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## **Bichas, Sapatões e Putas: Director Sandra Werneck Advocates for Human Rights Through Three Brazilian Films**

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BICHAS, SAPATÕES E PUTAS: DIRECTOR SANDRA WERNECK ADVOCATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

THROUGH THREE BRAZILIAN FILMS

by

KRISTEN BADGER

Under the Direction of Leslie Louise Marsh

#### ABSTRACT

As a director Sandra Werneck consistently demonstrates her commitment to social issues impacting Brazilian society, from gay rights and AIDS awareness to child prostitution in her films. This thesis will discuss three feature-length films which address social conditions affecting non-heteronormatively identifying people, women, youth and people with HIV. Werneck's films offer a form of optimism by crafting an alternative space in which her characters may evolve and thrive by avoiding the victimization and stereotyping of her characters. Cinematic elements like the narrative structure, lighting, color and texture aid in articulating her support for human rights. This thesis is set against the backdrop of recent legislative developments protecting gay rights, impoverished children and families and increased AIDS research and education. The discussion is foregrounded by Brazil's post-dictatorship re-democratization and contemporary Brazilian feminism, symbiotic with human rights movements based on the essential equality and equal treatment of all human beings.

INDEX WORDS: Citizenship, Heteronormativity, Human rights, Gay rights, Latin American feminism, Feminist theory, Queer theory, Cinematography, Sandra Werneck, *Amores Possíveis*, *Caçuzo*, *Sonhos Roubados*, Brazilian film.

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KRISTEN BADGER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my sister, Jenna Raquel Hilton-Thomas, RN, in warm remembrance of her bravery, commitment to quality of life, unconditional acceptance of all who crossed her path, unwavering support and encouragement of my endeavors and her irreverent and bold sense of humor.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

“The right to have rights, or the right of every individual to belong to humanity, should be guaranteed by humanity itself. It is by no means certain whether this is possible” (Arendt 177-8).

The discussion of human rights has been sustained for centuries, echoing in the words of authors, politicians, religious and activists alike. Hannah Arendt’s assertion regarding the guarantee of human rights specifically responds to the European and Soviet totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century; however, her message regarding civil rights is universal and continues to be scrutinized today even in the current milieus of newly democratized societies. This thesis will evaluate three films directed by Sandra Werneck in regards to her development of human rights related issues and the impacts on citizenship within the current context of Brazilian political policies and social events.

Historically, Latin America has been characterized by political instability and marked by internal polemics regarding land, power, and rights. Brazil has seen its share of these evolving and often interwoven debates and continues to negotiate an ongoing dialog concerning the rights of its citizens. The films discussed in this paper are set in the wake of Brazil’s re-democratization after a twenty-one year dictatorship ending in 1985 and contribute to the debate by advocating for congruency between political and civil democracies. Sandra Werneck’s films *Amores Possíveis/ Possible Loves* (2001), *Cazuza: O Tempo Não Para/Cazuza: Time Doesn’t Stop* (2004), and *Sonhos Roubados/Stolen Dreams* (2009) address topics from non hetero-normativity to AIDS awareness to adolescent prostitution. The three films highlight the experience of individuals within the marginalized groups (non-heterosexual individuals, people living with AIDS and adolescent sex-workers) impacted by these social topics.

Seyla Benhabib explains that “one becomes a minority if the political majority in the polity declares that certain groups do not belong to the supposedly ‘homogenous’ people” (14). Benhabib’s statement puts into place the theoretical classification of a minority group. However, the practical classification of a minority group occurs when groups of people are disenfranchised and relegated to a peripheral reality that lacks the equality in privilege and benefit granted to their majority counterparts, as evidenced by the current discrepancy between legal and civil statuses of Brazilian minorities.

In light of the emerging economic development and stability in developing nations like Brazil, why do human rights continue to be so hotly contested? Why do rights for same-sex couples, women and youth lag behind their majority counterparts in a seemingly progressive country known for its democratically elected female president who was formerly a Marxist guerrilla leader? What would a Brazil look like in which legal, civil and human rights were mutually dignified?

Sandra Werneck’s films raise awareness about these issues currently being debated in contemporary Brazilian society by highlighting specific minority experiences and challenging established norms of the homogenous majority. Latin American film scholar Leslie Marsh observes Werneck’s “non-interventionist” approach, which permits the characters to speak about their own experiences without public opinion and judgment (238). Werneck allows for alternative identities by eschewing stereotypes, acknowledging the existing hierarchies, in spite of oppressive circumstances, not casting her characters as victims, and yielding a “space” to what would otherwise be labeled as “marginal” characters.

Citizenship is characterized by a mutual exchange of overlapping expectations of rights and responsibilities between state and society within a democratic political system. Caldeira and Holston explain “the state molds people into particular kinds of (citizen-) subjects and ...citizens also hold the state accountable to their interests” (693). Although interpretations of democracy vary, concepts of civil liber-

ties entailing freedom of speech, assembly, and personal security have long been viewed as characteristic traits of democracy (710).

A political democracy based on democratic values is not however synonymous with a civil democracy in which citizen rights are equally and evenly distributed and safe-guarded, as in post-dictatorial Brazil's re-democratized government. Recent social and legislative developments in Brazil concerning human rights point to a disjuncture between society and state in regard to the state's protection of society's interests, evidencing the imbalanced relationship between citizens' rights, the legislation created to protect these rights and the actual judicial enforcement of the legislation.

There is degradation in civil democracy if a citizen is not guaranteed civil liberties, thus creating a disjuncture between government and its constituents. For example, the right to personal safety in public places should be collectively ensured to all. Anthropologist Tomi Castle explores the effects of the lack of government protection as she discusses violence as an obstacle to experiencing full citizenship and cites the guarantee of personal safety as the utmost concern of citizens (121). Events as recent as June 2012 resulting in violent homophobic attacks that have maimed and/or killed their victims represent obstacles to achieving full citizenship.<sup>1</sup>

The breach between state and society's commitment to each other becomes apparent when political institutions fail to act effectively on citizens' behalf in response to the violation of rights. If people don't feel that political institutions are acting effectively on their behalf to defend their rights, they will begin to take alternative measures to enforce the law, maintain order and resolve problems independently of government agencies on their own terms (Caldeira and Holston 695). One such alternative measure has been the organization of grass-roots communities to address specific issues not being ad-

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<sup>1</sup> 22 year-old twin brothers José Leonardo y José Leandro were threatened by knife, beaten and stoned while walking down the street in Bahia with their arms around one another after a concert, killing one of the twins and seriously injuring the other in June 2012 (O Globo). Another attack occurred in São Paulo in July 2011 where father and son at an agricultural fair were mistaken for a gay couple. The father's ear was bitten off (Souza).

dressed effectively by the government, for example the Movimento Lésbico de Campinas (Mo.Le.Ca.)<sup>2</sup>. Mo.Le.Ca. was founded in 2000 “to expand the social, political and civil rights of lesbians; to achieve full citizenship for women; to promote the elimination of all forms of discrimination, prejudice and intolerance toward lesbians; and to fight for the rights of LGBT people and the rights of women” (Global Fund for Women) based on the concept of citizenship as a “full, participatory inclusion in public life and not simply about access to specific rights” (Castle 119).

Certain claims to citizenship, such as the protection from violence and disinterested enforcement of laws seem like basic inalienable rights that every citizen should be able to rely on. Castle points out that the expectations of citizenship should not be limited to the promise of protection from violence, but should also encompass government responsibility to acknowledge and respond to claims of infringement (123). Recent violent events have proven that these expectations are not being met, resulting in a collective insecurity. Where there is insecurity regarding one’s basic rights not to be assaulted and to be heard with the same attention that a heterosexual person would be heard, there is disenfranchisement from mainstream society for the group. Living with this insecurity and lack of confidence in the legal system impacts its members in far-reaching and powerful ways on a daily basis. Grassroots groups, like Mo.Le.Ca., provide a unified voice to the group’s demands and expectations, paving the way for “new varieties of citizens who do not fit easily into traditional models of citizenship” (Castle 118).

Sandra Werneck has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to the effort to secure a safe space in Brazilian society for non-traditional citizens by raising consciousness through her documentaries, feature-length and short films. For more than thirty-five years her films have featured individuals that have been disregarded, ostracized and criticized by society, among them: child laborers, transvestites, and imprisoned mothers. Instead of confining her characters to the usual tropes that would further

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<sup>2</sup> The group’s tongue-in-cheek acronym (Mo.Le.Ca. or moleca) means butch or tomboy in Portuguese.

marginalize them, Werneck's characters express themselves and their individuality shunning the stereotypes typically associated with them.

## 2 AMORES POSSÍVEIS



**Figure 2.1** *Amores Possíveis* Film Cover

Through her work in *Amores Possíveis*, Sandra Werneck critiques social prejudice and intolerance of the national political policy, which at the time denied gay couples access to the benefits awarded to straight couples. The film was made in 2001 six years after a bill was submitted to the Brazilian Congress for equal rights for homosexual couples. Recent Brazilian legislation reveals the impact of the collective demand for gay rights. In May of 2011 the Court ruled that gay couples in "stable relationships" could legally register as civil unions in order to take advantage of their rights to community property, alimony, health insurance and tax benefits, adoption, and inheritance rights. Later that year same-sex marriage was legalized in certain states of Brazil. As of May 2013, a legally registered same-sex civil union could be converted into a marriage in all states of Brazil.

*Amores Possíveis* tells the story of Carlos' quest for his ideal mate which leads him to explore sexual and sentimental relationships with many women, even marrying and having a child, before he

eventually settles down with a man, Pedro. *Amores Possíveis*' narrative style appropriately reflects the film's title, presenting three distinct vignettes of the romantic alternatives that face Carlos. In the course of the film Carlos' decisions and subsequent behavior with his sexual partners make him an example of Tomi Castle's "new variety of citizen" that does not fit easily into traditional models of citizenship. Werneck capitalizes on the ambiguity introduced by Carlos' sexual relationships to interpellate the static heterosexual/homosexual binary by revealing the complexity of individual relationships through Carlos' romantic trajectories, therefore advocating for new understandings of sexuality, perhaps in the form of an all-inclusive continuum, as opposed to the limiting categories of sexual identities.

Queer theorist Mimi Marinucci problematizes this binary, as well, by explaining that categories associated with sexual pleasure and desire are historical and cultural developments in a discussion of social constructionism (5). The binary categories associated with sexual pleasure cite a heterosexual "role" as the dominant group and establish a diametrically opposing alternative category encompassing all that deviates from the heterosexual role. The creation of these categories is a form of acknowledgment of the existence of behaviors that don't fit the established norm. Marinucci's explanation allows us to understand the category definitions of the binary as a response to an external need to define others in relation to one's self that is derived from behavior and not necessarily relevant to the internal process of discovery that leads to the behavior it classifies.

Labels for sexual identities and roles within those identities carry certain expectations of behavior. For example, in homosexual relationship it may be assumed that a "homosexual will be exclusively or predominantly homosexual in his feelings and behavior and effeminate in manner, personality, or preferred sexual activity;" that he will seek some type of sexual interaction with all men he comes into contact with, including young men and boys (Marinucci 6). Julia's role in *Amores Possíveis* assumes this societal prejudice as she warns her young son, Lucas, to always lock the bathroom door before sending him to spend the weekend with his father and gay partner, Pedro. The mother says to her young son as

she hands him his backpack, “If you go into the bathroom, you lock that door. I don’t want that vagabond to see you naked!” (0:07:35)



**Figure 2.2 Julia advises her son Luca to beware of his gay stepfather.**

Werneck continues to dissect the assumptions social categories by portraying homosexual behavior as more normative and less deviant than heterosexual behavior in a scene where Pedro comments to Carlos (prior to their romantic involvement) on the apparently deviant sexual behavior in Carlos and Julia’s relationship, saying that he was never into that kinky stuff. Here she dispels prejudices regarding homosexuality.



**Figure 2.3 Julia handcuffs Carlos during sex.**

Categories constructed to denominate sexual preferences have recently grown to form an increasingly longer list of abbreviations to accommodate new identities, such as “Transgender” and “In Questioning” in the initials LGBTQIQ. The sexual identities depend on a paradigm that gives meanings to terms only in reference to one another and in the context of the belief system. The paradigm, first acknowledging both hetero and homosexual identities, was re-tooled to accommodate emerging new categories, such as lesbianism and bisexuality. In time the re-tooled paradigm also became obsolete as it was recognized that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender identities do not constitute an exhaustive or exclusive list of alternatives to the heterosexual norm, (and) some amend the inventory by adding an additional category, such as “questioning” or “other” (Marinucci 32). In spite of an extensive list of options regarding sexual identities, it continues to be possible that one category is unintentionally omitted.

Marinucci argues that, “The ongoing need for such additions and adjustments may be an indication that the established paradigm (based on the binary model of human sexuality) can no longer be saved” (32). In queer theorist Judith Butler’s discussion on sexual identities, she cites the categories as necessary for asserting political demands, but warns against their potentially exclusionary nature (19). Marinucci proposes discarding obsolete binary-based paradigms in favor of an all-inclusive continuum<sup>3</sup> that would acknowledge that “far more of us are queer than not” (36). Marinucci’s proposal underscores the constant need to reevaluate established categories and not take them for granted as unquestionable truths.

In the film, Carlos first attempts to align himself with his expected heterosexual identity as he begins the process of self-realization. He enters into the dim and shadowy movie theater escaping the pouring rain. Carlos searches among the throngs of movie-goers for his soul mate, at times confusing the shadows of figures with actual people. The shadows in the theater symbolize Carlos’ self-doubt and the

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<sup>3</sup> Marinucci’s concept of the non-binary continuum draws on Alfred Kinsey’s Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale developed in 1948 to account for those who did not identify exclusively with heterosexuality or homosexuality. See *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* for more information.

shadowy figures symbolize his frustration in not finding his ideal mate in spite of the many people that he dated. Carlos' mother exercises a strong influence in her transmission of traditional values of heterosexuality to her son. Butler brings into relief the hyperbolized norms of gender and the compulsory nature of heterosexuality as a causal implication in her discussion of gender performativity (28). Dona Sonia reinforces the heterosexuality established by norms of gender through her consistent encouragement of her son to find a good girl and settle down with one of them. Dona Sonia recalls Carlos' charming and refined ex-girlfriends. She laments their breakups, and criticizes the non-normative experiences he has with punk-rocker Dandara, wild artist Julia and then the brief sexual affair, which she refers to as an orgy.

Werneck further challenges the boundaries of heteronormativity in scenes which cast Dona Sonia not only as Carlos' mother, but also his woman or his wife by provoking an incestuous sexual overtone. The director's mother-son romantic pairing seems to mock traditional definitions of heterosexuality. In one scene Carlos accidentally, amorously kisses her on the mouth during a late night sex game. He later poses the rhetorical question, "What do I need another woman for when I have you, the best of all?" Dona Sonia replies, "But you can't go to bed with me". Indeed, she is the best of all. She is his woman (mother and wife) and an unattainable paragon.



**Figure 2.4 Carlos accidentally kisses his mother, Dona Sonia.**

Carlos' passionate girlfriend, Julia, represents a romanticized vision of Carlos' heterosexual ideal soul mate. She is radiant, sensual and exuberant and rarely appears on screen without a smile on her face and eyes wide in excitement. The exterior natural elements also collaborate in communicating her dynamic qualities. On screen the wind rustles Julia's clothing and hair, blows umbrellas inside out, bends trees and whips their leaves around. Their relationship is beautiful, exciting and consistent with normative views of heterosexuality.

However, during Carlos and Julia's scenes together the shadows of self-doubt continuously engulf them; exposing the dubious nature of their relationship. The storms and torrential rains also contribute to the mysterious and foreboding overtones that predominate in Julia's scenes. An oversized game of Battleship played on opposing canvases by Carlos and Julia forecasts the couple's impending incompatibility and the post-rupture war.

After Carlos' separation from Julia, in his desperation to find his ideal match, he resorts to using a paid service to locate his soul mate. For this he must answer a battery of questions regarding the criteria for his potential soul mate. "In your case what gender is your soul mate?" "Female! Of course!" He responds with a surprised expression. Werneck uses Carlos' vehement response to the interview question to acknowledge heterosexuality as the only viable possibility, reconsolidating the concept of compulsory heterosexuality. The interviewer stoically records her client's answers, showing her disinterested, blanket acceptance of his preferences, an ideal which Werneck promotes. This scene reveals the assumption of heterosexuality and allows for the existence of an alternative sexual preference or the lack of a preference.

Werneck continues to allow for alternatives to heteronormative<sup>4</sup> concepts of love and romance through her juxtaposition of the monochromatic visuals of Carlos and Maria with the vibrant visuals of

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Warner coined the term "heteronormative" in acknowledgement of the normative behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption of heterosexuality. In the introduction of *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* Warner argues that heterosexuality does not merely refer to a (male –female, female-male) sexual

Carlos and Pedro. Years later we see a resigned and older version of Carlos stuck in a banal marriage to Maria. Cinematic aesthetics communicate Carlos and Maria's lack of chemistry and zeal for one another by a bland palette of neutral colors and textures throughout their home. The breakfast table is an unappetizing display of dry, rough textures in the bread basket in bland monochrome. Even the color of the orange juice is not very bright. The living room and bedroom are also a dull mix of sterile monochrome colors. The setting is dark, heavy and drab. He does not initiate physical contact with Maria. She is the one that gives him an unreciprocated good morning kiss and asks him before going to sleep at night if he'd like to make love, to which he responds, "Sure." As the introductory scene opens of Carlos and Maria lying in bed together, they are lying beside each other; although, their bodies are just barely touching. There appears to be an absolute lack of engagement, physical and emotional between the couple. Also, Carlos' countenance is not peaceful or contented, but disconcerted and disturbed when he is in Maria's company. Carlos and Maria's lack of chemistry provide a direct contrast to the colors used in the scenes involving Pedro are vibrant and warm. The wall color, furniture and decoration in Pedro's home are lively, visually interesting and seem to express a sense of humor. The artwork in Pedro's house shows animals walking, flying, in action and in forward motion, indicative of the positive and happy life the couple shares. When they are together, they sustain an affectionate and respectful interaction in which both are willfully involved. Their relationship has developed through an organic trajectory in which personal and professional circumstances have united them. (They play soccer together and have worked together for years for the same shipping company.) It is clear from the visual information provided that the homosexual couple is more stable, happier and healthier than the heterosexual couple.

Marsh cites the romantic comedy genre as an opportunity for female directors, like Werneck, to reevaluate understandings of romantic relationships in terms of current circumstances and evolving ide-

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identity, but rather informs and influences a host of practical aspects of life, like gender, family, individual freedom, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, reproductive politics, class identity, social display, terror and violence.

as regarding sex and work (232). The romantic comedy, *Amores Possíveis/Possible Loves* shows one man's quest for his ideal soul mate and the decisions and emotions that shape his quest and lead him to explore and assume alternative lifestyle, a homosexual lifestyle. In Carlos' new romantic relationship with Pedro external perceptions of homosexuality and prejudicial attitudes are discreetly acknowledged, exemplifying Werneck's construction within the film of an alternative definition of a contemporary romantic reality.

### 3 CAZUZA



**Figure 3.1 Cazuza Film Cover**

Werneck's work to raise awareness about safe sex and HIV prevention responds to a growing national rate of the disease. Since the outbreak of AIDS in 1980, 608, 230 cases of AIDS have been registered in Brazil. In 2010 alone, almost 35,000 cases were registered. From 2000 – 2010 the growth rate of the epidemic has increased in all regions of Brazil, between seven to twenty-eight percent, with the ex-

ception of the southeastern region, which observed a seven percent decrease from twenty-five to eighteen cases per 100,000 inhabitants (Saúde).

In Werneck's development of the main characters (Carlos and Cazuzza) in the films *Amores Possíveis* and *Cazuzza*, she carefully crafts a space in which both characters seek truth and integrity with their beliefs, explore non-heteronormative ways of accomplishing this ideal, and live courageously according to their beliefs. This inspires a visualization of a reality in which an individual's personal decisions and space are respected as citizens of a civil democracy and the inalienable rights of humanity may be taken for granted.

Whereas *Amores Possíveis* addresses prejudice and stereotypes of non-heteronormative romantic relationships, the film *Cazuzza* deals foremost with AIDS awareness. Werneck's 2004 biographical film *Cazuzza: Time Doesn't Stop* features 1980's iconic Brazilian rock singer, Cazuzza (a bisexual man), and focuses on his decade long artistic career. He was the first Brazilian celebrity to publicly acknowledge that he was HIV positive at a time when AIDS had recently surfaced and very little was known about the disease. In a television interview Cazuzza's parents recall questioning his decision regarding the taboo subject of his public announcement regarding AIDS to which he responded, "Dad, the person who sings, 'Brasil, mostra tua cara!/Brazil, show your face' can't hide something like this." In the song, the singer makes a call for the country to come clean and reveal itself. Cazuzza did precisely this when he found out that he had contracted HIV.<sup>5</sup>

As a recording artist his legacy includes 126 recorded songs, but Cazuzza's greatest legacy may be his passion for living life to the fullest on his own terms. One example is his refusal to accept the confines of the traditional demarcations of sexuality. Cazuzza's mother recalls him rejecting the self-defining labels, but ultimately settling for the label of bisexual. Werneck's rendering of the artist's life makes his

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<sup>5</sup> Cazuzza revealed his illness in 1989 after reaching the height of his artistic career, in which he sold more than 500,000 copies of album "Cazuzza: O Tempo Não Pára" earlier that year, he received two Sharp Music Awards the previous year and was proclaimed by renowned singer-songwriter, musician and political activist Caetano Veloso.

lack of preference clear. Cazuzza sustains both hetero- and homosexual relationships throughout the film. Throughout the film, Cazuzza offers no apologies for his lack of conformity when confronted about his sexual partners, dating and sleeping with whomever he chooses. Cazuzza's happy non-conformity provides a contrast to Carlos' struggle to conform to a heteronormative concept of marriage in *Amores Possíveis*. In one of the film's vignettes exploring Carlos' romantic possibilities, he becomes the epitome of conformity through his commitment to his unfulfilling relationship with Maria.

Cazuzza's assumption of a bisexual lifestyle places him in opposition to the heterosexual norm, established in the film by Cazuzza's parents. His mother observes one of his male sexual partners leaving in the morning after spending the night with Cazuzza and she asks her son why his girlfriend didn't stay for breakfast, a form of denying his homo/bisexuality. Cazuzza unabashedly responds that there was no girlfriend. Holding Cazuzza to a standard of assumed heterosexuality she asks him, "Why aren't you like the others, Cazuzza?" Again, while cleaning Cazuzza's room she finds a letter or poem in which he details his sexual experience with a man and she reads with obvious dismay, realizing that her son is bisexual. Also, while driving down the street Cazuzza's father watches in surprise as his son kisses and caresses a male friend.

Information throughout the film supports the existence of a traditional, monogamous, heterosexual norm that is fundamentally opposed to Cazuzza's lifestyle. Similar to *Amores Possíveis*, in *Cazuzza* his parents impart the heteronormative values. Cazuzza's parents are the only example in the film of a traditional heterosexual couple, converting them into a token representation of the heterosexual norm. For example, in one scene João (Cazuzza's father) is reading a book titled *O Homen Casado/The Married Man*, holding the book with the hand bearing his wedding band. In another scene João and Cazuzza are together in a sauna and in a bare moment of truth Cazuzza asks his father if he has been unfaithful to his wife and João reiterates his commitment to Cazuzza's mother and his marriage. However, while the married couple does appear in various scenes together, there is no substantial corporal contact between

them as Werneck inverts the familiar trope regarding the invisibility of homosexuality bringing to light homophobic prejudice. The lack of physical contact in their relationship contrasts Cazuza's unbridled sexual experiences, echoing usual stereotypes of sexual identities and behaviors associated with them; the conservative established heterosexual norm versus the liberal experimental pansexual deviance of non-heterosexual identities. These stereotypes reappear in a scene where a Cazuza's mother telephones interrupting a post-concert, drug-induced orgy and Ezequiel (Cazuza's producer and good friend) tells her that Cazuza can't come to the phone because he is busy. These scenes offer a comparison of the differing value systems of João (father) and Lucinha's (mother) and Cazuza's. Their conformity to social norms is contrasted with his governance of passion and pleasure.

Cultural anthropologist Roberto Da Matta's analysis of the Brazilian concept of masculinity, which is related in part to the male body, helps to explain the differing value systems. Da Matta exposes a cultural value-system by deconstructing a socially accepted crude joke. The joke is played among adolescent males by groping one another's behind with the excuse of looking for a comb. Da Matta describes the rear end as a special, taboo part of the body and also a particularly sacred zone of the male body (136, 137). He explains that the interior and fragile dimension of rear end earned it the classification as the most feminine part of the male body (139). In a heterosexualized translation of homosexual sex in which a hierarchical paradigm is applied, active and passive roles are assigned within the pair (the man and the "womanly" man), inevitably inferiorizing the passive or "womanly" man's role. Thus, passive homosexuality is seen as disobedience and a betrayal to his gender and to the concept of masculinity (142). Cazuza's rebellious behavior and disregard for the established sexual norms plainly oppose his masculinity according to Da Matta's analysis. In particular, scenes using the image of the singer's exposed rear reveal his vulnerability to being inferiorized by a passive homosexual experience.



**Figure 3.2 Cazuzza's behind is exposed during an orgy.**

Several homosexual erotic scenes documented throughout the film also firmly establish Cazuzza's non-conformity with the heterosexual norm and his commitment to his own ideology regarding the expression of his sexuality. However, when Cazuzza tests positive for HIV in the film he views the results as an attack on his personal homosexual behavior, stating, "From now on, it's just Mother and Father (having sex)/ heterosexual sex. No more kinky stuff...This disease is shit! It doesn't want us to be happy!" (Oliveira 1:01). To demonstrate his assimilation and the severe emotional impact of the news of his contraction of HIV, Werneck uses the ascetic imagery of the blank, white walls of Cazuzza's apartment, as well as his all-white clothing in the subsequent scene to show his emotional emptiness. His fragile state of health prevents him from living as intensely as he once did; his lifestyle is drastically changed by eliminating the wild parties and illegal drug use. He enters the blank apartment looking up, around, and out the window as if in a futile search for answers, while the background song recites, "The feeling has ended..."

By contracting HIV Cazuzza's life changes dramatically, not only in regard to his health, but also in relation to others. In Werneck's portrayal of the gradual deterioration of Cazuzza's health, he is unable to find adequate treatment for AIDS in Brazil and travels back and forth between the United States and Brazil. He ultimately spends several months in a Boston hospital. The difficult access to treatment (alt-

though shown through the lens of a celebrity) speaks to a deficiency in the Brazilian public health system. While the famous singer had the financial resources to seek treatment abroad, the vast majority of Brazilian citizens do not. In spite of grassroots efforts (like the Sociedade Viva Cazuzza) to improve access to treatment, many Brazilians with HIV have struggled and continue to struggle to take care of themselves and combat the disease. Cazuzza represents an example of the differentiated citizenship that many people with HIV experience when the Brazilian government does not meet its constitutional commitment to promote the well-being of its citizens.

His isolation is a notable change from the lively social activity he sustains in the first two-thirds of the film in which he is almost invariably surrounded by friends or attending parties and shows. The final part of the film shows a more serious Cazuzza who spends most of his time alone composing or with his parents and Ezequiel, although it is not clear whether Cazuzza's isolation endures after finding out he has HIV is a result of the diminished physical ability to participate in the activities he once enjoyed with friends or if he is socially ostracized due to prejudice and ignorance about AIDS.



**Figure 3.3 Cazuzza promotes AIDS awareness in Brazil**

Although Cazuzza's life ended at just thirty-two years old, royalties from his work continue to fund an organization founded by his parents in his memory whose goal is to restore life to a community greatly impacted by the epidemic. Viva Cazuzza Society's mission is to give assistance to children and

adolescent HIV carriers in need, social assistance to adult patients in treatment within Rio de Janeiro's public system, and to educate healthcare professionals and laypeople regarding the scientific information on HIV/AIDS. Viva Cazuzu holds an annual video contest in which director Werneck, multiply involved in this issue, serves as a juror for young contestants (fifteen to thirty-year olds) compete for the prize by filming a thirty-second video regarding HIV prevention and/or safe sex to be shown during Carnival the following year (Sociedade Viva Cazuzu).

#### 4 SONHOS ROUBADOS



Figure 4.1 *Sonhos Roubados* Film Cover

The depiction of three female high school students' (Jessica, Dayane and Sabrina) day to day life in a Rio slum places several claims to citizenship front and center, such as the promotion of well-being of all and the eradication of poverty and substandard living conditions. Werneck's most recent film, *Sonhos*

*Roubados* features the challenges they face in the fight for survival, their response to poverty's oppression through prostitution and their subsequent evolution and development in the face of these personal trials. Werneck contextualizes the problematic profession exercised by the three teenagers by insisting on the universality of the young women as participating members of their society, retaining the focus on their youthful adolescence and emphasizing their work ethic. In spite of the abject poverty and lack of options available to them, Werneck doesn't blame or victimize the girls. Instead, she portrays the girls as agents of change who seek the information and resources necessary to improve the current realities for themselves and their families and, in some cases, pursue their dreams.

Werneck's portrayal of the main characters' dysfunctional families articulates her social commentary on one of the circumstances responsible for child prostitution in Brazil. At 17 years old Jessica balances the significant responsibilities of her career as a high school student, parenting a toddler, and providing for her family, which consists of her young daughter, ailing grandfather, who repairs bicycles at their home, and at times, her extended family of friends. Her mother passed away five years earlier from AIDS and there is no mention of her father. Her friend and schoolmate, Dayane, lives with her aunt and uncle, who sexually molests her, and has a father who refuses to acknowledge her as his daughter. Sabrina, whose mother is also pregnant, throws her out of the house months earlier. Jessica, Dayane and Sabrina all belong to non-traditional family structures marked by the absence of their biological parents, whether the abandonment was intentional or unintentional. This is one of the contributing factors, in conjunction with intermittent, unpredictable school closings and difficulty accessing public assistance, which perpetuate cycles of poverty in Brazil. *Sonhos Roubados* shows how some recur to child prostitution to resolve their economic scarcity.

However, the remarkably common clothing, hair styles, and behavior of the main characters support the notion of the three indigent teenage girls as a cross-section of Rio's urban lower-class, rather than an isolated case. The aesthetic representation liken them to their adolescent counterparts and

corroborate their roles as functioning members of society, attending school and working (at the neighborhood deli, hair salon and, at times, in other local venues as sex workers), as well as spending time with family and friends. There are no extenuating characteristics that set apart any of the girls from their peers. Although they are young, they have goals and are willing to work hard to achieve them, even if by working they must sell their bodies. The universality of the teenagers incites compassion for their desperate circumstances and lack of options, while liberating them from reproach for their choice of employment. The girls are not exempt from normal jobs, in which they wear uniforms, perform marketable vocational skills and deal with demanding supervisors. However, they've identified a better compensated professional opportunity in prostitution that they frequently exercise.



**Figure 4.2 Sabrina juices sugar cane at the neighborhood deli.**

Werneck is able to divorce some of the social stigma related to prostitution through the understated universality of the three girls, as well as through her emphasis on their work ethic and by showing the extent of their desperation to escape the limits of poverty. Prostitution is validated as a form of employment in that their services are in constant demand and (usually) remunerates them well. They take pride in their work and exercise a measure of professionalism toward it and their clients. When Dayane visits her biological father at his welding workshop, he tells the fourteen year old, "At your age I was already working!" To which she proudly replies, "I am, too!" As they window shop on their walk home

from school, they admire the latest jeans at the clothing store. Jessica tries on a pair, shakes her head at the expensive price tag impeding her purchase and says, "You gotta work hard if you want to be sexy!", referring to sex work. As night falls, Jessica pleads with her young daughter to go to sleep so that she can go out to the dance (and find sex work). Her father says he can't watch his granddaughter due to an unfinished bicycle repair and her sarcastic reply acknowledges her (unspoken) responsibility as the primary breadwinner of the family. Jessica shows her pride in her earning capability by adamantly refusing to accept the groceries brought by her daughter's father, referring to it as charity, a scene which Werneck poignantly juxtaposes with the image of Jessica arriving home to open a barren refrigerator and scraping the bottom of a nearly empty pot of rice leftover from the day before. In another scene where the girls are window shopping; Dayane asks the store clerk if she would accept food stamps as a form of payment for the clothing. In demonstrating the sheer desperation of Dayane's decision to surrender her necessary sustenance in order to satisfy her material pursuit of clothing Werneck makes a case to justify the teenagers' decisions to work as prostitutes in lieu of other practicable alternatives.

Matching school uniforms and students playing in the yard remind us that the onerous burden of supporting a household is being borne by an adolescent, after all. In spite of the revealing clothing, attractive jewelry and sustained sexual activity, the three young women are under the age of eighteen and legally protected as minors. Visual information throughout the film evokes their youth, thus prods the questions in regard to their inherent rights to the basic necessities of food and shelter, as well as safety and education and well-being: Who is protecting these children? What kind of future is in store for these girls? How can they be held solely responsible for their work in the sex industry in light of the absence of viable alternatives for supporting their families/themselves?

In her work on Brazilian filmmaking, Marsh observes that representations of youth in recent Brazilian cinema have made way for women's filmmaking to continue defining cultural and sexual aspects of citizenship for girls and young women in Brazilian society through representations of female

youth (215). Werneck's representation in *Sonhos Roubados* of three teenagers' lives whose circumstances require them to fulfill adult responsibilities invites reflection on the political and social deficiencies that perpetuate the problem of child prostitution and, as Marsh suggests, also invites a reconsideration of how citizenship may differ across lines of gender.



**Figure 4.3 High school students talk on campus.**

The 1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil penned after the fall of the dictatorship includes among the fundamental principles it is founded on: citizenship (II) and the dignity of the human person (III). In Chapter 2, Article 6 of the Brazilian Constitution education, health, food, work, housing, leisure, security, social security, protection of motherhood and childhood, and assistance are ensured as social rights (CA No. 26, 2000; CA No. 64, 2010) (Deputados). In an effort to facilitate access to these rights, the Brazilian government has implemented social assistance programs over the past two decades, such as: Family Grant Program for Education (Programa Bolsa Familiar para a Educaçã, 1995), Program for the Eradication of Child Labor (The Programa para a Erradicaçã do Trabalho Infantil ,1996), and the Food Grant (Bolsa Alimentaçã, 2001). The three programs were eventually consolidated into one unified program in 2003 under the administration of then President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, called the Family Grant (Bolsa Familia) (56). In general, the social programs espouse noble objectives; however

the impoverished main characters in *Sonhos Roubados* bear witness to the relative inefficiency of the programs.

Fabio Veras Soares of the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth based in Brasilia, Brazil, describes the evolution of the “Bolsa Família” as “a fight for legitimacy in the sphere of social protection policies in Brazil” (55). Social programs, like “Bolsa Familia”, acknowledge the disconnect between citizens, their access to the rights promised in the Constitution and the government’s commitment to aid in resolving the disconnect. *Sonhos Roubados* raises the questions: Why doesn’t Jessica’s household have enough food to feed her toddler daughter? Why are they living in sub-standard living conditions?

The program’s political evolution documents its progress toward increased efficiency and has since delivered such favorable results as significant decreases in national percentages of poverty and extreme poverty of sixteen percent and thirty-three percent, respectively, in a partial evaluation undertaken by the International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington D.C. in 2010 (59).

In spite of the program’s comprehensive achievements, bureaucratic complications continue to hinder practical access to government services. Werneck calls attention to a bureaucratic complication due to the classist discrimination that Jessica encounters during her attempt to regain legal custody of her daughter as she spends the night waiting outside of a government agency, Conselho Tutelar (the Brazilian equivalent to the Department of Family and Child Services). Once the doors open for business, Jessica is denied the right to even enter the building due to the clothing she is wearing. The Department attendant refuses to grant her access to the office dressed as she is, crudely advising her that this is not a “baile funk” and to come back when she is dressed decently (1:06:40). Discrimination based on race, religion, sex and age are all outlawed under Brazilian law, however legal discrimination based on classism persists as Werneck problematizes in Jessica’s encounter with the Conselho Tutelar staff.



**Figure 4.4 Jessica spends the night waiting outside the Conselho Tutelar.**

Each of the three main characters of *Sonhos Roubados* face her own unique obstacles to accomplishing their dreams; obstacles which are both exacerbated and perpetuated by their impoverished circumstances. Their resolve and determination to create a future better than their present lives inspire the girls' decisions to change their lives. The decision to change presents risks by undertaking new occupations, discontinuing the practice of prostitution, abandoning the known in favor of pursuing their dreams, albeit temporarily.

Jessica realized that with full-time steady employment she could recuperate the legal guardianship over her daughter and began to work at the neighborhood deli/bakery, reducing (if not renouncing) her dependency on prostitution as a means of survival. Dayane found the courage to legally denounce her uncle's sexual abuse. Dayane's new vocation as an apprentice with a local hair stylist afforded her an alternative means to generate income, as well as the confidence and hope to invest in her future. Sabrina's dreams of having her baby were realized once she made the daunting decision to leave her physically abusive, gang-leader of a boyfriend and found work to support herself passing out advertisements. Each of the girls' decisions gives way to a productive and sustainable lifestyle in which they rely on their own abilities and resources to meet their needs and help their families.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The United Nations' 2013 Human Development Report chronicles the recent, rapid expansion of the middle class in the developing world and predicts a dramatic economic and political shift in the next twenty years away from Europe and North America. This shift of power is not limited to increased financial gains for emerging countries, like Brazil, China and India, but has also rendered gains in education and health in a survey conducted of almost all of the countries in the world. According to spokesperson, Bill Orme, the rises demonstrate that "economic growth and human growth are inextricably linked" (Beaubien, NPR). As Orme calls for increased government investments in education and health on community and local levels as a pathway to improved economic potential, the messages from Werneck's films resonate.

In *Amores Possíveis*, the narratives style of the three distinct vignettes detailing Carlos' possible loves facilitated the comparison of the different lifestyles he led based on his romantic pairing. Werneck exposed stereotypes, social prejudice and assumptions of heterosexuality through Carlos' experiences in each of the vignettes. Through her healthy, normative portrayal of the homosexual marriage, Werneck bolsters the equality of rights for gay couples.

The dire lack of information, education and treatment available for HIV are key points in the film *Cazuza*. Although Cazuza, a wealthy celebrity, is not representative of the majority of Brazilians living with HIV, the isolation and pain he experienced after contracting the disease are universal. *Cazuza* addresses the necessity to continue raise public awareness, educate citizens and healthcare professionals, continue AIDS research and further improve access to treatment in light of current national statistics.

*Sonhos Roubados* proffers a shift in perspective on the issue of teen prostitution toward focusing on the practical and economic implications of the work and away from the moralist repudiation of it. Werneck attributes the dependence on the illicit profession to a host of unresolved problems facing Bra-

zilian youth, from the government's inefficient and inadequate response to economic hardship, an unreliable and inconsistent educational system, teen pregnancy, violence and drugs.

Werneck cogently elucidates critical social issues in her films while her "non-interventionist approach" permits her audience to reach their own conclusions based on the information provided. Although the topics and subjects addressed in her films are extremely diverse (from transvestites to nursing mothers to child laborers, etc.), they share a common thread: Werneck provides a means to share their stories and experiences with others locally, nationally and internationally. For almost forty years Werneck has voiced her commitment to the social issues addressed in her films, proving to be a persistent agent in raising awareness, which is the first step in creating change.

Brazil is garnering increased attention due to its status as an emergent economic global power. It would be truly noteworthy to see this Latin American country set precedents in regards to its human rights, extending a paralleled offer of citizenship to all members of its civil society. However, this is a gradual process that begins with raising consciousness. The messages of advocacy for human rights in Werneck's films may inspire people to become actors within the process of change.

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