hotel Mama 9:57-711
14.10 Mein Revier Dokusaoop
 Drogenhändler, Schlägereien und Überfälle – das ist das Leben von Martina Wissmann (46). Die Stuttgarterin ist Cop in Texas und sorgt in Seguin für Ruhe und Ordnung.
16.20 News Nachrichten 3:46-573
16.20 Abenteurer Auto Magazin 10:370
 Echt oder getrickts? Mit verbundenen Augen über die Rennstrecke!
18.00 Abenteurer Tuning Magazin 57:407
 Heute widmet sich Lina van de Mars einem Filmstar: dem Ford TSi Gene Hackman, Steve McQueen und Burt Reynolds saßen bei diversen Verfolgungsfahrten hinterm Steuer.
19.00 Achtung, Kontrolle! 674-399
 Ordnungspolizei Eschborn

RTL II

6.20 Pokémon Animeserie ab 8 1:857-221
6.45 Yu-Gi-Oh! 5Ds ab 8 8:48-950
7.45 Pokémon Animeserie ab 8 3:14-573
8.30 Dragon Ball ab 8 4:078-405
9.25 Naruto Shippuden ab 8 7:735-467
10.20 Slappy und die Rasselbande
 Komödie, USA 1998 (Wh.) 6:487-405
 Mit Jennifer Coolidge 7195-MMA
11.55 Bubble Boy – Leben hinter Plastik
 Komödie, USA 00 (Wh.) 80:966-738
 *** Mit Jake Gyllenhaal 73700-MMA
13.35 Quigley, der Australier 3:208-405
 Western, USA 1989 (Wh.) Mit Tom Selleck, Alan Rickman 100:180-MMA
15.55 Der Mann ohne Gesicht 60:366-641
 Drama, USA 1993 (Wh.) Mit Mel Gibson, Nick Stahl – Der durch einen Unfall entstellte Lehrer Justin McCool freundet sich mit dem zwölfjährigen Chuck an. 180519-MMA
18.10 Jim Carroll – In den Straßen
 Biografie, USA 1994 (Wh.) Mit Leonardo DiCaprio, Bruno Kirby, Lorraine Bracco – Jim Carrolls Talent als Basketball-Spieler beschert ihm ein Stipendium an einer renommierten Highschool. Dort kommt er erstmals mit Drogen in Berührung. Nach dem frühen Tod eines Freundes sucht er immer tiefer in die Heroinsucht. Sein Dasein besteht schließlich nur noch aus der Sucht. 82719-MMA
20.00 RTL II News Nachrichten 571-134

MDR

7.30 Timmys Traum vom Eislaufen
 Dokumentation, D 2011 4:371-370
8.00 Verzauberte Emma oder Hilfe, ich bin ein Junge... 4:50-979
 Komödie, D 2002 (Wh.) 89 Min.
9.30 Sturm der Liebe ab 8 63:861-738
10.20 Tierärztin Dr. Mertens ab 2 77:086-196
11.05 Sehen statt hören ab 2 7:136-888
11.35 Retter an Irlands Küsten 30:507-047
12.20 Lindenstraße ab 2 Serie 6:394-252
12.50 Auf den Brocken Doku 2:463-009
14.25 Karibisches Dschungelbuch
 Dokumentation, D 2004 6:918-46
15.10 In aller Freundschaft ab 2 70:817-879
 Arztserie, D 04 – 225. Vergesslichkeiten (Wh.) Die 85-jährige Maria wird mit schweren Verbrennungen in die Klinik eingeliefert. Elena hat zudem den Verdacht, dass die Patientin an Alzheimer erkrankt ist.
16.03 höchstpersönlich Porträtreihe
 Gesine Cukrowski 302:309-641
16.30 Sport im Osten ab 2 1:160-739
 Aktueller Sport vom Tage
18.00 Auf gute Nachbarschaft 5:843-776
18.15 Unterwegs bei Sachsens Nachbarn Reisesmagazin
 Böhmisches Versailles
18.50 Unser Sandmännchen
 Gute-Nacht-Geschichte ab 3 38:908-640
19.00 Ländermagazine 2:271-115
19.30 MDR aktuell ab 2 Nachr. 4:856-757
19.50 Quickie Quizshow 7:447-663

RBB

8.00 Brandenburg aktuell 1:768-844
8.30 Abendschau Nachrichten 2:368-028
9.00 ZIBB Magazin 3:581-115
10.00 Sehen statt hören 3:501-573
10.30 Die Jury hilft Ratgeber 2:375-92
11.00 Loroten Doku, D 2010 2:372-221
11.35 Polettos Kochschule 7:887-738
12.05 Lindenstraße ab 2 (Wh.) 6:809-573
12.35 Die letzten Paradiese ab 2 87:526-467
13.20 Luzuya Magazin 7:158-641
13.50 Eisenbahn-Romantik 7:179-154
14.20 Große Namen (2/5) 6:980-486
14.50 Die erste Kugel trifft ab 2 2:294-007
 Western, USA 1956 (Wh.) Mit Glenn Ford, Jeanne Crain, Broderick Crawford – Große Temple ist ein friedlicher Drugstore-Besitzer und Ehemann. Dass er ein Ex-Revolverheld ist, reißt den fiesen Winnie, der ihn zum Duell fordert.
16.20 Tierärztin Dr. Mertens ab 2
 Tierärztin, D 2008 (Wh.) 47:923-009
17.10 Die 30 tolststen Schlagertars der Siebziger Plätze 30 – 76 22:976-007
17.50 Unser Sandmännchen ab 2 7:590-405
18.02 Organ gebraucht 308:441-863
 Dokumentation – Der tägliche Kampf ums Überleben
18.32 ARD-Ratgeber: Auto + Verkehr
 Infomagazin 208:426-554
19.00 Heimatjournal Infomag. 8:554-783
19.30 Regional-Magazin 8:801-844
20.00 Tagesschau ab 2 Nachrichten 1:176-202

20 UHR



Krimiserie

20.15 Navy CIS 252-757
 Krimiserie, USA 2003 – 2. Sprung in den Tod (Wh.) Ein Fallschirmjäger der Marines stirbt bei einem Sprung. Gibbs (Mark Harmon) glaubt, dass der Schirm manipuliert wurde, und befragt die Kameraden des Opfers.
21.15 Navy CIS Krimiserie 7:365-680
 USA 2003 – 3. Seadog (Wh.) Mallard untersucht die Leiche von Brian Farrell. Der Navy-Commander wurde erschossen. Die Spur führt zu einem saudischen Terroristen.
22.15 Navy CIS Krimiserie, USA 03 7:094-193
 Die Unterbrücker (Wh.) Ein Soldat des Zerstörers „J.S.S. Foster“ ist offenbar ertränkt worden. Kate und Tony gehen dem Fall auf den Grund.
23.20 Numbr3rs Krimiserie 9:487-196
 USA 08 – 9. Mann im Schatten (Wh.) 92:125-MMA
2.05 Navy CIS Krimiserie 3:224-551
 USA 2003 (Wh. von 20.15 Uhr)
0.10 Navy CIS (Wh. von 21.15) 4:632-865
1.10 Navy CIS (Wh. von 22.15) 2:661-174
1.45 Numbr3rs (Wh. von 23.20) 3:138-500
3.25 What's up, Dad? (Wh.) 2:994-210
3.45 Wer ist hier der Boss? 7:121-245

Krimi



Krimi

20.15 Wehrlos – Die Tochter des Generals 1:328-880
 Krimi, USA 1999 (Wh.) Mit John Travolta, Madeleine Stowe, James Cromwell – In der Kaserne wird die Tochter des Generals Campbell tot aufgefunden. Armee-Ermittler Paul Brenner (John Travolta) stößt bei den Ermittlungen auf kompromittierende Videomaterial. 98:730-MMA
22.25 Hijackers – Auf Leben und Tod 4:905-931
 USA 2001 (Wh.) 92:101-844
 Mit Ice-T, Cyril O'Reilly, Kimberley Oja – Captain Marshall (Ice-T) – soll ein von Verbrechern entführtes Flugzeug mitten im Flug entern.
0.30 The Art of War Thriller 8:966-413
 CBN/USA 2000 (Wh.) Mit Wesley Snipes, Donald Sutherland 107:116-MMA
2.30 Wehrlos – Die Tochter des Generals Krimi, USA 1999 8:625-245
 *** (Wh. von 20.15 Uhr) Mit John Travolta, Madeleine Stowe 97:101-MMA

Reportage



Reportage

20.15 Der XXL-Report neu 70:173-571
 Reportage, D 2011 – Leben in der Platte Der Anblick von Plattenbauten löst Kontroversen aus: Für die einen sind sie reine Schlafmaschinen, für andere eine Form der Baukunst. 1990 wohnte fast jeder dritte Ostdeutsche in „der Platte“. Was hat deren Ruf so ramponiert und zur Massenflucht aus den Neubaublocken geführt? Wie leben die Menschen heute dort?
22.45 MDR aktuell ab 2 Nachr. 52:301-844
23.00 Alpha 0-7 – Der Feind in Dir ab 2
 Serienspecial, D 2010 44:389-660 (Wh.) Johanna Berger gerät ohne ihr Wissen in den Fokus eines neurowissenschaftlichen Experiments. Unterstützung findet sie bei Mila Antonovic und ihren Mitstreitern vom Netzwerk „apollon“.
1.05 36 Stunden ab 2 Kriessfilm, 92:245-974
 USA 1964 (Wh.) Mit James Garner, Rod Taylor – Im Mai 1944, kurz vor der Invasion, gerät US-Major Pike in die Fänge der Nazis. 105-MMA
2.50 Sport im Osten ab 2 36:855-245

Dokumentation



Dokumentation

20.15 Geschichten aus dem Prenzlberg 6:596-912
 Dokumentation, D 2008 – Der Streifzug durch die Geschichte des Prenzlauer Bergs erzählt von Schicksalen und Begebenheiten, die in Vergessenheit geraten sind.
21.00 Geschichten aus Mitte 2:367-577
 Doku, D 2010 – Berlin Mitte – das ist Metropole und Kiez. Hier wird regiert – und trotzdem auch gelebt.
21.45 rbb aktuell Nachrichten 8:076-842
21.45 Dickes B. Talkshow 2:789-467
22.15 Vincent, François, Paul und die Anderen Drama, F/D 1974 75:522-080 (Wh.) Mit Yves Montand, Michel Piccoli, Serge Reggiani – Vincent und Paul treffen sich stets am Wochenende mit ihren Freunden. Sie feiern und verändern ihre Probleme. 188-MMA
1.35 Die große blaue Straße 93:873-326
 Drama, F/D 1957 (Wh.) Mit Yves Montand, Francisco Rabal 88-MMA
3.05 Ein großer und ein kleiner Gauner ab 2 Krimikomödie, 46:873-913
 *** F/1 1976 (Wh.) Mit Y. Montand 97-MMA

Figure 4.2: TV programming in Germany on October 15, 2011. Source: TV Piccolino 21/11, 08.10-21.10.2011.

and patrol cops, concentrating on isolated cases and little editing to achieve an authentic effect and attract the viewers' interest. The programs tend to adopt a sensationalist tone, conveying the impression that authorities are omnipresent and criminal offenses rarely go unpunished, but failing to provide background information. The overall message is that viewers must act according to the law to avoid punishment, but while the camera focuses on altercations between officers and citizens, little is said about the laws that have been broken. The objective is not to inform or educate viewers, but to keep them entertained. In the evening program, this mission is accomplished by a succession of US crime series (*Navy CIS* and *Numb3rs*, from 8.15 pm to 3.25 am).

The Saturday program of RTL II is constituted solely of foreign shows. The morning program consists of Japanese cartoons, followed by US family-friendly programs: *Slappy und die Rasselbande* (original title: *Slappy and the Stinkers*) and *Bubble Boy*. The remaining program is filled with Hollywood productions, e.g. *Wehrlos – Die Tochter des Generals* (original title: *The General's Daughter* (Simon West 1999, Germany/USA)) and *Hijackers - Auf Leben und Tod* (original title: *Air Rage* (Fred Olen Ray 2001, USA)). The only domestic production in the Saturday program is the short news bulletin at 8.00 pm. Just like Kabel eins, RTL II neglects the viewers' informational needs by dedicating only about 1% of the total airing time to news reporting. Although it is undeniable that entertainment is an important function of media, it is also sensible to argue that even broadcasters that specialize in entertainment formats should offer more than 10 minutes daily news reporting. The neglect of news reporting and the strong focus on light entertainment formats detected in the programs of Kabel eins and RTL II are a strong argument in support of public broadcasters.

Diversity is an important element of a democratic media system, and in this context entertainment-oriented channels such as Kabel eins and RTL II play an important role in contributing to this diversity. The content of their programming, however, has deficiencies that must be cleared by alternative channels more concerned with the educational and informational role of media. In Germany, this gap is filled by public broadcasters like MDR and RBB. While mainstream US productions are rather rare in the program of these broadcasters, they offer viewers a large array of documentaries, talk shows, news bulletins and other informational formats to choose from.

The program of MDR and RBB on Saturday corroborates this assertion. The documentary *Timmys Traum vom Eissurfen* opens the morning program at

7.30 am, followed by domestic fictional productions such as *Verzauberte Emma* (film), *Sturm der Liebe* (telenovela) and *Tierärztin Dr. Mertens* (series). Instead of foreign programs for children, MDR opts for airing the classic German stop motion animation *Unser Sandmännchen* at 6.50 pm, preserving the tradition of telling children good night stories before they are sent to bed. *Unser Sandmännchen* is followed by 50 minutes of news reporting (*Ländermagazine* and *MDR aktuell*) and by a documentary about life in a Plattenbau, the traditional East-German block buildings. At the same time slot, RBB brings a documentary about two popular areas of Berlin, Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte. Other attractions that stand out in RBB's Saturday program are the 1956 US Western classic *Die erste Kugel trifft* (original title: *The Fastest Gun Alive* (Russell Rouse 1956, USA)) and the critically acclaimed productions *Vincent, Francois, Paul und die Anderen* (Claude Sautet 1974, France/Italy) and *Die große blaue Straße* (Gillo Pontecorvo and Maleno Malenotti 1957, Italy/France/West Germany/Yugoslavia), both with French actor Yves Montand. Because of their date, place of production and arthouse character, it is unlikely that these films would be included in the program of private commercial broadcasters such as Kabel eins and RTL II, which prefer mainstream productions more appealing to younger audiences increasingly accustomed to consuming media content produced in the United States. These audiences, in turn, are more appealing to advertisers, which are still rare in the program of MDR and RBB.

The dependence on advertisers, expressed on the conformance of content and programming to advertisers' interests, is one of the most pronounced characteristics of the global media system, and the commercial broadcasters mentioned above are clarifying examples of how corporate interests shape media content and place restraints on public debate about significant social and political issues. As Croteau & Hoynes [2006, 169] point out, nowadays "constraints on media in democratic societies are more likely to come from corporations, for economic purposes, than from governments, for purely political purposes". From this perspective, it is sensible to argue that governments should play a role in shaping national media, both by ensuring the existence of public broadcasters that offer citizens media content based on issues of public interest rather than profit-making and by limiting the influence of foreign media companies over national media, be it through protective trade practices or by establishing quotas for domestic productions. Although governmental regulation of media is not a welcome practice among defendants of the free flow of information, it should not be mistaken with

ensorship. As previously mentioned, because of the special nature of media products and their educational and informational role, media should not be solely controlled and shaped by the market and the corporate interests that rule it. Taking into account the relevant social role of media and the need to provide citizens with platforms for public debate free from corporate interests, governments play a fundamental role in ensuring actual democracy and diversity in the domestic media system.

The broadcasting system in Brazil is comparable to the German, with a combination of profit-oriented private channels dependent on advertising and public broadcasters financed by the government. As in the German system, private channels in Brazil seem to focus on light entertainment, while public channels emphasize programs on education and culture. There are, however, striking differences between the programming of Brazilian and German private broadcasters. The analysis of Kabel eins and RTL II has revealed that these channels rely heavily on foreign programming, especially mainstream series and films produced in the United States. In Brazil, the main attractions of private channels are telenovelas and series made in Brazil. Aspects such as tradition, language and localism play a fundamental role in designing the program of both private and public broadcasters in Brazil. While it is possible to identify common priorities and interests between private and public channels in Brazil, the public (MRD and RBB) and private (RTL II and Kabel eins) German channels analyzed previously fail to establish a common ground. MRD and RBB focus on information and culture; RTL II and Kabel eins prioritize light entertainment and neglect news broadcasting and the local interest. This is partially due to the fact that, differently from MRD and RBB, which focus on the states where they operate, RTL II and Kabel eins are national broadcasters without ties to any particular region. Nevertheless, the examples analyzed indicate that themes of national cultural, political and social interest are often ignored.

A brief analysis of the program of Globo, Brazil's largest and most influential broadcaster, illustrate the predominance of locally-produced media in Brazilian television (Fig. 4.3 and Fig. 4.4). The program of April 18, 2012 (Wednesday) shows that foreign productions were aired in the late night time slot, which attracts few viewers: the series *Mentes Criminosas* (original title: *Criminal Minds*) was scheduled to start at 1.51 am, followed by *Corujão*, which shows foreign films that are too old and/or unpopular to be included in the prime time program. Globo's schedule also indicates that programs with educational purposes are not exclusive

of public broadcasters. The early morning slot includes four programs aimed at adult education: *Telecurso Profissionalizante*, *Telecurso TEC*, *Telecurso Ensino Médio* and *Telecurso Ensino Fundamental*. The main objective of these programs is to support the learning process of students pursuing a high school diploma. Information is another priority of Globo: *Globo Rural*, the first news program of the day, starts at 05.53 am with the latest news about the agriculture sector. The news program at 06.32 am (*Bom Dia Praça*) is dedicated to local news: each state produces and airs its own news bulletin. The two editions of *Jornal Local* (12.04 pm and 7.08 pm) follow the same principle. The remaining news programs (*Bom Dia Brasil*, *Globo Esporte*, *Jornal Hoje*, *Globo Notícias*, *Jornal Nacional* and *Jornal da Globo*) deal with topics of national interest and are broadcast in all states.

Telenovelas⁶ are a tradition in Brazilian television and the main highlight of Globo's schedule. *Vale a Pena Ver de Novo* (2.32 pm) shows telenovelas that have been previously broadcast: *Chocolate com Pimenta*, for example, was produced and originally broadcast between September 2003 and May 2004. *Malhação* (5.48 pm) is a soap opera for the teenager audience that has been on air since 1995. Globo's daily schedule includes another three telenovelas produced by the channel in its studios in Rio de Janeiro: *Amor Eterno Amor*, *Cheias de Charme* and *Avenida Brasil*. Globo's telenovelas are extremely popular in Brazil, and the program *Video Show* (1.49 pm) is almost exclusively dedicated to the gossip, the actors, the events and everything related to the production of telenovelas. Other highlights of Globo's schedule are *Mais Você* (8.28 am), a program for the female audience that focuses on gastronomy, decoration, fashion and popular culture, *Bem Estar* (9.56 am), an informative program focused on health and wellness, and the traditional talk show *Programa do Jô* (00.22 am).

In order to emphasize the differences between German and Brazilian television, a brief description of TVE's program will be presented (Fig. 4.5). TVE RS, or TV Educativa de Porto Alegre, is the public TV channel of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and was inaugurated in 1974. It belongs to Fundação Cultural Piratini, an institution administered and financed by the state government. TVE produces its own programs and also transmits programs produced by TV Brasil, the public

⁶Telenovelas are a very popular TV format in Latin America. The main difference between telenovelas and soap operas is the duration: while soap operas can continue indefinitely, telenovelas have a limited duration. In Brazilian television they are exhibited from Monday to Saturday for approximately six months.

REDE GLOBO | programação

programação | programas | filmes | notícias | especiais | jogos | cidadania

QUA 18 abr < >
















| | | |
|---------|---|-------------------------------------|
| + 04:50 |  | Sagrado |
| + 04:52 |  | Telecurso Profissionalizante |
| + 05:08 |  | Telecurso TEC |
| + 05:23 |  | Telecurso Ensino Médio |
| + 05:38 |  | Telecurso Ensino Fundamental |
| + 05:53 |  | Globo Rural |
| + 06:32 |  | Bom Dia Praça |
| + 07:30 |  | Bom Dia Brasil |
| + 08:28 |  | Mais Você |
| + 09:56 |  | Bem Estar |
| + 10:39 |  | TV Globinho |
| + 12:04 |  | Jornal local - 1ª Edição |
| + 12:51 |  | Globo Esporte |
| + 13:20 |  | Jornal Hoje |
| + 13:49 |  | Video Show |

Figure 4.3: The program of Globo on April 18, 2012 (Part 1 of 2). Source: www.globo.com

| QUA 18 abr | | < | > |
|------------|---|--|---|
| + 13:49 |  | Video Show | |
| + 14:32 |  | Vale a Pena Ver de Novo <small>Chocolate com Pimenta</small> | |
| + 15:45 |  | Futebol <small>Liga dos Campeões da Europa</small> | |
| + 17:45 |  | Globo Noticia | |
| + 17:48 |  | Malhação | |
| + 18:18 |  | Amor Eterno Amor | |
| + 19:08 |  | Jornal local - 2ª Edição | |
| + 19:25 |  | Cheias de Charme | |
| + 20:30 |  | Jornal Nacional | |
| + 20:56 |  | Avenida Brasil | |
| + 21:50 |  | Futebol | |
| + 23:50 |  | Jornal da Globo | |
| + 00:22 |  | Programa do Jô | |
| + 01:51 |  | Mentes Criminosas | |
| + 02:38 |  | Corujão | |

Figure 4.4: The program of Globo on April 18, 2012 (Part 2 of 2). Source: www.globo.com

broadcaster of the federal government. The programs developed by TV Brasil do not focus on particular regions but rather on Brazilian culture and society as a whole. In this sense, the broadcaster is comparable to German public national broadcasters ZDF and ARD. Similarly to MDR and RBB, TVE has a regional character and reflects the particular interests of the audience: *Galpão Nativo*, for example, is dedicated to traditional music and culture of Rio Grande do Sul. The program *Cidadania* discusses issues related to public health, education and human rights; *Viva Bem* provides older audiences with information about health and life quality. The children programs *Castelo Rá-Tim-Bum*, *Menino Maluquinho*, *Janela Janelinha* and *A Turma do Pererê*, as well as the news programs *Revista do Cinema Brasileiro* and *Repórter Brasil*, are produced by TV Brasil. The highlight of TVE's schedule on 21 April, 2012 (Saturday) is *Mostra de Cinema Gaúcho*, a special program that features films made in Rio Grande do Sul.

Although it is necessary to consider the cultural, social and historical particularities of each country, the comparison between television content in Brazil and Germany provides insights for reflection. The most striking difference between German private television, represented in the analysis by RTL II and Kabel eins, and Brazilian leading private broadcaster Globo is the time dedicated to news and informative programs. While the German channels tend to neglect the informational needs of their audiences, dedicating an insignificant amount of time to news broadcasting, Globo's schedule includes ten daily news programs and informative programs such as *Bem Estar*, which has a clear thematic focus. Moreover, Globo produces most of its own programming, while RTL II and Kabel eins rely heavily on American films and series. German and Brazilian regional public broadcasters, on the other hand, seem to have similar priorities and a comparable program structure that emphasizes information and education, taking regional needs and interests into consideration. A discussion about the characteristics and habits of Brazilian and German audiences would possibly help to understand the discrepancies identified in the previous analysis, but such a discussion lies outside of the scope of this work.

The main result of the analysis is the realization that profit-oriented television must not be a synonym for mindless entertainment, and that it is possible to be profitable and competitive while investing on high-quality domestic productions. As any commercial broadcaster, Globo also has its flaws and limitations, but it is a positive example of a media company that attempts to keep audiences well-informed and entertained and does not sacrifice the quality of its programming



Sábado 21/04/2012

1

Programação do dia:21/04/2012

| | |
|-------|------------------------------|
| 06:00 | Galpão Nativo |
| 07:00 | Rio Grande Rural |
| 08:00 | Cidadania |
| 09:00 | Viva Bem |
| 09:30 | Castelo Rá-Tim-Bum |
| 10:00 | Menino Maluquinho |
| 10:30 | Janela Janelinha |
| 11:00 | Histórias Cedric |
| 11:30 | Pandorga |
| 12:00 | Inami |
| 12:30 | Menino Maluquinho |
| 13:00 | A Turma do Pererê |
| 14:30 | Faça a Diferença |
| 15:00 | Programa Especial |
| 15:30 | Saúde Brasil |
| 16:00 | Expedições |
| 16:30 | Alto Falante |
| 17:30 | Segue o Som |
| 18:30 | Aglomerado |
| 19:30 | Para Todos |
| 20:00 | Nação |
| 20:30 | Revista do Cinema Brasileiro |
| 21:00 | Repórter Brasil |
| 21:30 | Primeira Pessoa |
| 22:30 | 2ª Mostra Cinema Gaúcho |
| 00:00 | Fronteiras |
| 01:00 | Palcos da Vida |

Figure 4.5: The program of TVE on April 21, 2012. Source: www.tve.com.br

by including a large number of culturally irrelevant US productions. By observing these results, one can assume that Brazilian private broadcasters still enjoy a high degree of independence from transnational media corporations, while German private channels seem to bend to their influence.

Whereas governmental censorship is mostly a thing of the past, a new type of censorship has taken over global media: corporate censorship. Croteau & Hoynes [2006, 178-179] define this kind of widespread censorship as a result of attempts by powerful companies to silence or neglect “information or views that contradict their goals”. The result is the predominance of views, representations and news reporting that “are compatible with a corporate worldview”. Self-censorship among media professionals also plays a role in defining the topics that are worth discussing and excluding themes deemed inappropriate. Differently from corporate censorship, which is exercised by external forces, self-censorship is a “subtle process” that occurs “when organizational norms or the perception of likely criticism from powerful players leads to changes in media content”. Concerned about keeping their jobs and aware of the company’s interests, media professionals tend to self-censor themselves by avoiding controversial topics and unpopular approaches, thus contributing to the proliferation of media that are uncritical and supportive of the status quo and that favor stereotypical representations, becoming increasingly homogenized and corporate-friendly.

The influence of corporate interests and advertisers on media content is criticized by Bettig & Hall [2003, 5], who argue that advertisers “have a vested interest in keeping consumers uninformed or misinformed”. The insignificant amount of time dedicated to news reporting by most commercial broadcasters, as the analysis of the programs of Kabel eins and RTL II have shown, can be seen as an indication that the advertisers upon which the broadcasters depend for revenue are not interested in keeping viewers informed and able to form opinions about issues affecting society. Moreover, the news reporting of the above-mentioned broadcasters tends to prioritize light news and avoid complex and difficult themes, focusing on isolated events and celebrity news and serving as a platform for the promotion of mainstream media products, e.g. by reporting on new music and cinema releases. This kind of news reporting is not exclusive of Kabel eins and RTL II, but rather the rule in commercial media, and an expression of the power of advertisers over a common good that should be protected from the economic interests of a few: information. Bettig & Hall [2003, 5-6] explain that advertising “helps to support an oligopolistic media structure by deluging

audiences with information about a handful of media products and keeping them largely uninformed about alternatives”. Moreover, advertisers are not only moved by economic but also by ideological motives; from this perspective, advertising can also be seen as “an ideological institution that supports and negates certain ways of thinking”, especially when praising the benefits of the capitalist system:

“In the first few decades of the twentieth century, big brand advertisers began to use national magazines to spread the virtues of consumption, not only through the ads themselves but also through editorial content. Since then, advertiser-supported media have been expected to promote consumerist lifestyles, largely based on credit, to enrich the capitalist class so that its members can enjoy consumption at the level of luxury. Such are the rewards of ownership and control of the few hundred multinational corporations that account for most of the world’s advertising expenditures.” [Bettig & Hall, 2003, 6]

The power of advertisers and the promotion of consumption as the basis of the only desirable and fulfilling lifestyle in commercial media confirm the assumption that the market model of media is not conducive to a democratic and diverse media system based on information and critical debate. An alternative to the market model is the public sphere approach, according to which media must serve the public interest. This approach opposes the basic assumption of the market model: media should remain unregulated and respond to the laws of the market, which is the only truly democratic institution able to give people exactly what they want. This argument has been dismantled by the fact that mainstream commercial media are more interested in satisfying advertisers than audiences. Another fallacy of the market model is the claim that the large number of media outlets available attest to the plurality and diversity of the global media system. In this case, multiplicity - more of the same - is mistaken with genuine diversity. Croteau & Hoynes [2006, 113] corroborate this assumption by arguing that the permanent increase in the number of media outlets should not be seen as “an unequivocal benefit, especially if these outlets are linked to a growing concentration in media ownership”. Moviegoers might have a larger number of theaters and films to choose from, but if the majority of theaters is owned by the same company, which is part of a larger conglomerate interested in promoting only a handful of profitable blockbusters produced by a sister company, their choice has not actually increased.

Diversity of perspectives and representations is a fundamental characteristic of a democratic media system based on public interest. The other prerequisites of such a system are, according to Croteau & Hoynes [2006, 156-157], innovation, substance and independence. The public sphere approach supports these elements by suggesting that “media are fundamentally intertwined with matters of the common good rather than just with private profit”. Media that take the public interest into account are diverse because they “reflect the range of views and experiences present in a diverse society”; they are innovative because they couple technological excellence with creativity, investing in “fresh, creative and original” representations and discourses instead of relying on established formulas; they are substantial because they “include substantive news and entertainment addressing significant issues facing society”, rather than concentrating on sensationalism and celebrity news; and they are independent because they provide citizens with information free from corporate and governmental influence. News reporting and media products untouched by corporate interest and ideological fine-tuning have become the exception rather than the rule, and although it is unrealistic to imagine a global media system based mainly on the public sphere approach, it is necessary to discuss the urgency and the viability of a system able to accommodate both economic and public interests. At the pace with which corporate media expand, soon public broadcasting, local and alternative media will be engulfed by media giants, eliminating essential platforms for independent news reporting, critical debate and entertainment outside the mainstream.

The previous statement may seem extreme at first, but it is corroborated by a number of authors that have been following the development of corporate global media closely. One of the main critics of media concentration and a respected intellectual, Herbert Schiller has exposed the connections between corporate power, governmental *laissez-faire* and the global expansion of US-based media conglomerates. He argues that the second half of the twentieth century has “witnessed a phenomenal growth of corporate power deployed across the social and economic landscape” [Schiller, 1996, 55], adding that this expansion was made possible by three main changes in the institutional structure of American society: “[D]eregulation of economic activity, privatization of functions once public, and commercialization of activities once social”. As a result, not only the “corporate voice is the loudest in the land”, but alternative and independent voices “struggle, generally unsuccessfully, to be heard”. Whereas Schiller focuses on the increasing concentration of media ownership and corporate power in the United States, he

recognizes that this is not a national but rather a global phenomenon: “Today, the power of huge, private, economic enterprises is extended across national and international boundaries, influencing and directing economic resource decisions, political choices, and the production and dissemination of messages and images” [Schiller, 1996, 44]. The author is also critical about the submission of media and culture to market forces and emphasizes the need to acknowledge the special nature of media products and cultural homogenization as a consequence of the expansion of the US corporate media system:

“[There] is at least one critical difference in the media-informational sphere that distinguishes it from the rest of the for-profit industrial system. This is its direct, though immeasurable, impact on human consciousness. What is standard economic behavior for media-cultural companies, therefore, rarely fails to have considerable socio-cultural impacts as well. (...) The globalization that many find such a promising prospect can be viewed more realistically as the phenomenally successful extension of marketing and consumerism to the world community.” [Schiller, 1996, 115-116]

Schiller adds that US-based transnational media corporations are as powerful as other US institutions known for their extensive influence, e.g. military and scientific institutions. Media discourses produced by large US companies colonize the minds of people from all corners of the world by disseminating “global notions of what constitutes freedom, individual choice, a good life, and a desirable future” [Schiller, 1996, 115]. The globalization of media has not, as enthusiasts of the free flow of information concept had predicted, resulted in a more intense exchange of cultural goods and ideas between all nations with a functioning cultural industry, but in an increasingly unbalanced flow of ideas and products. The US corporate media system is not only extremely protective and averse to the participation of external competitors, but it is also keen on further expanding its sphere of influence in the national and international levels. The concentration of media ownership in a few hands has proven to boost profits and to facilitate expansion inside the United States and abroad. While some see the increasing symbolic and economic power of US-based media conglomerates as the result of a natural selection process characteristic of the capitalist economy - only the large and strong survive, and the small and weak must either capitulate or join the powerful ones -, others are more critical about this tendency, viewing it not as a natural,

unstoppable phenomenon but as a threat to cultural diversity and meaningful discussion about facts of social and political interest.

In order to visualize a media scenario totally dominated by large, for-profit media conglomerates, one must simply imagine a TV program constituted only by attractions such as those offered by Kabel eins and RTL II: trivial *Dokusoaps* exploring individual fates and basic emotions, US mainstream series and films, mindless entertainment, celebrity-based news reporting and very little information and local content. This is corporate global media in a nutshell and the reason why it is sensible and necessary to establish limits to their expansion, to ensure the survival and development of public broadcasting and independent media and to implement policies to protect and promote cultural diversity and to foster initiatives beneficial to the public interest.

In order to understand how the rapid and massive global expansion of US media companies has been possible and to point out consequences of and alternatives to the prevailing corporate global media model, the legal and political framework that allowed for unlimited concentration of media ownership in the United States will be discussed.

4.2 Media Concentration and Corporate Power

The basis for the growing concentration of media ownership in the United States was laid by a number of significant changes in media regulations that took place in the 1990s. These changes not only made it easier for a media conglomerate to own different types of media products (horizontal integration), but they also contributed to increasing vertical integration, eliminating obstacles that prevented a single company to own “assets involved in the production, distribution, exhibition, and sale of a single type of media product”. Horizontal integration allows companies to exploit their “synergy potential” by promoting their products in different media. As Croteau & Hoynes [2006, 98-100] point out, the release of Hollywood blockbusters is a good example of how a media corporation profits from horizontal integration. The profits generated by the selling of movie tickets and home video are just the tip of the iceberg. This is easy to visualize in the release of the installments of the *Twilight* saga, which also involves the promotion of movie soundtracks, the books upon which the movies were based, official websites, and a large array of movie merchandise, including clothing, jewelry, calendars, posters, toys, cosmetics, electrical appliances, and decoration items.

Horizontal integration makes it possible to turn a film release into “an integrated media campaign of enormous proportions” [Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, 98], generating “multiple revenue streams from a single concept” [Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, 78]. The precondition for making the most profit out of a single idea is to become larger, more powerful, and more omnipresent. The movies of the *Twilight* saga are, alone, extremely profitable. For instance, the third movie of the saga, *Eclipse* (David Slade 2010, USA), with a budget of US\$ 68 million, grossed US\$ 68,533,840 in the opening weekend in the United States and further US\$ 698,491,347 in theaters abroad [The Internet Movie Database (IMDb), 2012c]. Being only one of several products of the *Twilight* franchise, the stratospheric profits of *Eclipse* give an idea of how horizontal integration leads to profit maximization.

Increasing profit by controlling different stages involved in the production and distribution of media is also the main objective behind vertical integration, which, according to McChesney [2000, 20-21], expresses a growing trend in the media business: small and middle-sized media firms are becoming gradually extinct because the only option to survive in this business is to grow and expand through mergers and acquisitions or end up being “swallowed” by more powerful and aggressive competitors. Vertical integration allows firms to control the distribution channels of the content they produce.

The US laws and regulations that prevented vertical integration in order to enable newcomers to enter the film and television industries have been relaxed or eliminated during the “merger pandemonium” initiated in the 1980s, which was, as Croteau & Hoynes [2006, 91] point out, a period of strong deregulation that affected the media industry, among other industries. Regulatory institutions in the US, such as the Federal Communications Commission, became increasingly “probusiness” and supportive of the neoliberal policies implemented during the Reagan administration, which was in accordance with the free market policies put into effect by Thatcher in Great Britain. The free market principle was also accompanied by the defense of the free flow of information, which justified the withdrawal of the United States and Great Britain from UNESCO in the 1980s after its validity was questioned by Third World countries. The political climate in the 1980s, therefore, was beneficial for the development of a neoliberal market model on a global level, including a global media system ruled by large media conglomerates and based on economic, political and cultural power.

The first round of media mergers took place in the mid-1980s. In 1993, a US District Court abolished the fin-syn⁷ regulations to which broadcast networks were subject, authorizing them to produce their own programming instead of acquiring programming from external producers, as it was the rule. This enabled networks to pressure independent producers to give up ownership rights. For instance, in 1990 the four major networks in the US owned 12.5% of the new series broadcast; by 2002, they owned 80% of them [Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, 91-92]. The *coup de grace* in the media regulation structure was the 1996 Telecommunications Act, which brought the anti-regulatory trend to a new level. The act relaxed the rules that limited the number of media outlets a single company could own, encouraging companies to merge and expand. Revisions of the act in later years reinforced this trend, taking several obstacles out of the way of media companies willing to become larger and larger.

In 1999, the FCC removed restrictions regarding the number of local radio and television stations a single company could own. The “deregulatory fervor” of the last two decades of the twentieth century continued in the twenty-first century, with politicians ridiculing the idea of protecting the public interest and the FCC pushing for further elimination of restrictions regarding media ownership. New changes proposed in 2003, including the lift of a ban on cross-ownership, which would allow a company to own both a TV station and a daily newspaper in the same market, were met with criticism from citizens. Despite the public outcry, the changes were approved, contributing to further concentration of media ownership, which has reached an “unprecedented” scale [Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, 96].

The “unprecedented” level of concentration in media ownership is criticized by McChesney [2000, 9], who reveals that only nine transnational corporations dominate the global media market: General Electric (owner of NBC), AT&T/Liberty Media, Disney, AOL-Time Warner, Sony, News Corporation, Viacom, Vivendi, and Bertelsmann. Although only five of the nine companies are “truly” American, all of them have core operations in the United States. These TNCs own the six large Hollywood studios responsible for most productions released within and outside the United States, the US television networks, approximately 85% of the global music market, the majority of satellite broadcasting worldwide, and a significant percentage of book and magazine publishing, commercial cable TV channels in the United States and abroad, and European terrestrial television,

⁷Financial Interest and Syndication Rules aimed at preventing big television networks from monopolizing the media landscape.

just to mention a few. For McChesney, the tendency points clearly to an increase in media concentration in the future.

Most companies are following on the footsteps of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, the "most aggressive global trailblazer". News Corp.'s assets include Twentieth Century Fox films, Fox TV network, HarperCollins publishers, TV stations, cable TV channels, magazines, over 130 newspapers, and satellite TV services in Asia, Europe and Latin America. Such a gigantic market presence has been made possible by two main elements: technology and neoliberalism. The fast and outstanding development of communication technology in recent decades has facilitated the expansion of global media corporations and made them extremely profitable, in a way that was "unthinkable" several decades ago. However, a shift to neoliberalism has been the real propeller behind the increasing concentration of media ownership, by allowing for the "relaxation or elimination of barriers to commercial exploitation of media". New communications technologies could have been used to "enhance public service media", were the global media system based on the public sphere model; in a system based on neoliberal principles, where market expansion and profit maximization are more important than serving the public interest, these technologies have been used by TNCs to become larger, more profitable, and more powerful [McChesney, 2000, 10].

One of the industries that have experienced the most growth over the last decades is the US film industry, which has been traditionally dominating the global market since the post-war period. This industry is dominated by six large film studios, which are, in the words of Bettig & Hall [2003, 47-51], "controlled by large media conglomerates and the super-rich". The "big six" are: Warner Brothers, Disney, Fox, Paramount Pictures, Universal Pictures, and Sony. As Gomery [2000, 375] points out, "worldwide distribution has been the basis of Hollywood's power", and US films were a global phenomenon "long before the term global media was ever invented". One can argue, therefore, that the US film industry has laid the basis for the global expansion of other industries: music, television, and publishing.

Besides the long tradition in the production of feature films, combined with financial power, there is yet another factor that has decisively contributed to the consolidation of the US film industry as the global provider of filmed entertainment par excellence: the establishment of the English language as the global language. Herman & McChesney [1997, 18-19] explain that the structure of the contemporary media system was designed in the post-war years by "the combination of the

global power of the United States and the imperial legacy of Britain”, which was crucial for the institution of English as the global language. Using the British “imperial legacy” to their advantage, the US media corporations started to make great investments to conquer foreign markets, acquiring “significant holdings in film, music, publishing, and broadcasting” and expanding the domestic media empires to foreign territories. The proportions of US media domination abroad were intensified with the intense development in communications technologies in the last decades of the twentieth century, which allowed for “a degree of media conglomeration and global integration unthinkable in 1945 or even 1970”. Not surprisingly, the US film industry enjoys a prominent position in the global media system.

As previously mentioned, tradition and the language factor are two aspects that contributed to the expansion of the US film industry. There are, however, other factors that must be considered when discussing the global domination of this industry. Bettig & Hall [2003, 55] indicate a number of economic advantages that make it difficult for alternative and/or independent films to compete with Hollywood productions. American film studios not only finance and distribute their own movies, but they also are the main financiers and distributors of co-productions. This means that even films categorized as “independent” are not really independent, because the budget, cast, and script must be approved by “those who hope to profit from the film”. Getting an independent film into theaters is an additional challenge, since the major distributors charge a 30-35% fee for this service. Furthermore, in order to minimize the risk of losing money, studios often require “ancillary rights, such as home video, pay cable, broadcast television, and foreign distribution”. Other strategies used by the “big six” to maximize profit and ensure market domination are:

- Exploitation of film libraries: movie rights can be used as “collateral to finance new projects” or to “generate cash or support the growth of new media outlets”;
- Exploitation of star actors and authors;
- Sequels: “Studios rely on them to attract a preexisting audience generated by the original film. However, the Hollywood movie oligopoly’s reliance on the exploitation of sequels and franchise pictures increased dramatically at the turn of the twenty-first century”;

- Another common practice among studios is to produce remakes of classical Hollywood films and movies based on successful television shows. These are safe investments because they attract preexisting audiences and create “enough buzz” to raise the interest of potential new fans;
- The power of marketing: studios spend large sums of money to promote their films, creating a “hype” that instils a “social obligation” to watch the movie. Small firms that lack the financial means to market their films as extensively as the large studios have no chance to compete with them [Bettig & Hall, 2003, 56-59].

Considering the increasing concentration of media ownership and the growing global influence and omnipresence of Hollywood films, the tendency is that US films will continue to dominate globally and to expand, conquering new audiences and markets. This belief is shared by Herman & McChesney [1997, 44], who identify several factors that point out in this direction. The first is the construction of a large number of multiscreen theater complexes worldwide, designed according to US standards and often owned by US companies. Several of these complexes are owned by companies that happen to produce films as well, e.g. Viacom (owner of Paramount Pictures), Universal, and Time Warner. The second and third aspects are the global expansion of the home video market and the “rise of multichannel commercial television broadcasting”, which “has created enormous demand for Hollywood fare”. Whereas this demand has contributed to an increase in film production, it has not caused a significant increase in content diversity, since the studios are inclined to concentrate on productions that are most likely to be profitable and attractive to diverse audiences: blockbusters. These mainstream films usually have high production and marketing budgets, engage star directors and actors as a “seal of quality” and are based on scripts that use well-established formulas that have acquired universal character, i.e. that are enjoyed by heterogeneous international audiences.

An outstanding example of such global-reaching blockbusters is the *Fast & Furious* franchise, which released its fifth film in 2011. *Fast & Furious Five* (Justin Lin 2011, USA) had a budget of approximately 125 million dollars and grossed over 600 million dollars worldwide [The Internet Movie Database (IMDb), 2012a]. The fifth installment of the commercially successful franchise, which includes games, soundtracks, and toy cars, was partially filmed in Rio de Janeiro. It follows car racers Mia and Dominic Toretto and Brian O’Connor to a slum in

Rio de Janeiro, where they seek shelter after escaping from the authorities in the United States. *Fast & Furious Five* explores not only the cliché of Brazil as the favorite destination of American outlaws, but it also insists on the idea of lawlessness by portraying Rio de Janeiro as a city ruled by an unscrupulous investor, Hernan Reyes, who runs a network of illegal activities and works closely with the local authorities. Reyes has more power and influence than the police, and this situation is only changed by the intervention of American heroes, here represented by Toretto and his gang and police officer Luke Hobbs and his team.

Hobbs lands in Rio de Janeiro with the mission to catch Toretto and his accomplices and take them back to the United States. However, he soon realizes that Brazil has a different dynamics and must change his strategy. Toretto explains to Hobbs that it is a mistake to act as if he still were in America: “You’re a long way from home. This is Brazil!” According to the film’s plot, this means that Brazil is a lawless land where police is corrupt and the government is negligent, and therefore fellow countrymen must work together in order to fight injustice and bring some order to the chaos that reigns in Rio de Janeiro. In America, Toretto is a criminal and Hobbs is the law; in Brazil, however, they are not supposed to be enemies, but partners. After witnessing his team members die in the hands of Reyes’ gangsters, Hobbs joins Toretto’s team and supports his plan to steal Reyes’ fortune, which is stored in a safe located inside a police station. It is interesting to notice how the plot is structured in order to never raise doubts about the moral values of American characters. Hobbs’ reputation as a man of the law is not threatened by his support of Toretto’s illegal activities, since they are fighting a system that has proven to be more illegal, immoral and criminal than all of Toretto’s actions combined. Because they are stealing from a murderer and a thief, their decisions are justified and their reputation remains intact. This dramatic solution reproduces a common stereotype in American mainstream narratives.

The commercial success of *Fast & Furious Five* is due to the combination of action, violence, good-looking female characters and few and uncomplicated dialogs, a recipe for entertainment that seems to be attractive for audiences throughout the globe. In an attempt to awake the interest of the audiences across national and cultural borders, thus maximizing profits and minimizing risks, *Fast & Furious Five* reinforces stereotypes that remain attached to Brazil’s image. By ridiculing Brazilian police and portraying the local population as passive and powerless, the plot of the film offers the ideal conditions for the development and glorification of American characters. The choice of Rio de Janeiro as a location is

also an attempt to keep the franchise attractive for audiences by changing the scenery. The chase scenes in the narrow streets and rooftops of the slum add novelty to a film that repeats many of the elements present in previous installments. *Fast & Furious Five* was produced by Universal Pictures, one of the “big six” studios involved in the production and distribution of filmed entertainment.

Another major blockbuster release in 2011 was the fourth installment of the *Twilight* franchise, *Breaking Dawn* (Bill Condon 2011, USA), which grossed US\$ 138,122,261 in its first weekend in the United States [The Internet Movie Database (IMDb), 2012b]. Interestingly, some scenes of the teenage vampire saga were filmed in Rio de Janeiro. The rationale behind having Rio de Janeiro as a location is different from that used by the producers of *Fast & Furious Five*, but it is still related to Brazilian stereotypes. After their wedding, vampire Edward Cullen and his wife Bella travel to Rio de Janeiro to spend their honeymoon. They have remained pure until their wedding, so the change of location is a ritual that represents the transformation of their chaste relationship into a sexual relationship. The association of Brazil with sexual freedom has been extensively discussed and exemplified in Chapter 3, so it will not be discussed in detail here. It is revealing to notice, however, how particular stereotypes and associations keep being explored in Hollywood mainstream productions to exhaustion. Since their home - America - must remain pure and free from sexual associations, Edward and Bella must cross national borders to be allowed to cross moral borders. While getting married was the first step towards a change in the nature of their relationship, this transition could only be completed by a temporary transfer to a place where the original sin is not perceived as a transgression.

Fast & Furious Five and *Breaking Dawn* are eloquent examples of discourses that predominate in global media. Made solely for profit and adapted to the taste of the masses, the films are conservative in content, supportive of the status quo and unwilling to take any risks, staying faithful to commercially successful formulas that do not challenge the viewer in any sense, but simply deliver what is expected: mindless entertainment, well-packaged and excellent in technical terms, but lacking originality and creativity. Global media conglomerates have specialized in excellent packaging and marketing while neglecting content. The increasing power and cultural influence of these conglomerates point out to a dim future, where the global media system has become homogeneous and completely dominated by corporate interests, where alternative voices and representations have been silenced once and for all and Third World countries no longer get a

chance to produce and distribute their own media, but had their media industries engulfed by TNCs. In such a scenario, Third World countries have been reduced to exotic locations for films produced by large US studios. These countries have known for decades that such a scenario is not the result of pessimistic predictions, but a real possibility. The NWICO debate born in the 1970s was a clumsy, yet legitimate attempt to reverse the developments in the global media system that were leading in that direction.

In the next section, the birth and failure of NWICO, the growth of corporate media power and the importance of NWICO for developing countries like Brazil, which are often portrayed in global media but rarely have the chance to challenge stereotypical representations, will be discussed.

4.3 Free Flow of Information and the American Empire

The rapid and massive expansion of American media in a global scale as part of a larger scenario of economic and military supremacy was discussed by Schiller already in 1969, in the first edition of *Mass Communications and American Empire*. A fierce critic of American cultural imperialism, Schiller described the initial stages of a process that would culminate in our 21st century global media scenario, characterized by extreme concentration of media ownership, the homogenization of tastes according to US standards and a strong consumerism based on advertising. The privileged position of the United States in global military, economic and cultural affairs was achieved, Schiller [1971, 1-2] argues, by the early recognition that “the fusion of economic strength and information control or image-making (. . .) is the new quintessence of power, international and domestic”. Moreover, American decision-makers have a weapon that earlier “expansionists” also suffering from a so-called “world leadership syndrome” did not have: modern mass communications. This modern weapon serves two objectives at once: in the United States, they help to overcome “the lack of popular enthusiasm for the global role of imperial stewardship”. Abroad, they divert the public’s attention from important political and economic issues through the continuous flow of images and messages made in the United States, thus inhibiting “antagonism to a renewed though perhaps less apparent colonial servitude”.

The new power structure that characterized the post-war and post-colonial world offered the ideal conditions for the establishment of an American global Empire that encompasses political, economic and cultural supremacy. The post-

war and post-colonial world was characterized by “diminished European strength, an expanded but defensive Socialist geographical and material base and the newly-independent but economically feeble ‘third’-world”. Schiller [1971, 5] adds that the “sophistication” of the American imperial structure is due to its dependence on a combination of “economics and electronics”, differently from primitive earlier conquerors with their “blood and iron” foundations.

The extensive and increasing domination of American media in the global flow of communication and information is sophisticated and based on symbolic expressions rather than concrete structures of “blood and iron”. The United States have colonized Brazil and several other former European colonies through the distribution of US media in these countries, thus disseminating American ideology and way of life and introducing First World consumption patterns, and also through the global dissemination of American representations of the Third World. In many of these representations, the Third World has never ceased to be a large colony willing to satisfy the interests of foreign masters. The examples presented in Chapter 3 are illustrative and confirm the assertion that the image of Brazil transmitted by US media is the continuation of a colonialist regime of representation established by Portuguese conquerors back in the 16th century.

Brazil was then - and continues to be - seen and represented as an earthly paradise with endless possibilities for experiencing sensual pleasure and accumulating wealth. There were - and there are - no law, authorities or strict moral codes to be feared. Because of all that, Brazil was - and is - considered an amusement park for the rich and powerful, and not to be taken seriously as an independent nation in the process of intense economic, political and social development. The problem with representations that do not acknowledge the rupture with the colonial past and the autonomy of Third World nations is not only one of inaccuracy, but also of credibility and reputation. While Americans portray themselves as patriotic heroes willing to fight for justice and freedom, the Others are secondary, passive figures unable to make decisions for themselves and to assert themselves as independent, self-determining and capable citizens. Such representations undermine the credibility of Third World countries and peoples, contributing to justify global economic, political and social inequalities, and confirm the role of the United States as the world’s leader in the economic and political spheres, as well as the adequacy of a global media system where a single country is entrusted with the task to represent the world’s cultural and ethnic diversity and to dictate the cultural lives of peoples in all continents.

Stereotypical representations serve to support the maintenance of the status quo and to justify the already extraordinary and continuously increasing American cultural influence throughout the globe. By adopting an ethnocentric regime of representation and refraining from producing and distributing messages that are critical of global inequalities, the dominating media industry promotes “obedience to hierarchy” [Adorno & Horkheimer, 1999, 38]. In an economic and cultural system characterized by monopoly, one cannot expect to achieve real change and to have real diversity:

“Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce.” [Adorno & Horkheimer, 1999, 32]

Cultural domination and the consequent homogenization that takes place when a culture becomes so influential and omnipresent that it threatens to overshadow all others are, according to Schiller [1971, 109], a phenomenon with mostly irreversible consequences and therefore more damaging in the long-term than economic or political domination. This is because what is at stake is the very “cultural integrity” of Third World nations, which must deal with political and economic issues and a general lack of solidarity from developed nations and, on top of that, must struggle to protect their culture and heritage. As Schiller [1971, 109] points out, the “national, regional, local or tribal heritages” of “weak” nations are “menaced with extinction by the expansion of modern electronic communications (. . .) emanating from a few power centers in the industrialized world”. Moreover, while mistakes in agriculture and industry are “disastrous” but “remediable”, “cultural patterns, once established, are endlessly persistent”. The content of media messages “may determine, in large measure, the cultural outlook and the social direction of the new nations for generations”, and therefore the importance of an independent media system should not be underestimated.

Autonomy as a nation is not only a matter of political and economic self-sufficiency, but it is also dependent on the ability to define the directions of domestic communication and information policies, to make its own programming based on popular tastes and domestic cultural expressions, and to resist the

introduction of programming that is not beneficial to local values and traditions. However, the way the global media system is structured is not encouraging to the achievement of real autonomy and independence by Third World societies. The predominating tendency is that authentic indigenous and local cultures gradually disappear, being substituted by a global consumerist Western culture whose values and beliefs are dictated by American media. In such a culture there is no space for alternative representations, voices and lifestyles, for critical discussions about alternatives to the current exploitative capitalist system, and for challenges to the unjust global power structures.

The global media flow, Schiller [1971, 109-110] explains, is “powered largely by Western commercialism, which up to now has not concerned itself with the disparities in economic levels among states and their correspondingly different communications requirements”. The rapid and intense development of communication technologies in the second half of the 20th century was advantageous for transnational corporations eager to expand their sphere of influence, but the potential of these technologies for improving communications infrastructure and building independent media systems in Third World countries remains unfulfilled. As Schiller puts it, if the “informational apparatus” available were employed to develop communication and information systems in the Third World, the result would be “great forward drives in the developmental process”. However, a similar result has not been observed yet because communications technology is usually not employed to increase the level of independence and self-determination of Third World countries in the communication sector, but rather to increase their dependence on developed nations and transnational corporations both in terms of infrastructure and content.

Producing local broadcast programming and establishing a competitive domestic film industry are endeavors that require adequate infrastructure, expertise and abundant financial resources. Many developing nations, unable to fulfill such requirements, become strongly dependent on foreign programming, to the advantage of the world’s largest exporter of media products, the US-based film and TV industry. American media companies tend to distribute their products for a fraction of the production costs. This “dumping” practice discourages developing nations to produce their own domestic programming, resulting in a broadcast structure dominated by content produced abroad, whose character is usually “irrelevant” or even “injurious” to the developing nations that broadcast it [Schiller, 1971, 111].

The predominance of US-made content in domestic media has serious implications for local cultures. Instead of discourses that reflect the traditions, values and lifestyles present in local cultures, audiences are bombarded with messages and representations produced abroad, in a different socio-cultural and economic context. Whereas it is true that media are a window to the world and vehicles to learn about other cultures and nations, the global predominance of US media calls the validity of this principle into question. Are media still fulfilling an educational role when the images and ideas they transmit are mostly produced by a single country? The examples presented in Chapter 3 have shown that American mainstream films tend to portray developing countries like Brazil from an ethnocentric perspective, reinforcing existing stereotypes and a homogenized, commercial image of the country that has proven to be profitable and well-accepted among international audiences, but that lacks authenticity and is rarely challenged.

US media conglomerates have managed to homogenize not only the programming of broadcasters and movie theaters all around the world, but also the content of the programs offered. As Schiller [1971, 112-114] puts it, the “cultural homogenization” that was established in the United States has taken over the globe, and local cultures in all continents are “facing submersion from the mass-produced outpourings of commercial broadcasting”, characterized by programs “designed especially to secure and hold mass audiences in thrall to the delights of consumerdom”. Developing nations, especially “the poor, the small and the new states”, are especially defenseless in protecting themselves against the cultural and economic influence of the United States because they are unable to finance a domestic media system without the introduction of foreign capital. This results in the establishment of media systems that are a “miniature” of Western systems, based on “a supply of temporarily low-cost foreign (mostly American) material which originally was produced to the specifications of commercial sponsors” and therefore “presents images and styles of life that are wildly out of keeping with the social necessities of most of the ‘have-not’ states”.

Schiller [1971, 117-121] adds that it is unreasonable to assume that everything developed nations have to say is of relevance and interest to Third World nations; on the contrary, in order to be able to protect their culture and heritage and to make decisions in accordance with domestic economic, cultural and social needs, it is necessary to keep a “social distance” from First World corporations, governments and societies, which respond to totally different interests and needs. Only then there is a chance that the world’s cultural diversity will resist the

pressures of globalization and commercialism.

The ability to produce own programming, to reject the introduction of particular foreign media discourses, and to participate actively in the global exchange of cultural goods are prerequisites for the preservation of the cultural integrity of Third World nations. By ensuring their participation in the global media arena as producers of media and culture, and not merely as consumers of mass-produced US-media, one is ensuring the dissemination of alternative voices that are able to challenge the mainstream and dominating power and representation systems. As previously discussed, large US-based media conglomerates are interested in the maximization of profits and in the maintenance of the status quo. For this reason, commercial media tend to refrain from presenting discourses that seriously question social and economic inequalities and the capitalist system that supports them. This is because the global commercial media system is both radical and conservative. The system is radical because “it will respect no tradition or custom (...) if it stands in the way of significantly increased profits”, and it is politically conservative because “the media giants are significant beneficiaries of the current global social structure, and any upheaval in property or social relations, particularly to the extent it reduced the power of business and lessened inequality, would possibly (...) jeopardize their positions” [McChesney, 2000, 100].

An overwhelming supply of media products characterized by homogenized content and format is typical of a media system based on the free market model. The main flaw of this model does not lie on its commercial character. A system based on the laws of commerce, which allow for legitimate competition in the marketplace, is not “inherently bad”, as Bagdikian [1992, 223] explains in *The Media Monopoly*. A commercial media system characterized by a power balance between corporations and governments, media for profit and public broadcasting, mainstream discourses and alternative voices, the First and the Third World could provide the necessary conditions for a more balanced flow of communication and information and for the preservation of the world’s cultural diversity. The most remarkable flaw of the current free-market-based capitalist system is that it privileges corporate interests and profit over human welfare and socioeconomic equality, allowing for a global media system controlled by large conglomerates. Even the Internet, which was praised in its infancy for its democratic character and the new possibilities it offered in terms of freedom of expression and independence from profit-oriented media, has succumbed to the pressures of commercialism. Although the Internet is still a democratic communication vehicle that enables

every user to transmit messages and share content without discrimination, this once free territory has also been colonized by large companies such as the powerful and omnipresent Google corporation, which is often a target of criticism because of its data privacy policies.

A system controlled by a single group cannot be concerned with representing diversity or reducing inequalities of any kind: “In the end, no small group, certainly no group with as much uniformity of outlook and as concentrated in power as the current media corporations, can be sufficiently open and flexible to reflect the full richness and variety of society’s values and needs” [Bagdikian, 1992, 223]. The corporate control of global media is reflected in the increasing homogenization and decreasing variety of programming. Concerns regarding the growing concentration of media ownership are often refuted with the argument that extended control of several stages of media production and distribution allows companies to provide “richer public choices in news and entertainment”. However, experience has shown that ownership of different media by a single company actually only makes media more similar to each other: “Movies become more like television series. Cable, once thought to be a fundamental alternative to programs on commercial television but now under control of companies also in television and other media, is increasingly an imitation of commercial television” [Bagdikian, 1992, 7]. The quest for synergy also contributes to the decrease in diversity and originality, since companies prefer to explore one single successful idea in different media in order to maximize profits and avoid risks instead of investing in original concepts and approaches.

It is likely that diversity will continue to decrease and inequalities in the social, economic and symbolic spheres will keep growing as long as corporations have the last say on global media decisions and no regulations are established to push forward a more balanced and diverse global communication and information flow. The first step towards this necessary change is to put into questions “sacred” principles such as free market and free flow of information, which have become nothing more than facades behind which corporate interests hide. It is questionable how “free” the global market really is, since the freedom to rule it seems to be reserved for those who have historically always occupied a privileged position in the political and economic hierarchy.

The term “free” is also used loosely in the expression “free flow of information”, which is the basis of US communication policies and a concept that is often misused to justify the global domination of US media industries and the limited participation of Third World nations in the international exchange of cultural

goods and media. Carlsson [2003, 34-35] explains that the concept of free flow was formulated in the United States in the end of World War II, in a moment when citizens could no longer stand the propaganda and censorship that characterized the war efforts. For this reason, the concept was praised inside and outside the United States. Moreover, as the war was coming to an end, it became clear that the United States would emerge as a world power, and communication and information were considered fundamental factors in the development of strategies for economic expansion.

Schiller's definitions of "free trade" and "free flow of information" summarize the misuse of the terms to justify domination and perpetuate inequality: "If free trade is the mechanism by which a powerful economy penetrates and dominates a weaker one, the 'free flow of information', the designated objective incidentally of UNESCO, is the channel through which life styles and value systems can be imposed on poor and vulnerable societies" [Schiller, 1971, 8-9].

The validity of the "free flow" concept was put into question by developing nations that joined the United Nations following independence movements that cut colonial ties in Africa, Asia and Latin America. After centuries of exploitation by colonial masters, the former colonies found in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) the ideal forum to express their yearning for real independence in the political, economic and cultural fields and to discuss possible solutions for their situation of economic inequality and technological backwardness. More participation in the global flow of communication and information was one of the main demands by Third World states, and developed nations were asked to provide assistance in establishing modern communication infrastructure in the former colonies so that they could develop competitive media industries. The communication needs and demands of the Third World were described in the document *Many Voices One World*, also known as the *MacBride Report*, written by UNESCO's International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, which was coordinated by Irish Nobel laureate Seán MacBride. The report was published in 1980 and generated a wave of criticism in the United States for supposedly threatening the free flow of information, resulting in an open campaign in the US and in Great Britain against UNESCO and in the withdrawal of both countries from the organization. The events and controversies that culminated in the withdrawal, as well as the real motivation behind the anti-UNESCO campaign, will be discussed in the next section.

4.4 NWICO and the anti-UNESCO Campaign

In his introduction to the *MacBride Report*, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow from Senegal, director-general of UNESCO from 1974 to 1987, summarizes the essence of Third World demands in the field of communication and the main objective of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debate:

“It is essential that all men and women, in all social and cultural environments, should be given the opportunity of joining in the process of collective thinking (...), for new ideas must be developed and more positive measures must be taken to shake off the prevailing inertia. With the coming of a new world communication order, each people must be able to learn from the others, while at the same time conveying to them its own understanding of its own condition and its own view of world affairs. Mankind will then have made a decisive step forward on the path to freedom, democracy and fellowship.” [in UNESCO, 1980b, xv]

M'Bow expresses the main idea that motivated the NWICO debate: to promote a more balanced flow of communication and information so that developing countries no longer have to watch passively while the First World develops new communication technologies and expands its sphere of cultural influence, but also have the chance to participate in the global flow as providers of cultural messages and news reporting that reflect their own experiences and perspectives, and not merely as viewers and consumers. Considering that the majority of nations involved in the NWICO debate were former colonies struggling for autonomy after centuries of oppression and exploitation, the demands were justified. UNESCO's support of the initiative to identify and discuss communication problems of the Third World, and to suggest possible solutions, was a positive sign in the right direction. It indicated that the political climate was favorable to debates about topics of relevance for the less privileged peoples of the world, and that developing nations were finally being taken seriously as sovereign members of the international political community.

The enthusiasm, however, did not last long. The publication of the *MacBride Report* in 1980, which was preceded by the passage of the Mass Media Declaration in 1978, triggered a series of attacks on UNESCO by the American government and conservative institutions such as the Heritage Foundation, which accused UNESCO

of declaring “war against the western free press”, of suggesting the redistribution of “the world’s wealth and resources to more than 100 underdeveloped nations, creating a global welfare state financed mainly by the U.S. and the western industrial nations”, and of promoting “a formula for a global socialist state” by supporting the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) [in: Ray & Schaap, 1989, xvii]. NIEO was a movement push forward by UNESCO with the support of its Third World members in the 1970s. It was based on the recognition that underdevelopment is not a “mere state of backwardness which can be made good by means of a linear process of catching up with other countries in the setting of the world economy, as fashioned by the developed countries” [UNESCO, 1980a, 3]. NIEO defended the right of developing countries to establish their own development patterns according to domestic economic needs and cultural characteristics, instead of adapting their economy to the needs of developed nations:

“The fact of the matter is that the establishment of a new international order means adopting a set of measures that will change the ground rules and usher in an era of international cooperation in which the developing countries will no longer be labouring under a handicap and will no longer have to shape their economic activity mainly to suit the interests of the developed countries and will be better able than in the past to shape their economic activity to suit their own interests.” [UNESCO, 1980a, 3-4]

NIEO represented an attempt to establish boundaries for the free market capitalism that perpetuates social and economic inequalities throughout the globe. If one takes into account the anti-communist paranoia in the United States during the Cold War (1946-1991), it is not surprising that such a proposition, despite its undeniable relevance for the developing world, was received with skepticism by the United States. Since NWICO was seen as an extension of NIEO, it was perceived as a threat to the status quo and became a target of a campaign led by the United States to discredit and undermine UNESCO, and this despite the fact that both the 1978 Mass Media Declaration and the MacBride report were “unanimous decisions” approved by all Member States, including the United States and Britain [Ray & Schaap, 1989, xvi].

However, as Preston Jr. [1989, 11] puts it, “issues of ideology and power brought an intensity of feeling” to the NWICO affairs, resulting in an abrupt

transition from unanimous approval to “obsessive fury” towards everything related to NWICO, UNESCO and initiatives aimed at promoting more autonomy for Third World countries. This “fury” was justified by a biased interpretation of the MacBride Report, which was believed to represent a threat to the free flow of information. The direct and challenging tone of the document, which expressed the needs and demands of developing countries in the area of global communications, fired an alarm among the privileged countries that benefited from the established world order. Carlsson [2003, 44] explains that it was the first time that a UNESCO document clearly stated that a few transnational corporations controlled the global media system, a monopoly that was supported by the free flow of information principle and that “posed a threat to the cultural integrity and national independence of many countries”. This power imbalance was seen as the main obstacle to the establishment of NIEO.

Preston Jr. [1989, 50-52] explains that “free flow” and “free market” were the principles that created an unbridgeable divide between UNESCO and the United States during their forty years of relationship (1945-1985). While the United States claimed that mass communications and the “free flow of ideas” were the basis for “creating mutual understanding and human solidarity”, UNESCO employed a different approach to achieve this objective, acknowledging “the reality of cultural diversity and the right of all people to address each other on relatively equal terms”.

According to UNESCO’s approach, “free flow” is not only about “dissemination”, but mainly about “discovery”, understood as a mutual exchange between cultures. Echoing Schiller’s description of free flow as a mechanism of domination, Preston Jr. [1989, 51] affirms that the terms “free flow” and “free market” are used “to disguise commercially advantageous exports as First Amendment principles”, referring to the United States Constitution. The First Amendment establishes that the American Congress “shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press” [U.S. Senate, 2012]. Preston Jr. [1989, 51-52] argues that this “open-door tradition” has enabled “the creation of an information empire in which all other cultures would be passive recipients of news, information, film, and other instruments of influence over ideas and values, distributed from the United States”. The belligerence towards UNESCO was based on the organization’s refusal to ignore the disparities that characterized the world’s communication and economic structures and to bend to the influence of Great Britain and the United States.

The MacBride Report acknowledged the threat that the “open-door tradition” represented for Third World cultures, and was, in turn, seen as a threat to the status quo. Whereas it recognizes that technological advances and the globalization of communications have made “masterpieces of creativity” available to international audiences on a scale unimaginable in the first half of the 20th century, it also calls attention to the fact that a great deal of the entertainment that has been made available globally “is so banal and stereotyped that it dulls instead of stimulating the imagination” [UNESCO, 1980b, 30]. This kind of entertainment threatens to impoverish and homogenize the cultural life in many parts of the world:

“Although a great body of cultural expression maintains its traditional and interpersonal forms, it is also true that in the modern world the mass media supply the cultural fare, and shape the cultural experience, of many millions of people. (...) The influence of commercial and advertising interests, and also the sterile conformism of culture approved by bureaucrats of all kinds, carry threats of a levelling, impoverishment and hollowness of cultural life. Nor are these the only contradictions. (...) The cultural identity of ethnic and other minorities has sometimes been confirmed by taking advantage of fresh avenues of expression, but has often been overwhelmed by external influences. For good or for ill, the mass media have a vast responsibility, because they do not merely transmit and disseminate culture but also select or originate its content.” [UNESCO, 1980b, 30]

The report openly challenges the structure of the global media system by suggesting that media have a responsibility towards minority and other non-dominant cultures, as well as an important educational role. It also questions how advantageous the technological development and the globalization of communications really are for the Third World: whereas it is undeniable that there is an increasing number of channels through which non-dominant cultures can share representations and messages on a global level, one must consider that these channels, as well as the respective technologies and means of production, are mostly controlled by the First World.

The MacBride Report suggested a radical change in this scenario by focusing on the four main demands of Third World countries (the four D’s): development, democratization, decolonization and demonopolization. The last proved to be a particular sensitive point, since it included regulating the activities of

transnational corporations. The main demands linked to development were the establishment of independent information and communication systems, adequate training for journalists and a more balanced distribution of information media. Democratization expressed the wish of developing nations to participate more actively in the international exchange of information “under favourable conditions in a sense of equality, justice and mutual advantage”. The last “D”, decolonization, defended the right of nations to protect their national sovereignty and cultural identity, to achieve self-determination and to act according to their own particular political, social and cultural values [Carlsson, 2003, 41]. The main focus, however, was on the right to communicate, which included the right to participate in public communication at all levels [Carlsson, 2003, 47].

By daring to critically analyze technological and structural developments advertised by dominant societies as revolutionary, and to take the side of the weak and underprivileged, the MacBride Report, the NWICO debate and consequently UNESCO became a nuisance to the United States and Great Britain, who saw their ambitions threatened by the coalition of Third World states operating under the auspices of UNESCO. What the United States and Great Britain saw as a revolution in communications was perceived by the former colonies as modern mechanisms to perpetuate social, economic and cultural inequalities in the Third World and to maintain the unequal division of labor between developed and developing countries. The rejection of NWICO and the open campaign of defamation against UNESCO was a reaction to the prospect that the efforts of an international organization known for its commitment to justice, diversity and equality could in fact promote significant changes in the global power hierarchy, undermining a centuries-old tradition of imperialist policies.

The achievement of independence by almost 80 nations in the second half of the 20th century, which gave over two billion people hope for the end of exploitation, is described in the report as a major historical phenomenon, which, however, did not have the expected results. Differently from what most countries that managed to cut the colonial ties expected, the gained independence did not change economic and social structures, which continued to “foster the position and influence of certain countries, and to perpetuate the dependence of a large number of other countries”. Political independence is undermined by economic, intellectual and cultural dependence, all of which have serious consequences for the cultural integrity and self-determination of a developing country. Genuine independence is only possible with “the communication resources needed to safeguard it”,

but unfortunately communication has become “an exchange between unequal partners, allowing the predominance of the more powerful, the richer and the better equipped”. If this exchange could become more balanced, and the new communication technologies could be used to overcome problems concerning all mankind, then the potential of modern global communications could be realized and “an enormous collective intelligence” could be created [UNESCO, 1980b, 34].

However, in order to realize this potential and foster the cooperation between nations, certain obstacles had to be removed, and the main obstacle in this case was the resistance of developed nations to acknowledge the needs of developing countries and help accordingly. Problems such as “the arms race, famine, poverty, illiteracy, racialism, unemployment, economic injustice, population growth, destruction of the environment, [and] discrimination against women” could be solved with the necessary political will and an effective use of communications to bring people together so that they will “aid one another through peaceful exchange and mutual understanding” [UNESCO, 1980b, 35]. Despite the relevance and lucidity of these affirmations, it is not surprising that suggesting a formula for world peace and justice based on communications - which represented a major source of economic and cultural power for the United States and Great Britain - would trigger heated reactions among dominant groups.

The controversies that led to the withdrawal of the United States and Great Britain from UNESCO in 1984 and 1985, respectively, were caused by differences in the expectations of First World and Third World countries towards UNESCO. In its letter to UNESCO’s director general from December 19, 1984, the United States provides following arguments to justify the withdrawal: “Extraneous politicization continues, as does, regrettably, an endemic hostility toward the institutions of a free society - particularly those that protect a free press, free markets, and, above all, individual human rights” [Schultz, 1984]. The real reasons behind the withdrawal, however, are related to the United States’ disappointment with UNESCO’s support of Third World concerns and demands. As Preston Jr. [1989, 193] points out, developing nations saw UNESCO as a platform where they could join forces to fight for “liberation from neo-colonial independence”, thus achieving “greater equality and autonomy”. By providing technological assistance and fostering debates on development, UNESCO was handling for the benefit of poor and underprivileged nations. In the eyes of Great Britain and the United States, the organization was going too far in its endeavor to promote peace and reduce global inequalities, and therefore it had to be punished.

The United States made clear that UNESCO was exceeding its role, which should be limited to “moderate radical demands for change through increments of assistance that would alleviate the worst problems of economic deprivation and stagnation”, opening the way for the United States and its “industrialized allies” to impose their own modernization model upon developing nations. The United States was not prepared for the “planetary bargaining” that characterized the more pluralistic international political sphere after decolonization and, due to the assumption that its “technological supremacy and vast cultural domination” had secured the unanimous acceptance of the “free flow” principle, it did not imagine that developing nations “would dare to demand equal access to that global marketplace” [Preston Jr., 1989, 193].

The issue of media concentration and cultural imperialism was the main focus of this chapter, which discussed how they are connected to cultural and ethnic stereotyping and the predominance of an ethnocentric regime of representation. By investigating the inequalities in the global media system that brought forward demands for a New World Information and Communication Order, this chapter has closed the circle that started with a discussion about ethnocentrism and the origins of Brazilian stereotypes, and was followed by an analysis of representations of Brazil in mainstream American films. After examining the dissemination of cultural stereotypes by global media from the economic and symbolic perspectives, one comes to the conclusion that, in order to promote economic justice and cultural diversity, it is necessary to shake the foundations of the current world order, which perpetuates dependence, inequality and exploitation.

Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions or a simple formula to achieve that goal. The film analysis has indicated that alternative representations of Third World countries must be distributed globally in order to challenge cultural and ethnic stereotypes. As a country with a well-established television and film industry, Brazil could set an example by exporting films, series and other programs to foreign countries, thus introducing accurate and diverse representations of Brazil to international audiences. This is already a reality in Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, where Brazilian telenovelas are extremely popular. In other countries, especially in the developed world, the predominating representations of Brazil are second-hand: they are not based on the “real” Brazil, but on the “idea” of Brazil that is constantly reproduced in mainstream media.

A more balanced exchange of films, TV programs and other media between participants of the global media system would be a fundamental step towards

the establishment of a global media structure characterized by equality and diversified content rather than homogenized content and stereotypes. This can only be achieved in countries with autonomous media systems able to preserve their independence from corporate global media. From this perspective, it is essential that public broadcasters continue to be developed and expanded, and that governments promote national culture by fostering the domestic film and television industries. France and Brazil are, in this sense, remarkable examples of countries where the role of culture and media for the country's identity and sovereignty is recognized, and government subsidies are important sources of financing for cultural activities and audiovisual productions. However, despite the fact that both countries have traditional and technically excellent media industries, content made in France and Brazil is still rare in countries that do not have the French or the Portuguese language as a common ground. In order to challenge the supremacy of audiovisual productions in English language, especially those provided by the global leading media industry, it is necessary to challenge this supremacy, for example by establishing new communication priorities and opening new channels through which alternative content can be distributed.

The first step towards a more balanced and diverse global media system is the recognition that the current world order must be challenged, and although international organizations such as UNESCO have proven to be loyal allies in the quest for justice, a new order characterized by equality, plurality and mutual understanding can only be achieved through collective action by local and national governments, non-governmental organizations, and the citizens of the world, inhabitants of the "global village".

5 Conclusion

In *Necessary Illusions*, Chomsky [1989, 5] analyzes the role of media in Western industrial societies and comes to the conclusion that capitalist democracy is heading in the direction of “the progressive elimination of labor unions, independent media, political associations and, more generally, forms of popular organization that interfere with domination of the state by concentrated private power”. He adds that the “democratization of media”, meaning giving citizens the opportunity “to inform themselves, to take part in inquiry and discussion and policy formation, and to advance their programs through political action” [Chomsky, 1989, 14], is not desired by those in power, who wish to reduce the citizen to a consumer and “to engineer consent through the media”. Instead of promoting critical thinking and citizen participation and challenging the status quo, mass media tend to “channel thoughts and attitudes within acceptable bounds, deflecting any potential challenge to established privilege and authority before it can take form and gather strength” [Chomsky, 1989, vii]. This phenomenon of shrinking democracy accompanied by the growth of corporate power is especially pronounced in the United States, but it is increasingly becoming a global rule advanced by cultural and economic imperialism.

This work used the representation of Brazil in mainstream American cinema as the starting point for a discussion that reflected some of the ideas developed by Chomsky and other critics of media concentration and cultural imperialism. By comparing the discourse about Brazil propagated by the US film industry with that produced by Portuguese conquerors in the Age of Discovery, it was shown that both discourses share many similarities and form, in fact, a single discourse that has adapted to new narrative forms and technologies over the years, but that has kept its essence intact. The main elements identified in the portrayal of the country by American commercial films from the 20th and 21st centuries are also present in writings of Portuguese colonizers who tried to describe that part of the New World to the Old World, emphasizing paradisiacal landscapes, the gentleness and obscurity of the natives and the abundance of natural resources.

The realization that the main elements of discourse remain unchanged and

unchallenged does not indicate a regard for consistency or respect for Western symbolic traditions, but rather suggest that the ethnocentric regime of representation that emerged from the encounter between the Old and the New World continues shaping dominant media discourses in the 21st century. Moreover, because the producers of alternative representations have limited participation in the global media system, dominant ethnocentric discourses are widely disseminated and perpetuated in Western collective memory. It was argued that the problem is not only of symbolic nature: the inaccurate representation of Brazilian culture and society is certainly offensive to Brazilians and to those who have a deeper understanding and knowledge of the country, but the criticism exercised here goes beyond representation. The analysis undertaken in the previous pages has shown that the symbolic is only one of the levels where domination and exploitation take place and power imbalances become visible. The inaccurate, biased and mostly ethnocentric representation of Third World countries by the First World, as exemplified by the portrayal of Brazil in American mainstream cinema, is symptomatic of a global political, economic and communication structure characterized by extreme imbalances in the distribution of power.

The power imbalances can be observed in the economic inequalities between the First and the Third World and in the little participation of the latter in global media flows. While even developing countries with prolific and well-established cultural industries – such as Brazil – struggle to distribute their cultural goods and messages on a global scale and to challenge cultural and ethnic stereotypes, the global media market becomes increasingly dominated by a handful of powerful media corporations. There is not a simple solution to these issues. The need to acknowledge the special nature of media products, to adopt the public sphere model and to regulate media was discussed in Chapter 4. These are important steps towards a more just and balanced global media scenario, but significant changes will only take place if the *modus operandi* of the capitalist system is put into question. The NWICO debate was undermined by the United States and Great Britain in order to protect economic and political interests, i.e. to ensure that the system is not threatened by major changes in the cultural and economic fields. The current structure of global media is profitable and advantageous for those who control and rule it, and therefore attempts to radically change it to the benefit of underrepresented nations are likely to be rejected.

The transformation of the global media system as proposed by the MacBride report cannot be achieved by a single institution or government, but only by the

combined efforts of organizations, governments and citizens. Emphasis is put here on the word “citizens” in order to suggest that the individual efforts of citizens will also play a relevant role in advancing the desired changes in the global media system. These efforts include participation in political processes, but they are not limited to it. Citizens can also influence the development of global media by acting like conscious consumers. Although it was discussed previously that media do not directly respond to consumer demand like other industries, but are more concerned with selling the right audiences to advertisers, a massive decrease in the demand for particular products and discourses would add impetus to the democratization of the global media system and its adaptation to the communication and informational needs of the developing world.

Democratization remains one of the main demands of Third World countries in the communication field, and this was already a priority in the 1970s, as stated in the MacBride report. The democracy envisioned by the developing world, however, is different from the model employed in the Western capitalist world and criticized by Chomsky, for example, because it rejects the predominating model of democracy imposed by the United States, which presupposes the assimilation of American values and the adoption of a predefined democratic structure beneficial to the expansion of transnational corporations. The kind of democracy able to fulfill the needs of the developing world, and that was outlined in the MacBride report, does not deny the expanded world designed by globalization, but it focuses on the ability of each nation to determine its own economic, social and communication priorities.

The previous chapters suggested that invisibility, or the lack of representation and participation in global communications, is one of the main obstacles impeding developing countries to achieve actual independence. This is not to say that political isolation, economic protectionism and cultural self-absorption are the only ways that lead to independence. The idea defended here is that the current structure of globalization has many flaws, but it could be shaped in a way that would prove beneficial for all actors involved. The new shape of globalization would acknowledge concepts of democracy and development that may differ from the predominating one, which tends to choose profits over people. But most importantly, in an ideal globalization scenario not only developed countries and media giants would have their voices heard in global media, but the transmission of messages in a global level would only partially depend on the wealth and cultural prestige of the communicator.

In such a scenario, communications would become truly global and accomplish the four D's suggested in the MacBride Report: democratization, decolonization, demonopolization and development, understood here as the privilege to decide, according to one's own traditions and values, what constitutes development. While one might believe that the introduction of cable TV in a rural village in South America is a sign of development, the villagers might decide that this kind of development is not desirable. Resisting to development, especially when imposed by external actors, is also a kind of development that reflects the power of self-determination. The global exchange of ideas and messages made possible by the globalization of communications is a phenomenon that shortened distances between cultures, nations and peoples, but it also caused ruptures and identity crises and deepened power imbalances. This phenomenon can only fulfill its full potential when all nations and peoples, independently of their economic, political and cultural status, have the opportunity to participate in it, share their views of the world, and openly question injustices and inequalities.

In order to understand these injustices and to formulate possible solutions, it is necessary to investigate their origin. This was the endeavor undertaken in Chapter 2, where the genesis of Brazilian stereotypes was analyzed. A product of colonial supremacy, the ethnocentric regime of representation upon which the image of Brazil is based has been serving as a basis for the portrayal of Third World peoples, societies and traditions for centuries. The rapid development of mass media in the 20th century has not significantly altered these representations, which were merely adapted to the new technologies available but remained unchanged in essence. This symbolic essentialism is stressed by Said in *Orientalism*, a book that has strongly influenced the discussion about ethnocentrism, colonialism and representational techniques carried out in Chapter 2.

The term Brazilianism was used in this work as an attempt to classify a symbolic tradition that is not as extensively studied and well-documented as Orientalism, but that also has its roots in colonialism and represents a significant body of knowledge born out of power. One can argue that many other countries and regions of the world have an own identifiable body of knowledge developed over centuries of colonialism, forming discourses that are widely accepted as true and remain often uncontested. One of the main arguments defended in this work is that media concentration is one of the main obstacles that impede the dissemination of alternative discourses, allowing for the confirmation and perpetuation of ethnocentric discourses.

The analysis of texts produced in the context of colonialism showed that the same elements that are emphasized in these narratives also appear in the film analysis carried out in Chapter 3. The constant repetition of stereotypes, the lack of accuracy and historical background, and the predominantly American perspective that characterize the representations of Brazilian reality in these films corroborate the suggestion that the participation of developing countries in global communications must be increased. Only different perspectives and approaches that do not fit into the mainstream can provide more dynamic, diverse and accurate representations that are more faithful to things, places, peoples and situations. Since reality is a social construction, it is a difficult term to use, but in this particular context, when we talk about accuracy we are referring to the world view and the perception of those who were born within this social reality and that experience this reality on a daily basis. Latin American filmmakers, reporters, writers and artists can portray their homeland, and meaningfully discuss issues that concern it, more accurately and critically than outsiders. Examples of inaccurate and stereotypical portrayals in Chapter 3 indicate that the “reality” of Brazil and other developing countries, as constructed by colonialism and disseminated by the mass media, must be continuously challenged by alternative representations created in the heart of these countries, and not outside.

After carefully analyzing the political climate and flawed strategies that led to the failure of NWICO, Carlsson [2003, 55] comes to the conclusion that “[u]nless the cultural diversity inherent in society is acknowledged and represented in the public sphere, no positive political, economic or social development will be possible”. The analyses and discussions that form this work have shown that Carlsson is right when she suggests that acknowledging cultural diversity is a prerequisite for far-reaching global changes in the political, economic, cultural and social fields. It was argued that cultural independence is directly related to self-determination in these fields: a well-established culture industry and appropriate communication infrastructure are prerequisites for the achievement of political and economic self-determination, a term that should not be mistaken as a synonym for independence, since in our globalized world, it is critical to talk about actual independence. The network of economies, institutions and societies that forms the “global village” is characterized by total interdependence between its actors. Developed countries depend on developing nations for raw materials and cheap labor, while the latter depend on the former for development assistance and investments. One of the main arguments defended in the previous pages, however,

is that some actors are more dependent and less powerful than others, and that this global network has a hierarchical structure that resembles the world structure designed by Europeans during the Age of Discovery. The network is characterized by power imbalances expressed in social and economic inequalities faced by Third World countries and in representations of these countries by the developed world.

The aim of this work is not to offer final solutions for the identified problems, but to call attention to the necessity to acknowledge the connections between cultural imperialism and economic exploitation. Much is said about the situation of economic dependency of the Third World in relation to the First World, but it is seldom explained how global media, employing an ethnocentric regime of representation, contribute to justifying and perpetuating this situation. A remarkable attempt to educate the international community about this connection, and to suggest concrete measures to change this scenario to the benefit of developing countries, was undertaken by UNESCO in the 1970s and 1980s, resulting in a revolutionary document whose credibility was gradually and efficiently undermined by the powerful. The MacBride Report was written by a group of courageous experts who dared to explicitly describe the mechanisms of domination that kept the Third World hungry, dependent, underdeveloped and underrepresented. The report supported the demands of developing nations for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) by focusing on the cultural and communication aspects of these demands. The proposal to establish a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) characterized by a more balanced communication flow was legitimate, reflecting demands from the Third World for more international visibility, autonomy and equal opportunities to participate in the global flow of communication and information. Just like NIEO, NWICO was an ambitious plan to reverse the situation of domination and exploitation experienced by the Third World since the dawn of the colonial era. It expressed the infatuation of the Third World with the increasing power and influence enjoyed by Western industrial nations, and an authentic desire to break once and for all with the colonial past. The demands, however, were too ambitious in the eyes of the United States and Great Britain, who, being faithful to the imperialist tradition, withdrew from UNESCO to weaken the initiative.

The main contribution of this work to academic debate consists in the historiographical and semiotic investigation of the symbolic, economic *and* political structures that make the perpetuation and continuous expansion of Brazilianism possible. It showed that it is not possible to fully comprehend cultural, ethnic,

social and national stereotypes without investigating their nature and their origin, and that a meaningful analysis must consider their historical background and the power relations involved in their formulation and dissemination. Finally, this work transcended the symbolic level by identifying the global economic and political structure that ensures the uncontested dominance of a number of nations in these and other fields. These reflections provided the basis for a discussion about the new communication model suggested by the NWICO debate, a model that has not lost relevance and currency and that would be a meaningful starting point for a new global debate about the need to reduce inequalities in several areas: economy, politics, culture and communications. Just like the other countries that form the Third World, Brazil must be able to increase its participation in global media in order to challenge Brazilianism. Only a truly democratic global media system can enable developing countries to challenge ethnocentric and biased discourses and to propagate alternative representations; and most importantly, only such a system can ensure that voices that are skeptical of the current global economic, political and cultural structure are heard and the world's cultural diversity is adequately represented in the media and protected from homogenization and commodification.

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