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Relevant aesthetic choices for dysphoric times in contemporary Brazil

Escolhas estéticas relevantes para tempos disfóricos no Brasil contemporâneo

Opciones estéticas pertinentes para los tiempos disfóricos en el Brasil contemporáneo

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Abstract
This paper analyzes two films, the fiction feature *Bacurau* by Juliano Dornelles and Kleber Mendonça Filho and the documentary *Democracia em Vertigem* by Petra Costa, as well as two essays ("Suspeito que estamos" and "Gente frouxa") by Nuno Ramos. These are examples of successful cultural productions articulating a clear critical voice with a high level of aesthetic quality and being recognized as meaningful in Brazil and abroad. I want to understand new aesthetic directions that have affected contemporary cultural production in Brazil during the Bolsonaro years. These new directions indicate changes in the choice of narrative genre as well as the use of rhetoric strategies in order to articulate effective voices of resistance in a country dominated by the far right.

Keywords: Bacurau. Democracy on the Edge. Nuno Ramos. Kleber Mendonça Filho. Petra Costa. Cinema. Essay. Contemporary Brazil.

Resumo
Esse ensaio analisa dois filmes, *Bacurau* dirigido por Juliano Dornelles e Kleber Mendonça Filho e o documentário *Democracia em Vertigem* dirigido por Petra Costa, assim como dois ensaios ("Suspeito que estamos" e "Gente frouxa") escritos por Nuno Ramos. Esses são exemplos de produções culturais que lograram articular uma voz crítica com qualidade estética e reconhecimento no Brasil e no exterior. Quero entender assim as novas direções estéticas que

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têm afetado a produção cultural no Brasil nos anos Bolsonaro. Essas novas direções apontam para mudanças nos gêneros de narrativa assim como nas estratégias retóricas para articular eficientemente vozes de resistência em um país dominado pela extrema direita.

Palavras-chave: Bacurau. Democracia em Vertigem. Nuno Ramos. Kleber Mendonça Filho. Petra Costa. Cinema. Ensaio. Brasil contemporâneo.

Resumen
Ese ensayo examina dos películas, Bacurau dirigido por Juliano Dornelles y Kleber Mendonça Filho y el documental Democracia em Vertigem dirigido por Petra Costa, y dos ensayos cortos ("Suspeito que estamos" e "Gente frouxa") del escritor Nuno Ramos. Son ejemplos de producciones culturales que logran encontrar una voz crítica con cualidad estética y reconocimiento del público en Brasil y en el extranjero. Con ese análisis busco ubicar las tendencias estéticas que han afectado la producción cultural en Brasil durante los años de la administración de Jair Bolsonaro. Esas nuevas tendencias apuntan cambios en géneros narrativos y estrategias retóricas para articular eficientemente voces de resistencia en un país en manos de la extrema derecha.

Keywords: Bacurau. Al filo de la democracia. Nuno Ramos. Kleber Mendonça Filho. Petra Costa. Cinema. Ensayo. Brasil contemporáneo.

INTRODUCTION

A series of historical events in Brazil explains the swift transition from qualified optimism and confidence about the future in the beginning of the twenty-first century to despair and hopelessness right now. Then and now, Brazilian artists and intellectuals have had to contend with challenges to their sheer survival as well as the challenge of reaching larger audiences despite the tacit economic censorship imposed by powerful Brazilian corporations, which act as gatekeepers of mass communication. In spite of these hurdles, Brazilian artists and intellectuals have continued to participate in the country's political and cultural life much beyond the perceptions of entertainment as a mere commodity.

We are facing an unprecedented crisis in Brazil right now, and I do not use these terms lightly.[1] It started with the large street demonstrations that took over major cities in Brazil in 2013 when new forms of political and cultural militancy, closely tied to social media activism, suddenly became much more visible. At first these movements were across the political spectrum, filling the streets with groups sponsoring widely differing agendas in heterogeneous crowds. It was possible to witness, as I did in

1 I always keep in mind historian Francisco Iglesias's observation about the way we tend to cheapen the concept of crisis: "A regra é a mudança, que pode ser mais ou menos acelerada, pois não há igualdade no fluxo temporal. Todas as fases são críticas, há uma crise permanente, de modo que a afirmativa comum de que determinada época é de crise é a-histórica, pois todas o são: apenas em algumas o ritmo se acelera, há o salto—são as revoluções. A nota constante, porém, é a mudança." [Add English translation?] "Change is the rule. It may be faster or slow according to different time flows. All epochs are critical, there is a permanent crisis. In this sense the common assertion that a specific epoch is a time is a crisis is ahistorical. All times are critical: in some there is a leap – they are the revolutions. The constant tenor is, therefore, one of change."

Campinas and Belo Horizonte, crowds touting loudly and vehemently very progressive and reactionary agendas. Sometimes there would be confrontations; other times these groups simply seemed to ignore one another.

Soon it became clear that the greatest change in the political landscape after that period of unrest was the presence of a conservative coalition bent on gaining the political upper hand by any means necessary, especially after losing their fourth consecutive presidential election. This coalition included traditional conservative politicians, new extremist figures from social movements whose image was boosted principally by social media, figures from the judiciary, and overwhelming support from the country's traditional media. Together, they brought about the swift impeachment of Dilma Rousseff on accounting technicalities in 2016 and the lightening-speed indictment and conviction of former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2018, which prevented him from running. Those two political/judicial coups secured the transfer of political and state power first to establishment conservative figures under Michel Temer and later to far-right extremists gathered around Jair Bolsonaro, who aligned Brazil with the most extreme neoliberal conservative ideologies and policies in the world.

These fast and profound changes have affected cultural production in Brazil. Arguably every cultural production has a political content—even emphatic affirmations of complete indifference to politics or social conditions come with their own political meanings. In a country as unequal as Brazil, cultural relevance is always an urgent matter, but in contemporary Brazil, cultural production has had to contend with political meaning and cultural relevance in a fight for its own survival. The far right currently in power demands that the capitalist market should be the only judge of whether some form of cultural expression (understood exclusively as entertainment) should exist. They only ask for state intervention so that dissention can be censored, or even eliminated, in the very narrow definition of family values and patriotism. Since 2013 individual artists and intellectuals have met with a violent backlash. From civil society, it ranges from social media vitriol to defilement and death threats. From the state, there are cuts in public investment and threats of the extinction of public institutions and sponsorship of the arts. This war against culture has exacerbated critical issues for democracy in Brazil: serious, chronic problems of gross human rights violations and rampant environmental destruction that now the federal government openly supports.

Cultural producers have responded to these issues with a resurgence in the affirmation of strong, open political stances. This resurgence demands the effective balance of the aesthetic and the communicative aspects of cultural production. This issue has been the subject of debates in Brazil for a long time because Brazilian

culture has a long record of reflection on artistic practices under precarious political circumstances since the 1964 military regime and the demand for political participation led to debates, for example, over the so-called *patrulhas ideológicas*.[2] Brazilian intellectuals and artists have found effective ways of processing the recent past, the present, and the future in their cultural production and articulating a clear, engaging voice in the face of utter destruction and despair.

Significant examples of cultural responses to these challenges are two short essays by artist and writer Nuno Ramos: "Suspeito que estamos ..." ("I Suspect We Are ...") (2014) and "Gente frouxa" ["Cowardly People"] (2018)—later collected in *Verifique se o mesmo* (2019) —and two films: the 2019 *Bacurau*, directed by Juliano Dornelles and Kleber Mendonça Filho, and the 2019 documentary *Democracia em vertigem*, directed by Petra Costa. These cultural projects are successful on two different levels: they articulate clear, critical voices with a high level of aesthetic quality, and they have been recognized as meaningful by the public in Brazil. These four examples illustrate the new aesthetic directions for contemporary cultural production in Brazil.

On May 25, 2014, Nuno Ramos published the essay "Suspeito que estamos ..." in the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*. That year saw the release of the final report from the Comissão Nacional da Verdade [National Truth Commission] on human rights violations during the military dictatorship between 1964 and 1986 and a serious crisis in water management in the city of São Paulo that forced parts of the largest metropolis in Latin America into compulsory rationing. There was also a disconcerting World Cup with very different protests, from the public at large outside and from the upper class inside stadiums, and the usual apotheosis of national frenzy induced by the media ending in an extraordinary debacle with Brazil's humiliating defeats to Germany and Holland. In the second semester, Dilma Rousseff's electoral victory enraged conservatives and galvanized a rabid, racist, misogynist opposition with a torrent of hate speech in social media.

Ramos opens his essay with an ironic statement of ignorance: "The newspaper offered me various topics, but I never felt prepared to write comprehensibly about any of them. So, I decided to write about things I do not actually know, but only suspect."[3] "I suspect that" becomes a refrain repeated forty times throughout the short essay until the rough, dramatic end: "*suspeito que estamos fodidos*" ("I suspect we are screwed"). Ramos gives us many examples of dead ends for the Brazilian culture, which are articulated around four main themes.

The first is the absolute centrality of violence in Brazil. Daily violence affects

2 The term originated in a book of interviews on the subject of art and political engagement organized by Heloísa Buarque de Holanda and Carlos Alberto Pereira in 1980.

3 In the original, "O jornal me propôs vários temas, mas nunca me senti preparado para dar conta de nenhum. Então resolvi escrever sobre o que não sei, mas suspeito."

the value Brazilians give human lives, informs the most popular cultural industry, and shapes Brazil's urban environment. The omnipresence of violence in Brazil leads the culture to what Ramos calls a general loss of the notion of limits and proportions—acceptance and tolerance toward unacceptable and intolerable levels of violence. The second theme is what Ramos calls Brazil's "domestic debt": the country owes a lot to many different groups of marginalized people. The accumulation of this social debt over time and Brazil's persistent delinquency reflect the country's chronic social inertia. The third theme is the replacement of politics with economics in Brazil's imaginary discourse. As neoliberal economic logic has dominated public discourse, governments have been transformed in public opinion into mere service providers. Accordingly, public opinion's attention has shifted from citizen rights to consumer rights and drained Brazil's political imagination completely. The last theme is the encroachment of the concept of privatization onto every aspect of life and beyond every limit up to the "*privatização do infinito*" ("privatization of the infinite") by the new age spiritualism of Paulo Coelho, the Catholicism of Padre Marcelo Rossi, and the Evangelicalism of Bispo Edir Macedo. The result is the realization of Margaret Thatcher's infamous 1987 proposition that "there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families" (*Guardian*).

Ramos's net is cast well beyond the usual harangues against corrupt politicians and selfish elites—an expression of empty exceptionalism repeated ad nauseum since forever in Brazil—and Ramos is not afraid of naming names. In an unabashedly sarcastic tone, he has no qualms in using examples of very well-known figures: the singer Ivete Sangalo dances and sings like "*um ríspido sargento*" ("a tough sergeant"); TV host Luciano Huck promotes a grotesque spectacle of cruelty and idiocy every week; and Rede Globo's ever popular *Jornal Nacional* performs a ridiculous, self-congratulatory mise-en-scène daily that Ramos calls "*um manto auto-elogioso*" ("a self-aggrandizing mantle").

On October 23, 2018, one week before the fateful run-up elections that brought Jair Bolsonaro to power, Ramos wrote another opinion piece in *Folha de São Paulo* called "Gente frouxa." Ramos now goes from biting sarcasm to urgent fury. The piece addressed directly (and fiercely) political figures such as Fernando Henrique, Marina Silva, Ciro Gomes, and Fernando Haddad, as well as frequent *FSP* columnists such as the economist Samuel Pêssoa, the journalist Hélio Schwartsman, and the philosopher José Arthur Giannotti, and even the newspaper itself. His dissatisfaction is the general inaction toward the impending victory of the far right in the elections:

> ... you have stuffed yourselves in this sinister festival of hesitations, indifference, and petty calculations. Has the panic I feel not reached you yet? Do you hear these broken voices, all these people crying? Where are you? Yes, I can hear the argument—hatred against all

> politicians is what brought about this petty monster. Be politicians, not cowards. Defend those at risk. It is not an overstatement to say that after what is about to come, all of us will be at risk, and more so those of us who poor, black, queer, lesbians, transgendered. Get yourselves together. Act as a bloc, take off your badges, call people to the streets, take a risk. Create something new. Cowardly people.[4]

Mixing formal and colloquial registers to add emphasis to his urgency and open aggressiveness, Ramos's principal aim was the complacency of most of the political establishment as we watched the rise to power of a dreadful political force that was anything but a novelty, since its ideas and intentions were very well known after decades of public discourse and political presence.

The wave of aggressive neoliberal reforms started with the administration of former vice president Michel Temer giving the term *resistance* particular prominence in Brazil, but some forms of resistance are clearly more interesting (and effective) than others. The idea of resistance has found its best representation with Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles's film *Bacurau*. Mendonça Filho and Dornelles (then a production designer) had already worked together in two remarkable films: *Neighboring Sounds* (*Som ao Redor*) (2012) and *Aquarius* (2016), which both pointed to defiant gestures of resistance against traditional and modernizing oppressive structures in Recife. Both films had international acclaim, and the film crew took advantage of a showing of *Aquarius* in the 2016 Cannes Festival to denounce the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff as a coup d'état at a moment when mainstream Brazilian media repeatedly assured public opinion that the process was legitimate (and necessary) and that there were no institutional ruptures in Brazil. The Temer administration's reaction was swift: Six days after the Cannes protest, the Ministério Público Federal started investigating alleged irregularities in the film's public financing. In August the Ministério da Justiça rated *Aquarius* appropriate only for those over 18 years old in a clear attempt to limit its public. And in September a commission assembled by the Ministry of Culture decided not to choose *Aquarius* as Brazil's entry for the Oscars' nominations in 2017, choosing instead the little-known film *Pequeno Segredo*, directed by David Schurmann.

To understand better the narrative strategies of *Bacurau*, which are quite different from the ones used in *Neighboring Sounds* and *Aquarius*, let us think of fictional narratives spread along a continuum between two opposite extremes. On one extreme, stories engage openly in systematic symbolic expression (allegories); on the other extreme, stories prefer rhetorical self-effacement and are invested in

4 In the original, "... vocês se empanturram nesse festim sinistro de hesitação, de tibieza, de continhas. O pânico que sinto não chega a vocês? Essa voz quebrada, esse tanto de gente chorando? Cadê? Sim, posso ouvir o argumento—o ódio aos políticos é que criou esse monstrinho. / Então sejam políticos e não covardes. Defendam os desprotegidos. Pois não é exagero—diante do que vem aí, desprotegidos somos todos, e mais ainda quem é pobre e preto e veado e lésbica e de sexo trocado. Juntem-se. Defendam em bloco, tirem a camisa, chamem para a rua, arrisquem. Criem. Gente frouxa."

showcasing the world "as it is" (realism). While allegories constantly invite us to engage in symbolic interpretation, realist narratives follow Flaubert's injunction: "an author must be like God in the universe, present everywhere and *visible* nowhere" (*Correspondance,* 155). Most narratives do not coincide exactly with either extreme, combining these forms of representation with different degrees of intensity. *Bacurau* is a film that tries to explore to the fullest *both* forms of communication in a politically charged context.

The dreamlike sequence of Carmelita's psychedelic funeral, the erasure of the city from GPS maps, the museum dedicated to *cangaceiros,* the drone resembling a flying saucer, the feast offering on a table with white linen for the leader of the invaders (which he disdainfully overturns), the nocturnal bird of the title,[5] and the mostly American crew of invaders and their southern Brazilian minions are all pointing to symbolism. Some of them have clear, direct meanings while others are so rich with possibilities that they border on the enigmatic. At the same time, the gory, intense skirmishes between the people of Bacurau and the foreign invaders and the gripping suspense typical of horror movies point to the sheer force of the best cinematic realist tradition.

Bacurau is a unique take on the genre, combining widely different approaches, always with uncanny technical mastery, and this can be attested easily by looking at various reviews of the movie around the world. An English-speaking critic called the film "thoroughly unclassifiable … a compendium of spaghetti Western, '70's sci-fi, social realist drama, and political satire" (Buder 2019). A Spanish-speaking critic called it "a mixture of typical elements from Brazilian legends and traditions with those commonly linked to Science Fiction, Western, Slasher, and Gore genres, with a strong political allegory attuned to our times" (Batlle 2020).[6] A Brazilian critic mentioned "elements of drama, suspense, science fiction, and, mainly Westerns, in the framings, the soundtrack … or even in the orangish cinematography that reminds us of John Ford or Sergio Leone" (Silva 2019).[7] The most obvious point of reference is the master of gore John Carpenter: *Bacurau*'s school is dedicated to "João Carpinteiro" and uses the music piece named "Night"—part of Carpenter's album *Lost Themes.*[8]

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5 The *bacurau*, also known as the *curiango*, is a nocturnal bird that feeds on insects. It is also featured in "Bichos da Noite" (1967), a song by Sérgio Ricardo and Joaquim Cardoso that is featured in the funeral scene.

6 In the original in Spanish, "mixtura elementos propios de las tradiciones y leyendas populares brasileñas con otros ligados a la ciencia ficción, el western, el *slasher, el gore* y una fuerte alegoría política a tono con estos tiempos."

7 In the original in Portuguese, "elementos de drama, suspense, ficção científica e, principalmente, faroeste seja nos enquadramentos, ns utilização da trilha Sonora … ou mesmo na maneira em que utiliza uma fotografia alaranjada, que remete aos westerns de mestres como John Ford ou Sergio Leone …"

8 Besides all the soundtracks for his own movies, Carpenter released three albums with his son Cody and Daniel Davies.

Bacurau expertly uses a number of techniques identified with U.S. films from the golden age of American cinema in the 1970s. Instead of nervous handheld cameras emulating documentaries and home videos typical of films such as *Cidade de Deus*, crane shots substitute for contemporary Steadicam techniques, Panavision anamorphic lenses that emulated cinemascope framing in the 1970s. Split diopters with double-focus photography add to the techniques used in a film that clearly refuses the frantic rhythm of contemporary action films but gets a firm grip on the hearts and minds of the audience. When the directors themselves called attention to this eclecticism, they added something else that is very important:

> *Bacurau* looks like an *E.T.* but it is still a movie made by people like us. I always wanted to make genre films, but also very Brazilian films. And *Bacurau* is a classic suspense, an invasion flick, a western, but very, very Brazilian.[9]

As this passage highlights, the eclectic use of formulas does not imply in an exercise in post-modern gender riffing, because the film is invested in its Brazilian identity. As Diego Batlle, an Argentinian critic, notes, *Bacurau* is deeply rooted in Brazilian culture and in the culture of the *sertão*, both its legends and traditions and its many contemporary changes.

Taking place in a not-so-far-off future where public executions performed in crowded soccer stadiums are broadcast live on TV, the film also belongs to a very specific subgenre: the invasion flick, a variation usually found in either horror or science fiction. Instead of aliens, Michael Myers, Jason, or Freddy Krueger, the stalkers/invaders in *Bacurau* are first-world tourists (mostly from the United States) who travel to the far corners of the world on a human-hunting safari. Bacurau is erased off internet maps, and cellphone signals are jammed in preparation for the invasion. The grotesquely corrupt mayor Tony Jr. and a couple of Brazilian southerners filled with racism and a deep-felt sense of inferiority are instrumental in preparing the slaughter as entertainment for blood-thirsty tourists. The film makes it clear that even before Bacurau was a community under siege, its supply of water was precarious because of a dam and everybody hides from the mayor, who comes blasting empty promises and a suspicious voter registration scheme with a bullhorn. Furthermore, a radio transmission equipped with visual aids on a water truck informs us of a state-sponsored manhunt for Tunga, the leader of a small band of guerrillas involved in local resistance. The actor Silvero Pereira, who had already become a household name because of their participation in the Globo telenovela *A força do querer* in 2017, plays Tunga. Pereira was born in Mombaça, in the *sertão* of Ceará, and is one of the founding

9 In the original, "*Bacurau* um *ET*, mas continua sendo um filme da gente. Eu sempre quis fazer filmes de gêneros, mas que fossem brasileiros. E *Bacurau* é um filme clássico de invasão, de western, de suspense, muito brasileiro."

members of the Coletivo Artístico As Travestidas. He defines their own identity thus:

> ... for a while I thought: "Am I a *travesti*? Am I trans? Am I a drag queen?" and then I realize I'm none of those things. I like being dressed as a woman and as a man. I like my image cis, *travesti* and drag queen.[10]

The conflation between the politics of resistance of armed guerrillas and queer identity in a small town in the backlands explains both the film's appeal and the resistance against in Brazil in spite of international acclaim. A clear sign that *Bacurau* touched a nerve was Samuel Pessoa's short review. This regular columnist at *FSP* usually writes on economy—his area of expertise—and politics, but dedicated a whole column to *Bacurau* on September 19, 2019. Somehow disconcertingly, Pêssoa complains in his column that "we'll never know exactly how people in Bacurau pay their bills" and that "the screenplay could have been taken from a Marxist text from the 1960s.[11] A particular source of irritation of such critics was the character Tunga, commander of a ruthless resistance that leads to the decapitation of the invaders. In spite of the indignation of those who saw the character as a literal defense of violent political action, Tunga became *Bacurau*'s most popular character, compared in social media with Joaquin Phoenix's character in *Joker*—which had been released around the same time—and even made into a carnival costume.

Petra Costa's documentary *Democracy on the Edge* was released on Netflix in 2019, and it also created quite a stir in Brazil. Like Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, Costa had already released a documentary with extraordinary international acclaim—*Elena*—and when she went on stage to receive an award for her second film—*Olmo e a gaivota* (2015)—in the prestigious Rio Festival, she said:

> Soon I hope every woman in Brazil will have complete sovereignty over their own bodies. Sovereignty either to reject a pregnancy—interrupt it with an abortion—something that has been legal for more than 40 years in France, in the United States, and in Cuba—or to embrace and dive into pregnancy (as it happens in my film) and enjoy every right to do it in the best possible way. I also hope that no Brazilian woman be the target of verbal or physical sexism, from our president to filmmakers, actresses, maids—all the women.[12]

10 In the original, "... durante algum tempo, eu pensei: 'será que sou travesti? Será que sou transexual? Será que sou *drag queen*?' E ali fui descobrindo que não sou nenhuma dessas coisas. Eu gosto de estar vestido de mulher, de homem. Gosto da minha imagem Cis, travesti e *drag queen*."

11 In the original, "nunca sabemos ao certo como as Pessoa em Bacurau pagam suas contas" and "o roteiro poderia ter saído diretamente das páginas de um texto marxista dos anos 1960."

12 In the original in Portuguese, "Em breve eu espero que no Brasil toda mulher tenha soberania total sobre o próprio corpo. Seja pra rejeitar uma gravidez, interromper com o aborto—que já é legal há mais de 40 anos na França, nos Estados Unidos, em Cuba ... —seja pra mergulhar nela (como é no caso do nosso filme) e ter todos os direitos pra fazer isso da melhor forma. Espero também que nenhuma mulher brasileira sofra machismo verbal ou físico, desde a presidenta, às cineastas, às atrizes, às domésticas ... às mulheres!"

This speech instantly made her the target of vitriol on social media in Brazil, but she responded with a viral video called "Meu corpo, mihas regras," in which she enlisted several actors to further discuss the issue.

Democracy on the Edge recounts the political events from the ascension of Lula to the presidency in 2003 to Bolsonaro's victory in 2018. Especially after being nominated for an Oscar for Best Documentary, *Democracy on the Edge* struck a nerve in important figures of Brazilian conservative corporate media. In a radio interview, journalist and TV host Pedro Bial (none other than the official biographer of Globo's Roberto Marinho) called Costa's film "a delusional fantasy. It's more than Manichean, it is a lie."[13] After Costa's PBS interview promoting her film, the Twitter account of the Secretary of Communications of the Federal administration called Costa "an anti-Brazil militant," and that set off a social media campaign of conservative figures condemning the film and its director, using mostly vitriolic, sexist terms. What bothered these critics the most is that Petra's film reached a wider, international audience with a cohesive version of the events that simply invalidated the idea that the institutions in Brazil were still working democratically.

The film documents social and political facts and arranges them into a compelling narrative, and it does so from an openly personal point of view. Costa herself narrates the film in the first person and combines social and political events with personal reactions, including her family's. Not pretending to be impersonal or neutral, *Democracy on the Edge* managed to tell the story of Brazilian politics after the end of the dictatorship in 1986 as the brave attempt to put years of authoritarian rule in the past and allow for the full participation of all Brazilians in the political life of the country. Most important Costa avoided the trap of relativizing (and thus somehow legitimizing) the two political coups that overthrew Dilma Rousseff in the middle of her second term and removed Lula from the subsequent elections by supposedly looking at both sides in contention in the political spectrum as equals.

It is worth noting that Costa's film has not gotten old since 2019. In fact, the film has gained strength as its narrative was further corroborated by investigations on the manipulations of judges and prosecutors of the so-called Lava Jato investigation and the disastrous mismanagement of the environment and of the pandemic crisis under Bolsonaro's divisive leadership.

Nuno Ramos, Kleber Mendonça Filho, Juliano Dornelles, and Petra Costa are only some examples of numerous artists and intellectuals in Brazil who have stood up for democracy and against authoritarianism. These cultural producers have made strong political statements that have galvanized people's imaginations and punctured

13 In the original, "uma ficção alucinante. É mais que maniqueísmo, é uma mentira." Bial also called Costa a *menina* with a voice that is "miada, insuportável" ("cat-like, unbearable voice") amidst other openly misogynistic comments about Costa's wish to please her mother with the movie.

the version of recent events tailored by the media. It is fundamental that we learn from them because others must help win the battle for Brazilian hearts and minds in order to reverse this already disastrous incursion into the neoliberal far right. The very future of Brazil may depend on it

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