



*Brazilian Cinema:  
From Dictatorship to Democracy*

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# Agenda

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1. The Beginnings
2. Cinema Novo
3. Tropicalism, Cannibalism & Political Exile
4. Pornochanchada
5. Cinema da Retomada & Democracy
6. Telenovela Films





# The Beginnings



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# Bela Época 1908-1911

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A time when no imported film enjoyed the box-office triumph of Brazilian films dealing with local crimes or politics.

Bela Época was the fertile ground to which Brazilian cinema could flourish, grow and thrive internationally.

Provided the first opportunity to cinematically break through the North American monopoly.

Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes affirmed that “If cinema did not become a Brazilian habit for approximately a decade, it was due to our underdevelopment in electricity.”







# Humberto Mauro



Pioneer of Brazilian cinema. Humberto Mauro (1897-1983) directed many successful films in his small town of Cataguases in the state of Minas Gerais from 1926 to 1930, when he was brought to Rio de Janeiro by producer-director Adhemar Gonzaga. He went on to direct several features which were praised for their uniquely Brazilian style - notably *Lost Treasure* (Thesouro Perdido, 1926), *Sleeping Ember* (Braza Dormida, 1927) and *Brutal Gang* (Ganga Bruta, 1933).









# Chanchada – 1933-1949



- Developed in Rio de Janeiro between 1929-1960
- Milestone in development of Brazilian popular cinema
- Studios: Atlântida, Cinédia
- They were often musicals (carnaval's songs) and comedies
- Focused on Brazilian urban life and Hollywood parodies
- The word chanchada is Portuguese for mess, or trash.



*Aviso aos Navegantes (1950) 2'45-6'*

Through chanchadas, a genre of popular comedy films, usually vulgar and often musical, registered and expressed some of the aspects and aspirations of a urban life in the capital of Rio de Janeiro. The films included a variety of carioca mannerisms, speech, thoughts and behaviors (similar to what happen today with Globo telenovelas)



# CINEMA NOVO

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# Cinema Novo

## 1963-1970

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**“Cinema Novo stood with the Brazilian utopia. If it is ugly, irregular, dirty, confusing and chaotic, it is also beautiful, disharmonic, luminous and revolutionary.” *Glauber Rocha***

Latin America is still a colony, and the only thing that differentiates yesterday's colonialism from today's is the colonizer's more perfect form as well as the subtle forms of those who assemble future blows on us.

...only a culture of hunger, drenched in its own structures, can take a qualitative leap. And the noblest cultural manifestation of hunger is violence.

Latin hunger is not, then, just an alarming symptom: it is the very nerve of its own society. Here lies the tragic originality of *Cinema Novo* for the world cinema: our originality is our hunger, and our greatest woe is that, because it is felt, this hunger is not understood.



**Glauber Rocha & Aesthetic of Hunger**

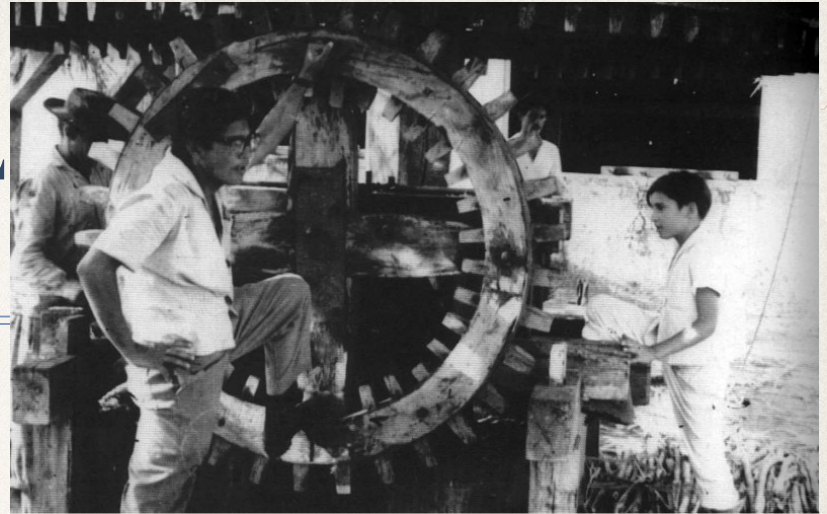


# THE SUGARCANE MILL

(A Bolandeira, 1968, 10')

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Vladimir Carvalho



- ❖ In the hinterland of Paraíba state, the rustic wooden sugarcane mills (bolandeiras) are being gradually replaced by modern motor powered vehicles. The bolandeiras produce honey and rock candy sugar (rapadura) and are operated by human and animal traction. They are on their way out and so is a way of life.



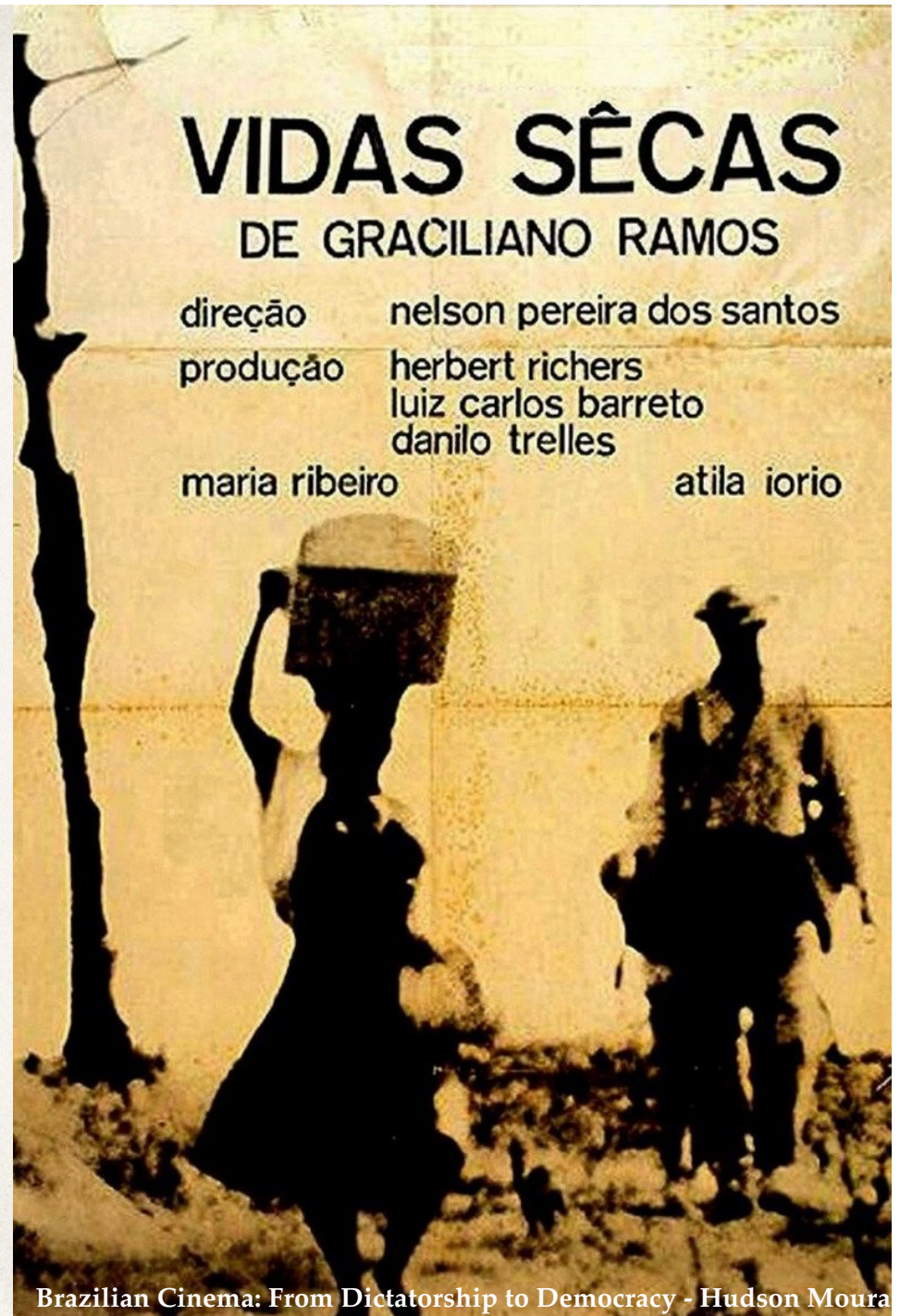
# Themes

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Inspired by Italian Neorealism and French New Wave CN depicts the brutal reality of the lives of *favelados*, in the slums of the big cities such as Rio de Janeiro, or of *retirantes* (migrants) fleeing the famine in the draught-stricken northeastern Brazil.

These films show the *people* for the first time in a Brazilian screen instead of a representation or a convention of characters depicted in commercial cinema, such as the popular comedies of *chanchada* or the classical Hollywood style of Brazilian studios.

“The significance of Cinema Novo was immense: it reflected and created a continuous and coherent audio-visual image of the absolute majority of the Brazilian people. Cinema Novo created a mythical universe made up of the impoverished interior, urban slums, lower class suburbs, fishing villages, dance halls, and the soccer stadium”. Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes, *Cinema: a trajectory within underdevelopment* (1973).





# Barren Lives (1963)

## Nelson Pereira dos Santos

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Barren Lives follows an itinerant herdsman and his family as they migrate across the desolate, drought-stricken landscapes of Brazil's northeast sertão, on their way to the urban south. The film makes startling use of point-of-view shots, and of naked, unfiltered light; "Ramos's literary style . . . is transmuted into a cinematography as dry and harsh as the landscape . . . Indeed, director of photography Luiz Carlos Barreto has been credited with 'inventing' a light appropriate to Brazilian cinema" (Robert Stam, Film Comment). Although specifically set in 1940, Barren Lives was banned in Brazil after the 1964 coup for its depiction of Brazilian poverty and police brutality.



18'-22'

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# Black God, White Devil

## (BRA, 1963)

### Glauber Rocha

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- ❖ “This film depicts the saga of two peasants, Manuel and Rosa, and a charismatic black beato, or messianic priest, whose authority threatens that of the Catholic Church and the local landowners. Antonio das Mortes is hired to eliminate the ‘black god’; in an interesting twist, the job is done for him. When the priest's hunger-crazed followers are led to a massacre at the hands of government troops, Manuel and Rosa, the sole survivors, find a new leader in the cangaceiro Corisco, heroic bandit-champion of the oppressed. And so the loop closes: Corisco, the ‘white devil,’ will be Antonio das Mortes's next victim”

CD2 55’-1:01’



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# Militaries & Power 1964-1984

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In 1964, The military decided to stage a coup to save the country from a new Cuban Revolution. They abolished independent political parties, there were numerous human rights violations and torture, centralized authority, embarked upon many pharaonic development projects, such as the road Transamazonica.

As state censorship heightened under military rule in the late 60s, Cinema Novo increasingly found its voice in the more disguised forms of allegory, metaphor, symbolism and satire, creating further works of startlingly complexity and breathtaking accomplishment -- for a time, at least, until the repression proved too severe, directors fled into exile, the energy of movement exhausted itself.



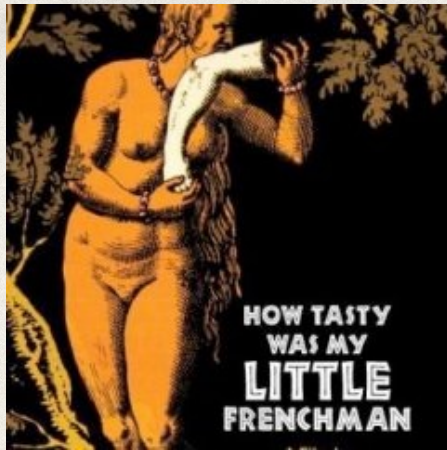
# Tropicalism, Cannibalism & Political Exile

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- ❖ How Tasty Was My Little Frenchmen is a key work of Brazilian cinema's "cannibal-tropicalist" phase, when state censorship forced Cinema Novo's directors into the realm of extravagant symbolism and mythic allegory. In essence, the filmmaker "cannibalizes" *tropicalismo's* musical stylistics along the lines of Modernism's "Manifesto Antropófago," while juxtaposing an "official" history with an irreverent reinvention of Brazil's colonial period. Ultimately, this revisionist technique purposefully undermines the authoritative self-representation of the military regime after the Fifth Institutional Act of 1968.
- ❖ In 1594 in Brazil, the Tupinambás Indians are friends of the Frenchs and their enemies are the Tupiniquins, friends of the Portuguese. A Frenchman is captured by the Tupinambás, and in revenge the Indians decide to eat him.
- ❖ They believe that in devouring a foreign body, that Other's traits become incorporated into the devourer.

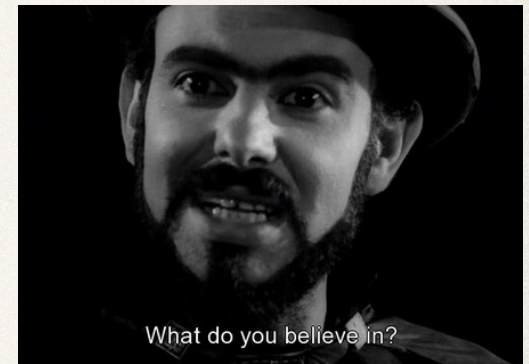
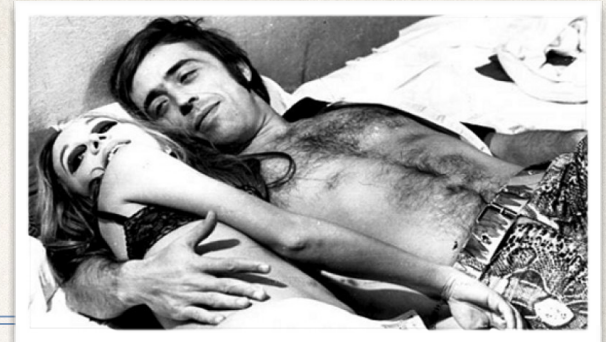


# Cinema of Garbage

1968 was a watershed year for Brazil, when the military dictatorship of 1964–84 entered its most repressive phase and the fecund leftist culture of the 1960s was extinguished. In the face of that year's dramatic intensification of cultural censorship and the forced and voluntary exiles of many cultural figures, a wide range of artists, filmmakers, and poets embraced an ethos of aesthetic and social marginality.

"The time has come for films that are dirty and poetic, impure and pretentious, and for new forms for new contents; for cinema that speaks of politics or of banditry without aesthetic respect, to the point of adopting an obscene liberty." Sganzerla

In these films, humor and grotesque were used as the basis for new allegories of Brazil, considered *absurd* country without political and cultural perspectives. In them, there was no heroic or virtuous characters. Everyone seemed impostors and alienated suffering with hallucinations. The popular classes were shown as grotesque and bad taste, victimized by the dehumanization of society and corrupted by the capitalist system. The hero was no longer a conscious worker, the peasant fighter or the selfless middle class political militant, but the "marginal", the social outcast, the accursed artist, transgressor of all the rules.



What do you believe in?





# Funding & Censorship

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In the 1970s, Brazilian cinema experienced a paradox. It was financially supported by the same authoritarian state which practiced censorship. How do you explain this paradox? What is the legacy of the modern Brazilian cinema that strengthened during the military dictatorship? How these films helped to create, in national memory/archives and in the cultural debate, iconic images of the dictatorship and their opponents?

Embrafilme was the Brazilian State funded company created by militaries in 1969 for production and distribution of Brazilian movies. It was disbanded by the government of Fernando Collor de Mello in 1990.

A EMBRAFILME tem por objetivo a distribuição de filmes no exterior, sua promoção, realização de mostras e apresentações em festivais, visando à difusão do filme brasileiro em seus aspectos culturais artísticos e científicos, como órgão de cooperação com o INC, podendo exercer atividades comerciais ou industriais relacionadas com o objeto principal de sua atividade.



# Pornochanchada: Sex Comedies

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# Dona Flor and her two husbands (Dona Flor e seus dois maridos) 1976

Dir. by Bruno Barreto. Based on Jorge Amado's novel

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DONA FLOR'S first husband is dead, but that's just as well, since he was a grievous no-goodnik in his lifetime. He was a gambler, a wise guy and a womanizer, and he beat his pretty young wife shamelessly, pacifying her with the occasional moonlight serenade or nice gesture. Once he took her out to a fancy nightclub, where he bought her champagne and caviar and didn't even pinch the waitress.

Apparently, this man's only note-worthy talent was for lovemaking, and "Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands," at the Paris Theater, devotes more than enough screen time to that aspect of the marriage. And Dona Flor's second husband, a dopey druggist who drops a medicine bottle the first time he sees the pretty widow, is a sorry successor. So Dona Flor mopes and broods and smiles wanly, until one day her prayers are answered. Husband Number One is such a devil that he manages to come back, sans clothing, and pay his wife amorous visits while Husband Number Two isn't looking. Even if Husband Number Two *were* looking he wouldn't catch on, because he is slow-witted anyway and because death has conveniently rendered Husband Number One invisible.





# Jorge Amado's Novel

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This story, adapted from the novel by the Brazilian author Jorge Amado, would seem to have the makings of a bawdy "Topper," and indeed the film's final 20 minutes make reasonably amusing use of the dead man's return. But Bruno Barreto, who directed the film, devotes far more time to setting up the situation than he finally does to exploiting it, and the early part of the film has a dangerously uncertain tone. Dona Flor's life looks terrible, yet this is not a didactic film or even a particularly satirical one, so there's little to be learned from her plight.

There are various glimpses of Bahia and its customs, circa the 1940's, but the only interesting bit of local color is Dona Flor's recipe for crabmeat casserole. Dona Flor teaches a class in gourmet cooking: Husband Number One liked to sit in on the class and, by the by, fondle the students.

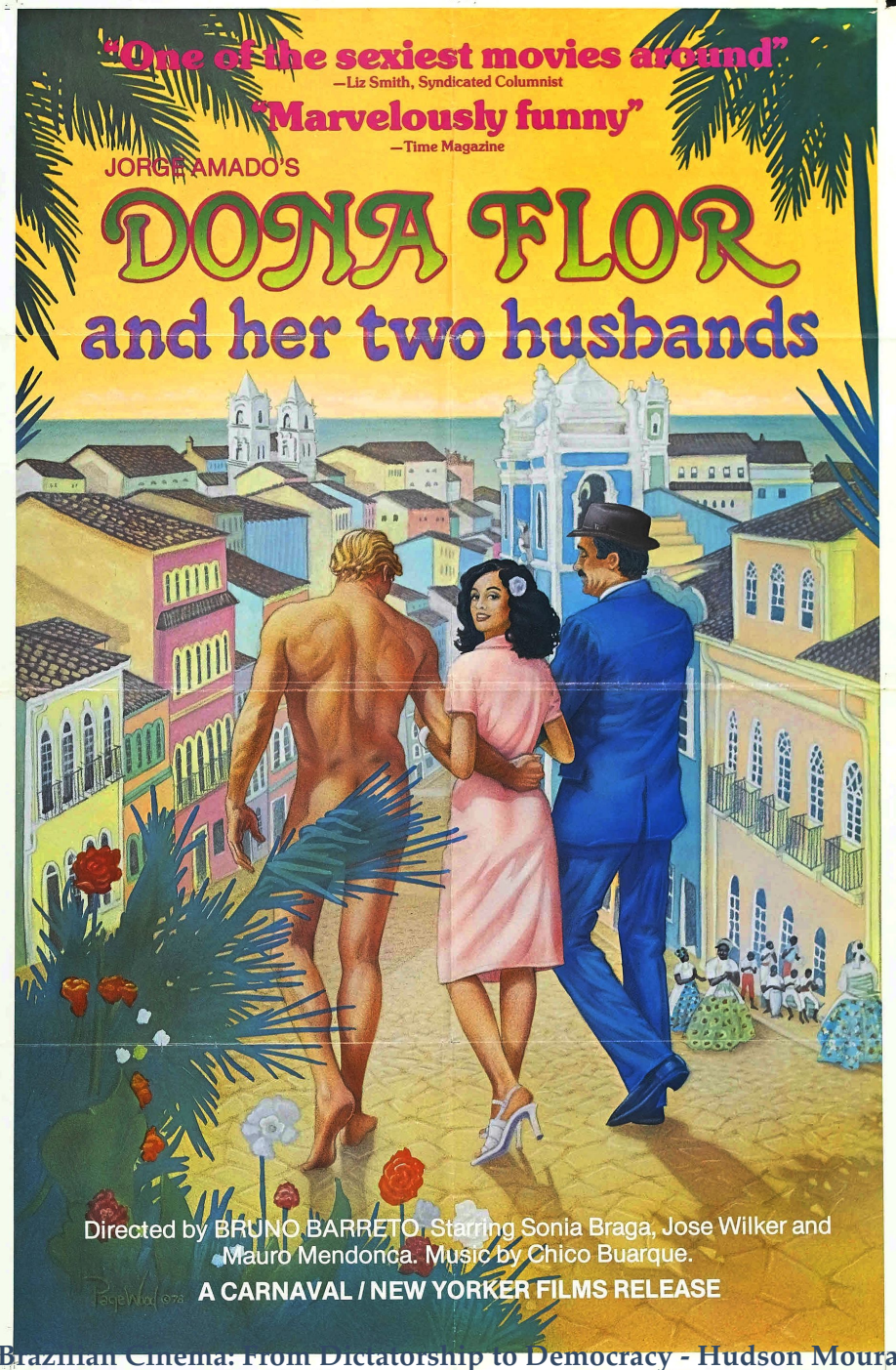


*What may it be...*

*what have no shame and will never have  
what have no government and will never have  
what have not healthy mind*

Chico Buarque

No moral judgments, the plot is quite logical. The narrative is an inventive and humorous portrait of the ambiguities that characterizes Brazil, a country divided between commitment and pleasure, joy and seriousness, work and trickery. There is also the ironic and satirical tone in the eyes of society and its hypocrisy. Dona Flor's gossip "friends" is a good example of this game of show and hide, the prejudices and even the attitude of judging what would be the ideal man. At the end, Chico Buarque's questions prevails.







# Cinema da Retomada & Democracy

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# Lei do Audiovisual

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- ❖ In 1990, Fernando Collor de Mello became the first President elected by direct vote after the military dictatorship. He implemented Structural Adjustment by privatizing government enterprises and closing several governmental cultural institutions such as Embrafilme. That and the following year was released only one feature film per year.
- ❖ Fernando Henrique Cardoso elected in 1994 implements incentive new rules for tax deduction which helped private sectors to finance the production and distribution.





The Brazilian cinema industry was said to have been reborn in 1995. The film most associated with this rebirth or *retomada* is Carla Camurati's 1995 hit *Carlota Joaquina, princesa do Brasil* (*Carlota Joaquina, Princess of Brazil*), a comedy based on the life of the sex-mad Spanish wife of King John VI of Portugal, who fled to the colony of Brazil in 1808 to escape the invading forces of Napoleon, recalls various key features of the *chanchada* tradition: irreverent humor directed at the elite and carnivalesque interludes of music and dance.



# Central Station

(1998)

Walter Salles



This tells the tale of Dora, an aging and lonely retired schoolteacher who makes ends meet by writing letters for illiterate Brazilians in a train station. One day a woman and her young boy want to write the boy's estranged father, whom the boy wants to meet in the worst way. A fateful accident kills the boy's mother, leaving the boy a virtual orphan since he doesn't know his father. Dora takes the boy in but sells custody to a local businessman from the train station, but her conscience gets the better of her when she discovers the man is in a black market operation that kills youngsters for their organs. She rescues the boy and together they go in search of the boy's long lost father.





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Josué,

I haven't sent a letter to anyone for a while, but I'm sending you this now. You were right. Your father will come back and he is surely all that you say he is. I remember riding with my father in his train. I was just a little girl, but he let me blow the whistle the whole time. When your driving down the road in your big truck, remember I was the first person to have you put your hand on the wheel. It will be better for you to stay with your brothers. You deserve much more than I can give you. If you miss me one day, look at the picture we took together. I'm telling you this because I'm afraid you too may forget me. I long for my father. I long for everything.

❖ Dora





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# CITY OF GOD



*City of God*  
(BRA, 2002)  
Fernando Meirelles

Cidade de Deus is an overwhelming film about the life of the notorious outer suburb of Rio de Janeiro of the same name, based on a book by Paulo Lins.

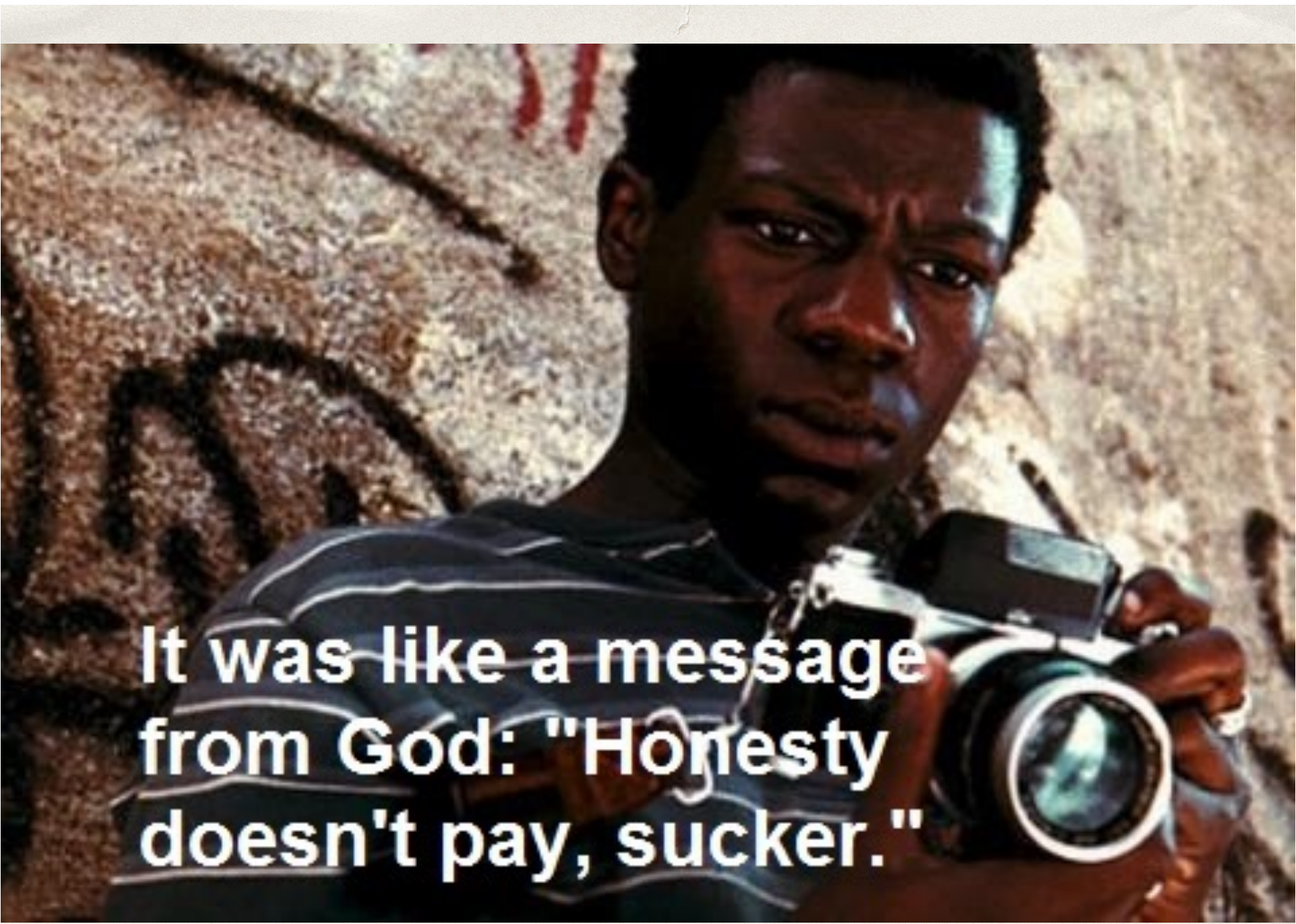
Fernando Meirelles did not make the film overly sober: he uses a dynamic, non-linear narrative structure and images that can even be described as glamorous. Yet the film always stays close to reality. This is largely thanks to the powerful acting by the young cast, who come from the district themselves. The multitude of characters and events in the book have now been reduced for the film adaptation to one single clear storyline. The film, just like the book, is a mosaic of stories about violence, love and friendship.



Rocket, one of the protagonists, is the alter ego of writer Lins, a kid who manages to escape from the hopeless situation of the favela. In the late 1960s, Rocket and Zé are eleven and gaze in admiration at Shaggy and his gang. After the death of Shaggy, it is Zé's turn. He shifts the field of operation of the gangsters (none of them over fourteen) from robberies to dealing drugs. Aged eighteen, Zé is the biggest gangster in town. Rocket is by now doing a training course, but also commits robberies in his spare time. When the 1980s dawn, Zé is over the top, but Rocket finally seems able to realize his childhood dream.





A close-up photograph of a young Black man with a serious, intense expression. He is holding a vintage SLR camera with a large lens, looking directly at the viewer. He is wearing a dark, horizontally striped shirt. The background is a rough, textured wall with some faint graffiti, including a red heart shape. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and shadows.

**It was like a message  
from God: "Honesty  
doesn't pay, sucker."**





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Based on  
**economical,**  
**aesthetic,**  

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**production, and**  
**performance**  
criteria, I believe  
that *City of God*,  
directed by  
Fernando Meirelles  
and produced by  
Walter Salles,  
started a new era in  
Brazilian cinema:  
the genre cinema.



The image is a movie poster for the Brazilian film 'Se Eu Fosse Você'. It features a close-up of two actors, Glória Pires on the left and Tony Ramos on the right, facing each other in profile. Glória Pires is holding a small, light blue object near her mouth, while Tony Ramos is holding a gold-colored lipstick. The background is a soft, light beige. The title 'Se Eu Fosse Você' is prominently displayed in the center, with 'Se' in black, 'Eu' in large blue letters, 'Fosse' in black, and 'Você' in large pink letters. Above the title, the names 'Glória Pires' and 'Tony Ramos' are written in blue and pink respectively. Below the title, it says 'Uma comédia de Daniel Filho' in black and blue. The overall aesthetic is clean and romantic.

Glória Pires  
Tony Ramos

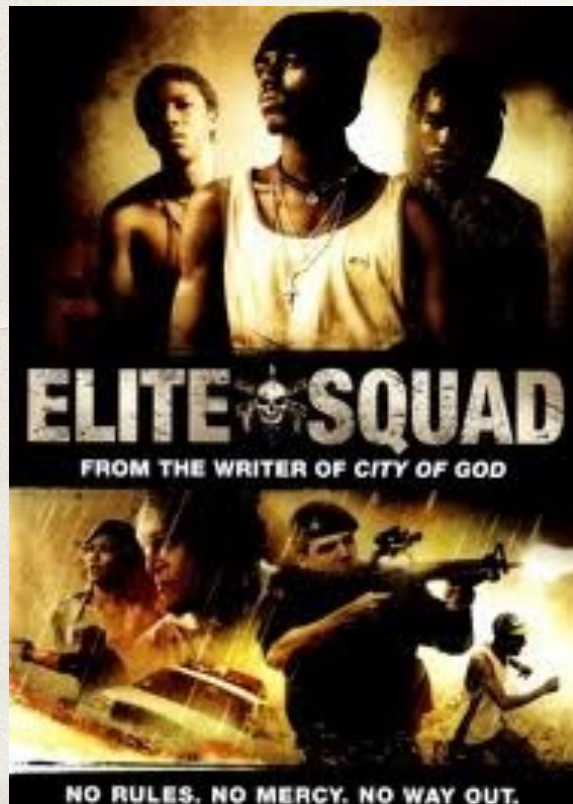
## Telenovela Films

Se **Eu** Fosse  
**Você**  
Uma comédia de Daniel Filho



# Elite Squad (2007)

José Padilha



• For Capitão Nascimento, violence is a necessary evil to win the war against the criminals. Similarly, the police brutality against the people in the slums depicted in the film is simply an efficient way of getting a witness to talk; here, violence is a method to secure justice. However, if it looked at from the perspective of a criminal or gangster living in these slums, then their violent actions are merely an expression of rage at their unfair life circumstances perpetuated by their own country.





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# OBRIGADO!

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