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# GLOBALIZATION FROM TOP AND BELOW: (RE)FRAMING (BRAZILIAN) MARGINS IN TWO NORTH-AMERICAN DOCUMENTARIES

SILVIA BIEHL

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_____
Prof. Dra. Glória Gil
(Coordenadora)

BANCA EXAMINADORA

_____
Profa. Dra. Anelise Reich Corseuil
(Orientadora e Presidente)

_____
Profa. Dra. Alessandra Soares Brandão
(Examinadora)

_____
Prof. Dra. Eliana de Souza Ávila
(Examinadora)

_____
Profa. Dra. Cláudia Cardoso Mesquita
(Examinadora - Suplente)

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For Marcelo,
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# ABSTRACT

GLOBALIZATION FROM TOP AND BELOW:
(RE)FRAMING (BRAZILIAN) MARGINS IN TWO NORTH-AMERICAN DOCUMENTARIES

SILVIA BIEHL

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
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Supervising Professor: Anelise Reich Corseuil

This dissertation analyzes the configuration of socioeconomic and national margins in two contemporary North-American documentaries entirely filmed in Brazil--*Favela Rising* (Jeff Zimbalist and Matt Mochary, 2005) and *Manda Bala* (Jason Kohn, 2008). In an attempt to contribute to the research on the representation of Brazil in foreign films, the investigation draws upon concepts such as globalization (Appadurai, 1996; Jameson, 2003), identity (Min-ha, 1997), and difference (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1996) to approach the documentaries not as fixed representations of a given reality, but as cultural texts that might or not be articulated through the notion of nation. The hypothesis is that the analyzed documentaries are sites for the configuration of margins and, for that reason, are privileged instances to observe the constitution of identities and differences. The conclusion—reached through individual and comparative analyses—is that the documentaries present very distinct articulations of socioeconomic and national margins. On one hand, *Manda Bala*, through an argumentative and circular structure, reinforces socioeconomic identities circumscribed by a Brazilian national margin. Besides presenting a totalizing portrayal of Brazil, *Manda Bala* reproduces a colonial gaze that fixes Brazilian society as cannibal, and reinforces the dominant gaze that it seeks to criticize. On the other hand, *Favela Rising*, through a mainly narrative structure, moves the gaze of national proportions towards the *favela* of Vigário Geral, in Rio de Janeiro. Less than creating a micro-portrait of Brazil, *Favela Rising* suggests the existence of social formations beyond national margins, whose political strength exists in its refusal of the negative difference imposed by socioeconomic margins. Another conclusion is that the

documentaries present, in an opposite and complementary manner, contradictory forces at play in globalization.

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*RESUMO*

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SILVIA BIEHL

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
2010

Professora Orientadora: Anelise Reich Corseuil

Esta dissertação analisa a configuração de margens socioeconômicas e nacionais em dois documentários contemporâneos norte-americanos filmados integralmente no Brasil--*Favela Rising* (Jeff Zimbalist e Matt Mochary, 2005) e *Manda Bala* (Jason Kohn, 2008). Na tentativa de contribuir aos estudos sobre a representação do Brasil em filmes estrangeiros, propõe a utilização de conceitos como os de globalização (Appadurai, 1996; Jameson, 2003), identidade (Minh-ha, 1997) e diferença (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1996) para abordar os documentários não apenas como representação fixa de uma dada realidade, mas como produtos culturais que podem ou não ser articulados a partir da noção de nação. A hipótese é a de que os documentários são locais de configuração de margens, e, por isso, instâncias privilegiadas para se observar a constituição de identidades e diferenças. A partir de análises individuais e comparativas, conclui-se que os documentários apresentam articulações bastante distintas de margens socioeconômicas e nacionais. *Manda Bala*, através de uma estrutura argumentativa e circular, reforça identidades socioeconômicas circundadas por uma margem nacional. Além de apresentar um retrato totalizante do Brasil, *Manda Bala* reproduz uma mirada colonialista que fixa a sociedade brasileira como canibal, reforçando a visão dominante que pretende criticar. Já *Favela Rising*, através de uma estrutura predominantemente narrativa, desloca o olhar totalizante de proporções nacionais em direção à favela de Vigário Geral, no Rio de Janeiro. Menos do que criar um micro-retrato do Brasil, o documentário sugere a existência de formações sociais para além da nação, cuja força política reside na recusa da diferença negativa imposta por margens socioeconômicas. Conclui-se também que os documentários

configuram, de forma oposta e complementar, forças contraditórias em jogo na globalização.

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# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION

Tunico Amancio (2000), in *Brasil dos Gringos: Imagens no Cinema*, a book about the representation of Brazil in foreign fiction films, inquires "What would Brazil be like in fiction films without the Sugarloaf, the *mulatas* and the *samba*?"[1] (192, my translation). Positioned in the last pages of his book, Amancio's question alludes to the general finding of his study: the repetition, in several different foreign fictions films, of images about Brazil, which, when gathered together, illustrate several crystallized (pre)conceptions about the country. For Amancio, "[t]he question becomes pertinent when related to documentary films that investigate the country, searching for it in every direction"[2] (192, my translation), thus suggesting that foreign documentaries might, for their more investigative rather than entertainment qualities, avoid such crystallized recurrences. Such prospective field of research, suggested and summarized by Amancio's words, is the starting point of my investigation. Concerned with images of Brazil in foreign documentaries, my thesis is based on previous studies on the representation of Brazil in foreign films, and is an attempt to contribute to these studies by advancing research into Amancio's suggested topic, the representation of Brazil in documentaries. In order to undertake such project, I analyze two contemporary North-American documentaries entirely situated in Brazil: *Favela Rising* (2005), by Jeff Zimbalist and Matt Mochary, and *Manda Bala* (2008), by Jason Kohn.

My thesis, nevertheless, is driven by an additional interest: the possibility of analyzing my corpora by drawing upon discussions about globalization. The awareness of the circulation of capital, people, and media beyond the border of nation-states provides a new theoretical challenge for conceiving matters of power and of the clichéd framing of cultural others, such as those which have been perceived in many representations of Brazil in foreign fiction films. To use the words of Ellla Shohat and Robert Stam (2003), "[j]ust as the media can exoticize and otherize cultures, they can also reflect and help catalyze multicultural affiliations and transnational identifications" (1). This seems to be the case, for instance, of some of the North-American

[1] [c]omo seria um Brasil na ficção do cinema sem o Pão de Açúcar, as mulatas e o samba?"(Amancio, 2000, 192).

[2] "[a] pergunta ganha pertinência quando relacionada aos filmes documentários que investigam o país, esquadrinhando-o em todas as direções" (Amancio, 2000, 192).

documentaries that have depicted the political and economic struggles of Latin American countries in the last few years, such as *The Forth World War* (Jacqueline Soohen and Richard Rowley USA, 2004), *Zapatista* (Benjamin Eichert and Rick Rowley, USA, 1998) and *The Take* (Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis, CAN, 2004). These documentaries share an evident activism, based on a crossing of national and cultural borders for the collection of social experiences that inspire and provide examples for a global combat against the harsh effects of transnational capitalism. In these films, the socio-cultural particularities of the countries portrayed are important especially in the relation which they establish with a non-local context, that of a global revolution. When searching for the corpora of my investigation, I was willing to find foreign documentaries set in Brazil with corresponding concerns as to global matters. While *Favela Rising* indicated such possibility, attaching a message of social change that extends the local transformations it depicts, *Manda Bala* did not. The result was conflicting perspectives that could be more significant if contrasted rather than overlooked.

*Favela Rising* (no translation to Portuguese), directed and produced by Jeff Zimbalist and Matt Mochary, was released in the United States in 2005. The documentary presents the trajectory of the cultural group AfroReggae, founded in the *favela* of Vigário Geral, in Rio de Janeiro, in 1993. AfroReggae's work is targeted at children and young adults from the *favelas* who are often employed as workforce in drug traffic. The stated mission of the group, as published in AfroReggae's official website, is to "promote inclusion and social justice, using art, Afro-Brazilian culture, and education as tools for the creation of bridges that unite differences and serve as base for sustainable development and for the exercise of citizenship"[3] (*AfroReggae's Homepage*, "Missão", my translation). *Favela Rising* focuses on the life of one of AfroReggae's leader, musician Anderson Sá, whose recovery from a serious accident (occurred after the completion of the production) attaches a strong message of hope to the documentary's final sequences. Produced by four North-American production companies[4], *Favela Rising* had also the contribution of a local crew, including children from Vigário Geral. In the United States, the distribution and exhibition projects involved the screening of the documentary in poor neighborhoods (a project entitled the "U.S. Favela

[3]AfroReggae. *AfroReggae*. Homepage.22 feb. 2010.
<http://www.afroreggae.org.br/institucional/missao/>.
[4] HBO Documentary Films, Voy Pictures, Sidetrack Films, and Think Films.

Tour"), and the publication of an educational curriculum[5] that guides teachers to conduct debates about *Favela Rising* and to "discuss issues of poverty, gangs and violence with high school students in the United States" (Bajal and Kelly 1).

*Manda Bala*, a documentary by first-time director Jason Kohn, was commercially released in the beginning of 2008, and was translated to the English language as *Send a Bullet*. The documentary depicts problems revolving around corruption and violence in Brazil, focusing on the corruption case involving former senator Jader Barbalho in early 2000's, and on kidnapping cases in the city of São Paulo. Most of the interviews in *Manda Bala* are in Portuguese and subsequently translated into English by translators who, for the most part, appear side by side with the interviewees. According to Kohn's "Director's Statement", taken from *Manda Bala Production Notes*, the documentary is an attempt to explain the relation between corruption and social inequality by producing a documentary that uses "the same visual language" of fiction films (4). Kohn probably relates the alleged fictional visual language of *Manda Bala* to the careful lighting and to the coverage of scenes through different camera angles, for instance, that help to compose the documentary. A relevant information concerning *Manda Bala* is the addition of a title warning that the documentary cannot be shown in Brazil right in its initial sequence. In an interview for Eliza Tozzi and Maria Eduarda Andrade, Kohn (2008) states that this information is given due to a lawsuit issued by one of the interviewees against the production, and states that he, nevertheless, wants Brazilian audiences to watch the documentary. The insertion of such title adds a double meaning to *Manda Bala*: it suggests the delicate information and accusations that the documentary discloses and supports concerning Brazilian governmental corruption, and simultaneously evidences the place of its spectator as non-Brazilian.

Despite both addressing themes that have been extensively explored in Brazilian contemporary cinema--namely, social exclusion, corruption, and violence in Brazilian cities--*Favela Rising* and *Manda Bala* differ considerably in the examination of such themes. *Favela Rising* affirms the possibility of (globally) fighting prejudice, violence,

[5] The 28-page curriculum, designed by Melissa Kelly and Monisha Bajaj (2006), is available for download at *Favela Rising*'s Website. The material includes a glossary, a "quotesheet" with important lines from the documentary, and factsheets about Brazil and U.S. See: Bajal, Monisha, and Melissa Kelly. *Favela Rising Educational Curriculum*. 2006. < http://www.favelarising.com/favela-rising-curriculum.pdf>. 14 mar. 2010.

and social inequality through the depiction and endorsement of AfroReggae's work. The inhabitants of Vigário Geral, in spite of being geographically and culturally contextualized as Brazilians, are portrayed as a group whose sense of belonging can hardly come from the nation and from the institutions that reinforce Vigário's marginal position within Brazilian society. *Manda Bala* asserts that Brazil has been entrapped into a cycle of substantial socio-economic inequality and urban violence, and which has been activated and perpetuated by governmental corruption. The participants of the documentary, in contrast to *Favela Rising*'s, are portrayed as being constitutive members of Brazil, a geographically delimited and politically organized nation-state. The ways in which *Favela Rising*'s and *Manda Bala*'s framings of socioeconomic exclusion differ suggest a tension between a totalizing portrayal of a national community and of communities resisting such a portrayal.

This thesis, therefore, is aimed at analyzing the configuration of socioeconomic and national margins in *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* drawing mainly upon discussions about globalization (further reviewed in this chapter). The aim is to observe whether such configurations reinforce cultural differences and identities based on national terms--North-American/Brazilians--or whether they can point out to "transnational identifications" between participants, producers, and, potentially, spectators. Globalization is understood not only as the context in which the documentaries are produced--the context of transnational capitalism, of transnational media, of transnational migration--but also as a conceptual parameter--the understanding of culture in terms of articulation of differences (Appadurai, 1996).

The margins that give title to this dissertation attempt to indicate the constant process of re-configuration of national, geographical, and cultural margins in cultural texts, and how such process entails dynamics of power relations. In this sense, margins signal that, in each documentary of my corpora, different gazes at Brazil are produced, and distinct types of margins are configured. Margins refer also to the themes that surround both films, the production of economic and cultural margins (in Brazil), and the ways in which they are portrayed in each documentary. In addition, I chose the use of the term margins (instead of borders or frontiers) to stress that the context of transnational capitalism, in which both documentaries were produced, is continuously producing economic and cultural margins; i.e., prejudice, marginalization, economic exploitation, etc. Ultimately, the reference to reframing of margins attempts to call attention to the infinite

possibilities of interpretation, and, consequently, to the failure of every attempt (including this one) at reducing culture and its texts to systematic categories. My hypothesis is that *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising*, less than static portrayals of a given reality, are sites of configuration of margins. For that reason, and because they present a tension between national identities and possible transnational formations and/or alliances, they offer a great opportunity to analyze and discuss globalization.

In the following pages of this introductory chapter, I present the conceptual parameters adopted in this investigation, as well as the general context in which it is inserted.

The focus of the studies about the representation of Brazil in foreign films has been the repertoire of images recurrently used to portray the country by foreigners, images that end up crystallizing, repeating, and reinforcing certain ideas about Brazil (Amancio, 2000; Freire-Medeiros, 2005; Murat, 2005; Young, 2001). Bianca Freire-Medeiros (2005), for instance, in her study of contemporary foreign fictions films set in Rio de Janeiro, entitled *O Rio de Janeiro que Hollywood Inventou*, arrives at the conclusion that all the films analyzed by her "have in common the use of Rio de Janeiro's urban setting as a *landscape of imagination* (…). They (re)invent the city through a view that is simultaneously naïve and paternalist, frightened and seduced, and forward images that, for being used so repetitively, have reached an almost mythical status"[6] (58, my translation). Freire-Medeiros states that, before 1950, foreign fiction films portrayed Rio as a place of "contrasts, but never of antagonisms", that is, without explicit social conflicts; an image that, the author reminds, was also reinforced by the Brazilian government at the time. The introduction, in more recent foreign fiction films, of Brazilian social conflicts to the plot and the *favelas* to the setting, according to Freire-Medeiros, has still put off an actual engagement with the problems depicted. In these fiction films, Rio de Janeiro still serves as the exotic background against which foreign characters appear.

In his aforementioned work, *O Brasil dos Gringos: Imagens no Cinema*, Tunico Amancio (2000) analyzes an extensive number of fiction films (over 160), produced in different historical moments, and

[6] "têm em comum a utilização do cenário urbano carioca como uma *paisagem da imaginação* (...). (Re)inventam a cidade a partir de um olhar concomitantemente ingênuo e paternalista, temeroso e seduzido, e veiculam imagens que, por serem usadas de forma tão repetitiva, alcançaram um status já quase mítico" (Freire-Medeiros 58).

released by different countries, which present Brazil either as visible setting (either reproduced in studio or shot in location) or as implied plot location (cited as a future destiny, often related to outlaws escapes). Through his analysis, Amancio is able to gather repeated themes and images associated to Brazil and group them into thematic filiations. According to Amancio, theses themes and images, when gathered together, show a certain tendency for superficial representations of the country (191-193).

Amancio's readings on the representation of Brazil in foreign fiction films are inspired by the technology of the panorama, a widespread Western form of representation in the 19th century. The panorama, according to Amancio, frames a representation of the world that is intended to be comprehensive, and even boundless, through a static spectatorship point of view (13-17). The world that opens itself through such apparatus presumes the perspective of an individual and privileged gaze that holds the power of observation. Amancio skillfully places the point of view of the panorama, "a grandiose apparatus of illusionism"[7] (13, my translation) as that of the foreigner, who "receives" the framed images of Brazil from such privileged distance.

This is because, most often (there are exceptions in Amancio's corpora), the foreign gaze that frames Brazil is the one that can be characterized as Eurocentric. Like Amancio, Shohat and Stam (2003) approximate the discourse of Eurocentrism with the perspective of some of its art: "Eurocentric thinking attributes to the West an almost providential sense of historical destiny. Like Renaissance perspective in painting, it envisions the world from a single privileged vantage point" (8). For Shohat and Stam (1994), Eurocentrism is "a form of vestigial thinking which permeates and structures *contemporary* practices and representations even after the formal end of colonialism" (2). This means that Eurocentric practices are not exclusive to specific historical periods or that they are actualized only by Europeans individuals; Brazilian elite, for instance, is known to have reproduced Eurocentric thinking after its formal separation from the kingdom of Portugal.

The main operation of Eurocentrism is to establish the Western civilization, and the Western subject, as the agent of progress (Shohat and Stam, 1994, 2-3), which means, for that matter, to establish the non-Western subject as primitive and unprogressive. Such operation has served as justification for the killing and forced acculturation of native groups in colonized territories, and still predicates relations of

[7] "um dispositivo grandioso de ilusão" (Amancio 13).

dominance and exploitation. As the analogy with art suggests, the privileged point of the Western gaze is the source of observation and recognition, of identification and differentiation. The dominant gaze, therefore, has been also criticized for the establishment of an identity based on a binary opposition with its (cultural, gender, racial, ethnic) other. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1997) states the issue much precisely when stating that

> [t]o raise the question of identity is to reopen the discussion on the self/other relationship in its enactment of power relations. Identity as understood in the context of an essential, authentic core that remains hidden to one's consciousness and that requires the elimination of all that is considered foreign or not true to the self, that is to say, not-I, other. In such a concept the other is almost unavoidably either opposed to the self or submitted to the self's dominance. (415)

Minh-ha's text suggest that the establishment (the expression is good use here) of an identity as essence presupposes a fixed point to establish difference. What has been implied so far from the aforementioned authors is the fact that identities, and ultimately cultures, should not to be understood as rigid entities; such issue is of tremendous relevance for cultural discussions about globalization.

Some authors emphasize the fact that, from an essentialist dominant perspective, the cultural other is also defined in essential terms (Chow 1996; Appadurai 1996; Bhabha, 1996; Shohat and Stam, 1994). A problem concerning this fact is that, when identifying the essentialist dominant gaze in action, there is always the danger of reproducing it. Shohat and Stam (1994), for instance, criticize studies on stereotypical representations that tend to denounce stereotypes of ethnical and racial groups but that, in turn, are deeply rooted in a belief of a "real" and "true" depiction of such groups (178). Such critique is the basis of Rey Chow's (1996) article "Where Have all the Natives Gone?", which discusses Western tendency to expect authenticity (fixity) from native groups (cultural others)[8]. According to Chow, there are two main approaches to the images of "natives", which end up reinforcing the essentialist gaze towards cultural others. On one hand, the image is

[8] Until nowadays, *Rede Globo*, for instance, announce reportages of Brazilian indigenous groups that have never had any contact with, or that barely have contact with, the "outside world"; i.e., supposedly truly authentic, uncorrupted, groups. The reportage itself is usually announced as the recording of the "first contact" with outside groups.

considered essentially objectifying (pornographic); from this perspective, cultural others are always turned into objects by the Western gaze, restricting critiques toward it (there is no "way out" of the objectifying gaze). On the other hand, the image is considered false representation; from such perspective, the "true" image is considered to be hidden under the objectifying gaze and should be revealed. Chow criticizes both perspectives, stating that one should neither resign criticism because of the objectifying nature of the image, nor attempt to invert this objectification by tracing the hidden subjectivity of those depicted (123-124).

According to Chow, the image of the cultural other by Western gazes should be taken as an "indifferent defiled [image]" (140), as an image that is indifferent because it cannot disclose any secrecy (any essence of the native), which the objectifying gaze attempts to expose (defile). In other words, Chow suggests that one should not attempt to simply condemn the image of the native in the name of a supposedly true representation, but to analyze the way through which images permits such objectification (native as image); i.e., by analyzing the construction of the Western gaze (139-141).

In "The Other Question", Homi Bhabha (1996) also stresses the limitations of studies that attempt merely to identify stereotypes, rather than to understand their construction. Bhabha argues that, in colonial discourse, the constitution of the colonizer's identity is made through the fixation of the identity of the colonized, which is constituted as "negative difference" (45). "Fixity as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism", Bhabha observes, "is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and demoniac repetition" (38). Such form of representation, which operates mainly through stereotypes (the focus, therefore, of Bhabha's article), is ambivalent[9]: it presumes something that is already known ("a disavowal of difference", 50), and that consequently needs no proof of its presuppositions, but that must be repeated over and over again (because,

[9] Chow (1996) criticizes Bhabha's notion of ambivalence in colonial discourse. According to her, when placing the emphasis entirely in discursive constructions, Bhabha assumes that the colonized already resists the language of the colonizer within the colonizer's own discourse: "All we would need to do would be to continue to study – to deconstruct – the rich and ambivalent language of the imperialist! What Bhabha's word 'hybridity' revives, in the masquerade of deconstruction, anti-imperialism and 'difficult' theory, is an old functionalist notion of what a dominant culture permits in the interest of maintaining its own equilibrium" (127-128).

after all, it is a construction). The stereotype is a fragile discursive strategy, since it attempts to fix a certain (prejudicial) identity that is in fact heterogeneous (47).

The reason I chose to present some authors and definitions usually associated to Multicultural and Postcolonial Sudies[10] (Eurocentrism, dominant identity, native as an indifferent defiled image, and stereotype as a mode of representation in colonial discourse) is that they present, as Minh-ha's (1997) quote states, questions of identity and difference together with power relations. In this sense, it is not as if every film analyzed by Amancio (2000), for instance, should be categorized as Eurocentric, or that they embody relations of (colonial) domination uniquely. In fact, the focus of Amancio's study is not each individual film, but images, sounds, themes, that, exhaustively repeated, become clichés (Corcovado means Rio de Janeiro and Brazil, for instance), and suggest stereotypical constructions of cultural differences (Brazilians are friendly, highly sexualized, violent, etc.) based on privileged vantage points of view. Besides, the reference to essentialist identity constructions is crucial for the focus of this investigation, which moves from the analysis of the repetition of images (images that suggest the fixity of stereotypes) to the construction itself, in the documentaries, of notions of identity and difference.

In 1949, film theoretician Sigfried Kracauer published "National Types as Hollywood Presents Them", an insightful article examining the portrayal of British and Russians in Hollywood fiction films. The work was "one of a number of pilot studies undertaken in connection with the UNESCO project for studying international tensions" (53). The awareness of "international tensions", certainly related to the political and economic scenario post-World War II--"it has come into focus only now that world government is a possibility and world domination is a threat" (53)--is relevant to the contemporary state of increasing ethnic conflicts and cultural prejudice, which makes Kracauer's article a noteworthy reference to contemporary issues of cultural representation.

For Kracauer, the representation of nations by other nations is the "resultant of an objective and subjective factor" (54). The former factor relates to information, to the attempt to portray a certain nationality based on evidence, while the latter relates to what Kracauer designates

[10] For a brief and instructive introduction to the fields of both Multiculturalism and Postcoloniaslim, see: Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. "Introduction". *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media*. Eds. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam. Rutgers University Press, 2003. 1-17.

"self-expression" or "projection" (55). According to the author, "[o]ur concepts of a foreigner necessarily reflect native habits of thoughts" (55), that is, they are never completely objective, and they certainly have more to say about the portrayer than the portrayed. The subjective factor, therefore, can be understood as the gaze from whom the foreigner is perceived. In his article, Kracauer concludes that the subjective factor is the most influential in the portrayal of foreign groups, not only in Hollywood.

For Kracauer, the subjective factor varies according to the foreign group being portrayed. Foreign groups that present some cultural resemblance with the domestic audience tend to be portrayed more objectively--like English in U.S. films--while groups that are more culturally distant tend to be portrayed with much subjectivity or projection--as in the case with Russians (70). Nevertheless, even in the first case, subjectivity plays its role of stressing specific traits over others, to the point that fairly objective portrayals become stereotypes. The emphasis upon English snobbishness in pre-war Hollywood films, Kracauer affirms, has made "[t]he English snob (…) a figure which has in some degrees drifted away from its original to join those mythological figures that people the world of American imagination" (64). The subjective factor is also influenced by historical and political contexts. Kracauer observes, for instance, that the portrayal of English as a democratic people during war substituted prewar attention to snobbishness, reflecting the relationship of both countries as allies. A similar situation was repeated at the time Russia's position as an ally became fragile. "[T]he wooing Russia for self-interest", Kracauer observes, strangely ignored previous sarcastic prewar portrayals of Russians[11] (66-68).

Despite framing cultural representation and film production in terms of national identities, Kracauer's reference to subjective factors suggests the complexity process of cultural representation and identification. When mentioning the ideal equilibrium between

[11] War also influenced the portrayal of Brazil in Hollywood. The Good Neighborhood Policy, the policy for international affairs developed by the U.S. government, was aimed at gathering Latin American allies during WWII, and was based on the supposed enhancement of mutual understanding between the United States and Latin American countries. In 1940, the U.S. Government opened the *Office for Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs*, which was coordinated by Nelson Rockefeller (Amancio, 2000, 53). Numbers of fiction films and documentaries were produced under the policy, such as *Flying Down to Rio* (Thornton Freeland, 1933) and Disney's *Saludos Amigos* (Norman Ferguson et al., 1942).

objectivity and subjectivity, Kracauer observes that the difficulty in portraying a foreign group or country as objectively as possible is their "fluid" character:

> "An individual or a people is not so much a fixed entity as a living organism that develops along unforeseeable lines. (…) It is true that the successive images a people create of its own character are as a rule more reliable than those it forms of a foreign people's; but they are not complete and definite either" (54-55).

That is, even though objectivity in the portrayal of foreigners is a quality to be aimed at (since it can avoid the repetition of prejudiced conceptions regarding specific groups or nationalities), it is impossible to achieve total objectivity, since culture itself is always changing. Kracauer's reading, therefore, seems to be in accordance with Arjun Appadurai's (1996) definition of culture not as a "property of individuals", but as "the process of naturalizing a set of differences that have been mobilized to articulate group identity" (13-14).

Globalization, according to Fredric Jameson (2003), is a term that refers to transformations in economical, political and cultural spheres that are presently taking place and which are, therefore, still being grasped by theory (Preface xi). From a cultural perspective, globalization has often been associated with the global spreading of communication networks. For Jameson, such a cultural position is often optimistic, since globalization is seen as a moment of proliferation of differences and of new identities ("Globalization" 56-57). Jameson argues, however, that globalization cannot be considered in its communicational and cultural aspect exclusively. The understanding of globalization in terms of economy, according to Jameson, provides a more pessimistic view of the phenomenon. Considering its economic dimension, globalization may be understood as the eradication of difference rather than its proliferation, as the establishment of consumer standardization through transnational capitalism ("Globalization" 57).

These two disparate perspectives on globalization, according to Jameson, are not "logically incompatible; indeed, they seem somehow to be dialectically related, at least on the mode of the unresolvable antinomy" ("Globalization" 57). The dialectic movement that Jameson suggests in these two perspectives (globalization as both proliferation and eradication of difference) can be explained by the logic of global market: the process of eradicating differences (homogenizing consumption) goes hand in hand with the growing need to proliferate

differences (segmenting markets). Because of this dialectical and complex process regulated by capital, Jameson demonstrates, an opposition to the standardization of transnational capitalism does not follow a precise form of resistance. From a local perspective, for instance, differences can be articulated to challenge a unifying single national identity; from a global perspective, however, the opposite can be necessary; the reinforcement of a national identity and of a national cultural production can contribute to challenge the standardization of cultures ("Globalization" 75). That is, matters of resistance depend highly upon how differences are articulated, and of what is being opposed to what.

For Arjun Appadurai (1996)--for whom migration and the spreading of media, not only transnational capitalism, are key features of a new world order--imagination has become a part of social life as "an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility" (31). Imagination, for Appadurai, is much related to diasporic movements (transnational or not) and to their effect upon "memory" and "desire" (6); to the way, migration, for instance, create individual and group expectations and conflicts. Imagination is equally related to the circulation of media throughout territories, in a sense already suggested by Kracauer (1949): not as mass manipulation, but as an active appropriation (7) of narratives.

Appadurai defines "the new global cultural economy" as set of "disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics", disjunctures "constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (33). Appadurai explores these disjunctures according to what he names the "five dimensions of globalization", namely, *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes* and *ideoscapes*. For this investigation, I would like to draw special emphasis to the term *mediascapes*, which, for Appadurai, are "imaged-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality" that give way to new forms of "imagined lives" (Appadurai, 35). The term seems mainly pertinent to analyze *Favela Rising*'s project for inspiring social change outside the community depicted. Even though the documentary neither combats transnational capitalism nor incites a global resistance against social exclusion, it allows for new forms of approaching the problem of urban socioeconomic exclusion that are not entirely restricted to issues of national politics.

Another important element that connects *Favela Rising* and Appadurai's understanding of culture (which cannot be dissociated from the potentialities of *mediascapes*) is what Appadurai (2009) names globalization from below: transformations incited by transnational forms of organizations (such as NGOs) that combat the tendency for growing marginalization in globalized societies (which authors such as Zygmunt Bauman (2009) state to be the main tendency of globalization). Although Appadurai's work emphasizes the flux of social formations that are no longer restricted to the boundaries of the nation-states, he is cautious in stressing that the nation-states are still a predominant social force, especially in its "violent relationship" with "postnational Others" (1996, 169; 2009). National identity, therefore is another important issue to be raised in this investigation, since *Manda Bala*, for instance, configures socioeconomic exclusion in terms of national politics. Appadurai's approach to globalization does seem more optimistic and flexible than that of Jameson, but it does not discard questions of power relations, prejudice, and violence that seem to grow out of new forms of radical nationalisms and ethnic conflicts, which seem to be incited, in fact, by current global disjunctures (Appadurai, 1996).

These are, therefore, the conceptual bases of my research. The effort is to analyze *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* considering culture in its articulation of differences as well as considering possible essentialist construction of cultural differences. Throughout this thesis, other authors, readings, and concepts will be mobilized according to the particularities of each chapter. I will start from two individual readings of *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising*, and move on to a subsequent comparative reading in a third chapter, in which I intend to dialogue with discussions about globalization. In Chapter Two, entitled "The View from the Top: Denouncement and Reinforcement of the Privileged Gaze in *Manda Bala*", I develop an analysis of *Manda Bala*, focusing on the documentary's representation of Brazil as a nation, and of Brazilian society as an organism deeply sickened by corruption and violence, reflected in references to cannibalism as organic anomaly, as well as to reconstructive plastic surgery; which, I sustain, reinforces a privileged (foreign and objectifying) gaze that reduces cultural differences into fixed categories.

A parting view is analyzed in chapter three, entitled "Re-viewing the Top: *Favela Rising* and the Narrative of Political Ascent". In this chapter, I analyze *Favela Rising*'s redefinition of Brazilian margins through the focus on an economic and culturally marginalized community as well as the documentary's move towards global acts for

social justice. I dedicate Chapter Four to a comparative analysis between the documentaries. "The Margins of the Nation, and the Nation of Margins: *Favela Rising*, *Manda Bala*, and Globalization" develops a comparison between both documentaries in relation to the conceptual parameters, analyzing some of the ways in which they can relate to globalization. In the final chapter, I present the general findings of the investigation and consider possibilities for future research.

# CHAPTER 2
# THE VIEW FROM THE TOP: DENOUNCEMENT AND REINFORCEMENT OF THE PRIVILEGED GAZE IN *MANDA BALA*

> Otherness itself shifts ground as the world keeps moving towards increasing globalization and escalating national and ethnic conflicts. And yet, and yet…'cannibal tours' still lure jaded tourists while ethnography continues to be haunted by older ideas of the West and the Rest and its continuing obsession with *difference* common to popular, philosophical and anthropological doxa about the Other.
>
> (Gananath Obeyesekere, 1998, 86)

The initial idea into which *Manda Bala* would later develop was brought up by Jason Kohn's father in a telephone conversation with his son (Kohn's father lives in Brazil; his mother is Brazilian), in 2002. The topic of the conversation was the corruption case involving theft of public money through the construction of frog farms in Brazil. The case in question became known in the country as the SUDAM[12] case, whose central figure was former Senator Jader Barbalho, charged and arrested for many irregularities in the program in 2002 and later absolved.[13] Besides the political scandal, Kohn declares he was inspired by another topic involving Brazil.[14] An article published by the New York Times[15] in February of 2002 about the mounting kidnapping cases in the city of Sao Paulo begins with a reference to a plastic surgeon, Juarez Avelar, who had performed in that year a number of ear reconstruction surgeries in former victims of kidnapping. Barbalho and Avelar would later

[12] The Superintendence of Amazon Development (SUDAM) was a program launched by the Brazilian government in 1966 and extinguished in 2001, during the former presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The justification for the program extinction was the series of corruption cases that started to dominate the media in 2000.

[13] Like most Brazilian politicians who ever get to be charged and arrested for corruption. Barbalho spent only 16 hours in jail.

[14] Kohn, Jason. "Interview: Jason Kohn, Director of 'Manda Bala (Send a Bullet)'". Interview by Kim Voynar. *Cinematica*. April 15. 2008. 11 Jun. 2009. <http://www.cinematical.com/2008/04/15/interview-jason-kohn-director-of-manda-bala-send-a-bullet/>

[15] Romero, Simon. "São Paulo Becomes the Kidnapping Capital of Brazil". New York Times. 13 Feb. 2002. 24 July. 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/13/world/sao-paulo-becomes-the-kidnapping-capital-of-brazil.html>.

become not only central figures but actual participants of *Manda Bala*, a documentary centered on these apparently unrelated topics: corruption and urban violence in Brazil, frog farming and plastic surgery.

*Manda Bala* presents twelve participants with the aid of introductory titles which I list here in order of appearance: frog farmer/ frog exporter Diniz; businessman/entrepreneur (codenamed) Mr. M; congressman/ governor/ senator Jader Barbalho; (former) Attorney General of Brazil Cláudio Fonteles; Federal Police Marshal, and head of the SUDAM investigation Hélbio Dias; Patrícia (former victim of kidnapping); anti-kidnapping detective Jamil; plastic surgeon Dr. Juarez Avellar (specialized in ear reconstruction surgery), (former) Assistant General Attorney Mario Lúcio Avelar; Paulo Lamarão, "the only civil lawyer to ever fight Jader Barbalho"; drug trafficker/ bank robber/ kidnapper Magrinho; microchip sales representative Cunha Lima.

Apart from Cunha Lima's brief appearance, these participants' interviews constitute the main part of the documentary, and help to set up different thematic groups: Jader Barbalho, for instance, is the representative of political corruption in the documentary. The theme is introduced at the beginning of the documentary by frog farmer Diniz. Acquainted with Barbalho, Diniz attempts to escape the interviewer's curiosity regarding money laundry through the construction of frog farms, thus triggering the theme of corruption. Cláudio Fonteles, Hélbio Dias, Mario Lúcio Avelar, and Paulo Lamarão represent the judicial group that attempts to combat political corruption and, more specifically, Barbalho. Mr. M, Patricia, Magrinho, Jamil, Cunha Lima, and Dr. Avelar are the participants directly involved with the quotidian of urban violence. Cunha Lima, Dr. Avelar, and the bulletproof car industry, represent those who profit from that quotidian. By the end of the documentary, these participants and the different thematic groups meet and interrelate in many levels, helping to construct a strong argument concerning Brazilian society.

The main argument put forth by *Manda Bala* is that the phenomenon of urban violence and the unequal distribution of wealth in Brazil are direct and interrelated consequences of political corruption. The privations of better living conditions, which are forced onto the majority of population by corrupt politicians, make the former respond to such privations with violence against the country's wealth minority. The wealth minority, in turn, respond to such violence with crescent paranoia and robust technological devices for protection, which results in a clearer separation between poor and rich people, and consequently in the perpetuation of the cycle of violence. Because of the cycle of

violence it triggers, the phenomenon of political corruption is presented as social cannibalism. The cannibal acts of frogs registered in Diniz's farm becomes a metaphor that supplements Magrinho's statement: "you either steal with a gun or with a pen. Look, how do the politicians steal? With a pen" (*Manda Bala* 1:13:24-30).

Since its acclaimed premiere in the 2007 Sundance Film Festival, event in which it was awarded both the prize for Excellency in Cinematography (by Brazilian photographer Heloísa Passos) and the prize from the Grand Jury, *Manda Bala* has received various complimentary reviews in international media.[16] Film critic David Fear (2007), from the *Time Out New York* Website, observes in *Manda Bala* a "rebirth of investigative-documentary form". The term investigative documentary is usually attributed to a practice in journalism which is concerned with the examination of the pieces that supposedly constitute a problem in order to give, if not a homogeneous solution, at least a comprehensive view of its foundations--an examination supposedly based upon objectivity[17]. David Fear argues that "[p]art of the brilliance of Jason Kohn's debut is how his film forces the audience to bind seemingly random elements into a stunning sociological Big Picture" (paragraph 2). In a similar tone, the Prologue of *Manda Bala Press Notes* (2008), available at the documentary official website, states that

> Brazil is known for its beautiful beaches, lush rain forests, and vibrant culture. However, in recent years, the country has developed more of a reputation for corrupt politicians, kidnapping, and plastic surgery. MANDA BALA (Send a Bullet) artfully connects these seemingly disparate elements and conducts a dazzling, yet harrowing, examination of the tragic domino effect that has reshaped the face of the country and created an entire industry built on corruption. (paragraphs 1 and 2)

Such statements, alluding to disjoint facts and connections, suggest editing as the highest technical achievement in the documentary, an editing that not only associates apparently disconnected elements but

[16] See, for instance: Fear, 2007; Gibron, 2007; Kohn (Interview by Guillen, 2007, Interview by Voynar, 2008); O'Hehir (2007); Schapiro (Berkely Review of Latin American Studies). For their full reference, see Reference List.

[17] According to Bill Nichols (1991), "[f]or a news gathering and disseminating apparatus like a television network, objectivity provides a legal safeguard against libel. It helps differentiate documentary from fiction (particularly that small slice of documentary known as news but also investigative or background reports) (188).

equally dissects them, i.e., "analyze and interpret minutely" (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*).

The bond between dissection and association suggests that the chaotic evidences of every-day life can be only brought together through a creative, if not to say fictional, treatment of "reality", which in turn suggests a conception of the documentary that differs from its commonsense conception of unabridged depiction of truth. Kohn has himself underlined the distance between *Manda Bala* and journalistic documentaries on many occasions[18], apparently diverging, at a first glance, from comparisons such as the one made by film critic David Fear. In the Director's Statement presented in *Manda Bala Press Notes* and in interviews[19] following the documentary's debut, Kohn states that *Manda Bala* was produced in an attempt to give new strength to contemporary documentary production. According to Kohn, documentary filmmaking has suffered from an epidemic of realistic portrayals. Developing such critique, Kohn targets the abundant portrayals of poverty in activist documentaries about developing countries (*Manda Bala Press Notes* 2, 4, 5). Kohn's discourse about *Manda Bala* is centralized around this critique; his expressed attempts and wishes to make use of visual techniques conventional to fiction films seem to be a practical response to realism in documentary. According to Kohn, "[t]he importance of telling this story visually […] was the difference between simply capturing facts in a verité style, and actually exposing a truth" (*Manda Bala Press Notes* 4). Kohn's

[18] At least when approximating journalistic to political and activist documentaries. In an interview to *The Reeler* Website, for instance, published in January 2007, Kohn states: "I don't really think of this as a 'political documentary,' because it's not journalistic. I kind of think of this as a non-fiction science-fiction movie. It's very much about a broken society, and using these two really weird, crazy stories to explore that broken society (…) A political documentary, to me, seems more along the lines of what would be an activist documentary attempting to affect change. But that wasn't really the point of this movie. This was about telling these two crazy stories and making sense out of them, and the way by which we did it was to use the story of a politician. That's one of the stories in the movie, and it's just as much a political documentary as it is a kidnapper documentary. There's a kidnapper in there, and both of them are treated with equal weight in the end." In his interview to *Cinematica*, from June 2008, and in response to Stephen Holden's (2007) unenthusiastic review of the documentary to *The New York Times*, Kohn states: "Stephen Holden wrote a review for the New York Times that says Manda Bala isn't as 'journalistic' as it should be. Not only is it hypocritical, it shows that he really knows nothing whatsoever about the genre, at all. He's looking at an apple and expecting it to be an orange. That would never happen with a narrative. There's this geriatric contingent that has this bad idea of what documentaries should be. It doesn't make any sense to me."

[19] See Kohn's interview for *The Reeler* (2007); *Cinematical* (2008, by Kim Voynar); *GreenCine* (2008, by David D'arcy).

statements, therefore, refuse a comparison between *Manda Bala* and journalistic analysis, since journalistic would favor realism instead of the stylistic, or fiction-film treatment to documentary. Nevertheless, the idea which offers itself in Kohn's preceding quotation--that *Manda Bala* "express[es] the truth"--is in agreement with Fear's description of *Manda Bala* as a "sociological Big Picture".

That is, Kohn's statements suggest ultimately that the documentary presents an actual diagnosis (or the exposition of truth) for the problems which have been corrupting Brazilian society. Accordingly, the dissection of *Manda Bala* suggests a privileged gaze over the problems being analyzed. Some foreign critics have praised such privileged and analytical gaze for its elucidative investigation of the conditions of developing countries. Film critic Scott Foundas (2007), from *Variety.com*, for instance, argues that Kohn

> ultimately draws the pic's disparate story threads together by arguing that the greed of a man like Barbalho and the "work" of a man like Magrinho (who ultimately seems almost like a latter-day Robin Hood) are not completely unrelated; rather that one gives rise to the other and will continue to do so until significant reforms are made to the Brazilian class and justice systems. It is a point Kohn (who is half-Brazilian) makes implicitly, never didactically. "Manda Bala" emerges as that rare film about the developing world that does not rub our privileged first-world noses in poverty and famine, but rather merely abides by that sage journalistic advice: "Follow the money". (paragraph 7)

Such long passage is worth quoting because it manages to link the aforementioned appraisal of dissection and connection, here taken to be a subtle procedure (never didactical, according to Foundas), to the attribution of a privileged sight of the "developed world" over the developing. I have manifestly misread Foundas' use of the adjective "privileged" to accent the distanced and active position attributed not only to the portrayal of the documentary but to the gaze of the non-Brazilian producer/spectator. Another review marks such cultural distance even more noticeably, stating that "[e]ven with its occasional faults, *Manda Bala* does what documentaries do best – illuminate an intellectual or social situation that our otherwise narrow Western viewpoint would never even consider" (Gibron, 2007). Gibron's words suggests even more explicitly that the appraisal of *Manda Bala*'s approach to Brazilian reality can be related to a Eurocentric gaze towards Brazil, a gaze prone to observe and establish cultural

differences from a privileged distanced position. The title that warns that *Manda Bala* cannot be shown in Brazil, placed in its initial sequence, therefore, can be read as an example of this radical cultural difference.

A few U.S. and some Brazilian critics have diverged from such complimentary views upon *Manda Bala*'s dissection of Brazilian society. Karen Backstein (2007), in her review to *Cineaste*, states that "[d]ocumentary or no, "he [Kohn] has chosen to make his Brazilian-based 'mean streets' story with a Hollywood eye--one that privileges the esthetics of that violence, gazing on this Wild South with a sense of superiority and exoticism" (paragraph 2). For Backstein, *Manda Bala* lacks the sense of "cohesive whole" (paragraph 4), praised by in the aforementioned reviews, stating that the several thematic groups presented do not appear well together. Stephen Holden (2007), from *The New York Times*, states that *Manda Bala* "is a weird hybrid of political exposé and sensationalistic fluff" (paraprah 1). According to Holden, "[a]s the movie dashes among several loosely related themes, it chooses inflammatory images over sober reportage" (paragraph 4).

In Brazil, reviews did not praise Kohn's portrayal as well, focusing upon *Manda Bala*'s problems of cultural (mis)representation. At least two reviews criticize the documentary's appeal to sensationalism, the discrepancies between testimonials and the argument constructed, and its shallow and prejudiced explanation for migration and poverty in Brazil. In "Parece o Brasil mas não é", a review followed by an interview with Jason Kohn for *Bravo!* Magazine, Elisa Tozzi and Maria Eduarda Andrade (2008) criticize Manda Bala for picturing an "incomplete" Brazil (1). According to the authors, "the main thesis of the documentary is based on clichés that have been already overcome by contemporary historiography"[21] (3, my translation). Even though Tozzi and Andrade do not state what they understand by outdated (and reductionist) thesis, they probably refer to the explanation given by Brazil's former General Attorney, Claudio Fonteles, and which is endorsed by the documentary: corruption can be traced in exploitative Portuguese colonization of Brazil; violence in southeast cities can be explained by north and northeast migration.[22] Besides its reductionist

[21] "[a] tese central do documentário se sustenta em clichês já superados pela historiografia contemporânea" (Tozzi and Andrade 3).

[22] Fonteles, in the voice of his interpreter: "The roots of corruption are indeed very violent. Because when the Portuguese first arrived here, they were not interested in creating a civilization. The Portuguese colonize system was one that generated subordination of a human being towards another one and ways of corruption. What they were interested in was only in stealing all the richness we had here. Today, all the money has been concentrated in São Paulo.

historiography, Tozzi and Andrade mention *Manda Bala*'s untrustworthiness to some of its participants. Plastic surgeon Avelar, for instance, according to Tozzi's and Andrade's review, was not informed by the film crew of the context in which his interview would be inserted. As a result, the information about Avelar's work and his patients would have been distorted to fit the argument of the documentary (5), i.e., that his innovation in the ear surgery field was a consequence of the high amount of mutilated ears caused by kidnapping, or that his clientele is built up exclusively or mostly of kidnapped victims.

Film critic Lola Aronovich (2008) claims that *Manda Bala* reproduces unfair images of Brazil such as those available through fiction film such as *Turistas* (John Stockwell, USA, 2006). In her review "Mandando Bala Contra o Brasil", Aronovich criticizes the documentary's resort to sensationalism, which makes the problems depicted either exaggerated or misleadingly oversimplified. The statement of Mr.M, the entrepreneur, for instance, that millions of people are kidnapped everyday in São Paulo city, besides being a clear exaggeration, contradicts the six cases investigated by the kidnapping police department (paragraph 4). Besides, politicians-owned communication companies, or the problem of politically biased communicative systems, Aronovich reminds us, is a problem not unique to the north region of Brazil, much to the country itself (paragraph 8). In *Manda Bala*, the portrayal of the communication systems ruled by Jader Barbalho in state of Pará, and their effect for the manipulation of the population, help the arguments of economic underdevelopment of the north and northeast regions of Brazil and of the subsequent migration of northeasterners to southern Brazil, and violence brought by overpopulation of migrants--as Aronovich states, "there is a flagrant

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There's no money in the Amazon, Pára, Piauí, Ceará. In these poor regions people have to migrate in order to survive, so they migrate to São Paulo, where maybe they won't have any entire loaf of bread, but at least they'll get the crumbs. So, here comes the violence." (*Manda Bala* 0:52:47 - 0:54:46). Even though Fontele's explanation might serve as a very general introduction to the history of Brazil and of Brazilian socioeconomic problems, especially to a non-Brazilian audience, there are at least three reductive conclusions which one can jump to after listening to it: first and second, that Brazil *is* (a given condition) corrupted and violent *because* it was not colonized to raise a civilization--which might lead one to draw opposite inferences that are mistaken (non-corrupt, non-violent, civilized, and even non-slaving) about countries that had different types of colonization, such as the U.S--third, that Brazilian violence is the result of northern migration--which *Manda Bala* shortly attests, placing Magrinho's statement that his father was *baiano* right after Fontele's sequence. Note that Fontele constructs his argument by concatenating ideas and creating cause-consequence relationships that mitigate the logical gaps within the whole argument. *Manda Bala*'s structure works in a similar way as Fontele's argument.

prejudice against northeasters in the documentary" (paragraph 7, my translation).[23] Finally, commenting on the scene when Dr .Avelar tells that a patient had an ear torn with a bite and the hidden interviewer responds to such comment saying "this is very salvage", Aronovich concludes that *Manda Bala* has a biased and colonialist view of Brazil: "Bingo. The intention is exactly to show the salvage country we are. Because, in a country where every person drives a bulletproof car and every child plays of kidnapping, we are all ear rippers and cannibals, like frogs"[24] (paragraph 9, my translation). Some Brazilian film critics, therefore, do not agree that Kohn makes a "stunning sociological Big Picture" of the country.

Rather than considering the critique of Brazilian reviewers as unacquainted patriotism, I would like to explore the fact that all the aforementioned film critics, Brazilians or not, understand *Manda Bala* as a portrayal of Brazil, before taking it as a generic metaphor for the negative consequences of political corruption,[25] and how this portrayal seems to meet the Eurocentric gaze that looks at Brazil from a privileged distance. Besides, I would like to explore the existence of contradictions (such as those observed by Aronovich regarding the different testimonials) in *Manda Bala* as the tension between the documentary's intended circular argumentation and the "isolated" images that dismantles such argumentation, i.e., to propose a reading that attempts to use the images of the film against their own attempt of all-inclusive coherence.

### 2.1 "It's a frog eats frog world": the argumentative structure of *Manda Bala*

One of the characteristics that stands out in *Manda Bala* is its use of technical procedures for visual and narrative enhancement or, to use Kohn's words, its attempt to be a "stylized film" (*Manda Bala Press*

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[23] Há todo um preconceito flagrante contra nordestinos no documentário" (Aronovich paragraph 7). Aronovich also comments on the reductive explanation given by General Attorney Fonteles about the origins of violence in São Paulo.

[24] "Bingo. A intenção é justamente mostrar que país selvagem somos. Porque sabe, num país em que todo mundo anda de carro blindado e toda criança pobre brinca de seqüestro, somos todos arrancadores de orelhas e canibais, como as rãs" (Aronovich, 2008, paragraph 9).

[25] In his interview to *Cinematical*, when asked in which ways the problems depicted in *Manda Bala* can be related to other contexts, Kohn (2008) answers that he does not "think of this as a film about Brazil, I think the problems are universal. You'd have a hard time finding a country anywhere, where corruption and violence don't exist. What is unique about Brazil is the concentration of wealth" (paragraph 24).

*Notes* 3). A way to understand what could be conceived as the fictional use of the documentary film is the rigorous planning of shots, and the meticulous study of framing and lighting which traditionally belong to the routine of the production of fiction films. The opening scene of *Manda Bala*, in which a target carrier dressed as a woman takes a shot behind a bullet proofed glass window in an indoor shooting range, is a good example of how the documentary works with scenes which have been prepared for filming rather than filmed by chance. The same type of rigorous location preparation seems applicable to the sequences of the frog farm and the ear surgery, in which the entire process of frog farming, and the surgical procedure, respectively, are carefully covered by different camera angles, movements, and framings. The extensive use of wide angle aerial shots and the use of Super 16mm film (also known as Cinemascope, a type of 16mm film that allows to be transferred to 35mm in widescreen dimension) suggest the technical rigor of *Manda Bala* as well. According to Kohn, the use of "CinemaScope, helicopter photography, kinetic car chases, stylized surgical procedures" ("History of Violence" 2008) are visual elements of science-fiction films that helped to approximate visually the themes of violence and technology, which he believed to be connected.

The rigorous, or rather "fictional", planning of documentary films is evidently neither a new technique in the field nor a new subject of discussion in film theory. Many documentaries of substantial distribution and circulation in television such as those about wild life are heavily based upon time-consuming observation, images with visual impact, and use of technical advancements (new types of camera, lenses, camera supports, etc.). John Grierson, known as the leader of the British documentary tradition of the 1930's and himself the coiner of the term documentary, defined the documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality".[26] Kohn's defense of the fictional treatment of the documentary is obviously targeted against what he names the "verité" ("political", or "activist") style of documentary filmmaking, which is supposedly after a depiction of truth with no or less technical and cultural interference.[27]

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[26] In: Ellis, Jack C. *The Documentary Idea*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989. p.5. Originally quoted in: Rotha, Paul. *Documentary Film*. New York: Hastings House, 1970. p.70.

[27] Bill Nichols (1991) makes a distinction between the observational and the interactive modes of documentary filmmaking in order to avoid the conceptual (in)distinction between direct cinema and cinema verité, which often stand for two very different approaches to filmmaking, namely, invisibility and provocation (Erik Barnouw, 1993, 254-255). According to Nichols, the observational mode is marked by the "nonintervention of the filmmaker"; the interactive mode

A more contemporary and direct reference to Kohn's concerns with visual enhancement is documentary director Errol Morris, for whom Kohn worked as an assistant. Some film critics have paid special attention to the relation between Kohn and Errol Morris,[28] naming Kohn "Morris's protégé" (Kohn 2007, interview by David D'arcy). Morris's *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control* (1997), in which four participants--a topiary gardener, a robot inventor, a lion tamer, and a mole-rat specialist--are connected in their relation to nature and life, is one of Morris's documentaries pointed out by critics regarding such resemblance. In this documentary, besides the use of apparently unrelated participants, the use of subtitles to present them, the abundant of camera angles, and attention to aesthetics, may approximate it to *Manda Bala*. A considerable difference between them, nevertheless, is the much looser connection among characters and a more open-ended argument in Morris's documentary. Another relevant characteristic is the dominance of the participant's personality over the argument being constructed. The attention to the participants' personalities in Morris thus differs greatly from *Manda Bala*, in which the participants are only introduced to support the argument.

I would like to make a last remark concerning the boundaries between fiction and documentary brought up by Kohn's discussion, by briefly reviewing the political and philosophical approach to documentary films by sociologist Jacques Rancière (2005). For the author, "documentary, the cinema dedicated to the 'real', is (…) capable of a fictional invention that is stronger than that of the 'fiction' film" (57).[29] For Rancière, documentary films are a complex exercise of fiction, a "heterogeneous fiction" (Rancière, 2004, 184) because they arrange, not simply present, images of the real. By defining documentary films as a mode of fiction, the author attempts to redefine the status of history as well, understanding it not as the empiric locus of events past--and for which images would be evidence--but as a given organization of discourse about such events. In this sense, documentary

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by the "images of testimonial or images of demonstration (images that demonstrate the validity, or possibly, the doubtfulness of what witnesses state)" (38, 44). Since Kohn contrasts the use of fiction filmmaking in *Manda Bala* to "verité" filmmaking, he is very likely employing "verité" as either direct cinema (Barnouk) or observational mode (Nichols), i.e., as an attempt to efface in the final product both the presence of the filmmakers and the own process of filmmaking (its characteristic as construction).

[28] Foundas (2007); Gibron (2007), Kohn (2007, interview by Jason Guerrasio; 2007, interview for *The Reeler*, interview by Michael Gullen).

[29] "o cinema documentário, o cinema que se dedica ao 'real', e (...) capaz de uma invenção ficcional mais forte que o cinema de 'ficção'" (Ranciere, 2005, 57).

films do not reveal to spectators evidences of a given chronology, but the anachronism of history: the existence of such images and their rearrangement according to which they will be meaningful.

Even though Rancière's conception of the documentary may seem similar to Kohn's conception of his own practice in *Manda Bala*, it is important to make some distinctions between these conceptions. Rancière's discussion draws attention to the fact that images themselves are potency, that is, there is no meaning inherent to them. Rancière's perception of the image is similar to that of Rey Chow (1996), who understands that the image of the "native" neither is inherently pornographic nor hides a truth that must be revealed.

To consider the image either as "heterogeneous fiction" or as an "indifferent defiled image" (Chow 1996) does not mean to simply consider every documentary or every interlacing of images neutral. It is, in contrast, to exercise the potency of the image *against* its supposed natural arrangement. Here lies the distinction between the two conceptions of the documentary abovementioned. Kohn seems to consider documentary films as a fiction that arranges heterogeneous images, but suggests that such arrangement discloses truth: "The importance of telling this story visually, […] was the difference between simply capturing facts in a verité style, and actually exposing a truth" (*Manda Bala Press Notes* 4). Besides, Kohn seems to believe that the use of fictional elements in *Manda Bala* makes such documentary a-political or neutral: "MANDA BALA is a film about wealth, decadence and corruption told in a cinematic tradition accessible to people regardless of their political predispositions" (*Manda Bala Press Notes* 4). In this sense, Kohn's views disagree with Rancière's, who considers aesthetic as a politics, as the sharing and distribution of what is (and what cannot be) visible (Rancière, 2005).

A good way to understand such distinction is to take into consideration Bill Nichols' (1991) characterization of what he names the expository mode of documentary filmmaking. This type of documentary became traditionally identifiable by the use of the "voice of God", the anonymous voice-over who would comment the images to spectators, leading their attention to the argument supported by the documentary (34-38). According to Nichols, the expository can prevail even in an interview-based documentary. In this case, "the voices of others are woven into a textual logic that subsumes and orchestrates them. They retain little responsibility for making the argument, but are used to support it or to provide evidence or substantiation for what the commentary addresses" (37). An important feature of the expository

mode is its belonging to "discourses of sobriety", discourses that "mask" their construction with apparent neutrality and objectivity (35). As Nichols states, "the viewer of documentaries in the expository mode generally holds expectations that a commonsensical world will unfold in terms of the establishment of a logical, cause/effect linkage between sequences and events" (37). *Manda Bala*'s structure, which revolves not exactly around "the solution of a problem or a puzzle" (Nichols, 1991, 38), but around its composition, can be characterized as an expository documentary. Kohn's refusal of a political, journalistic treatment of *Manda Bala* in favor of a fictional treatment places much emphasis on a distinction between them that may undermine its own discourse of sobriety.

The editing in *Manda Bala* is noticeably expository. I have previously mentioned the use of editing as a distinctive technical procedure in the documentary, since it arranges the different themes depicted into a general argument. Indeed the documentary presents several different thematic groups which intertwine constantly, showing that the themes may seem disparate but are tightly connected to one another. The documentary, in this sense, is highly argumentative; its ultimate task is to defend an argument. Editing transitions, for instance, are used to convey the relation between the participants and what they represent. In the scene after Magrinho talks about his reciprocal relationship with his neighbors (Magrinho provides them with improvements and they provide him with protection), presenting himself as a kind of politician, a low wide angle shot of a *favela* is fused with the close up of Magrinho's eyes facing the camera, then fused with a close up of Barbalho's eyes in a poster, which is fused with a wide shot of the Palácio do Planalto (*Manda Bala* 1:15:00-1:15:19).

Images 2.1 to 2.4: Editing transitions and argument construction in *Manda Bala*

The described scene literally fuses the four images, connecting the two types of politics--the official and the non-official--with two different types of law transgression, and also with two different types of violence. It creates a similarity, a consequence-cause relationship: "Editing in the expository mode generally serves to establish and maintain rhetorical continuity (…) Similarly, cuts that produce unexpected juxtapositions generally serve to establish fresh insights or new metaphors that the filmmaker wishes to propose" (Nichols, 1991, 35).

Circularity is another facet of the argumentative structure of *Manda Bala*. The documentary ultimately associates the different characters and situations within a thread, placing as climax the cyclical movement of Brazilian society. If juxtapositions as the one mentioned above (Magrinho and Barbalho being connected faces of violence) help to interrelate different characters and situations through similarities, the juxtaposition in the final sequence helps to direct the characters to a single direction. The final sequence (*Manda Bala* 1:15:56-1:25:11) begins with Patrícia's testimonial (*Manda Bala* 1:15:56-1:16-54), in which she first mentions the perpetual burden of having lost her ears. Even though her repaired ears look "natural", she says, they do not feel like real ones. During this part of the testimonial, the medium-shot of Patrícia is cut together with several shots of an ear surgery, and then back to her silence, after she finishes her statement. The interviewer asks her if she forgives her kidnappers, for which Patrícia answers affirmatively, since, according to her, her kidnappers were born in a favorable environment to criminality.

The next shot is a close-up shot of a frog tank, which is overlapped with Patrícia's translator's testimonial, in which she affirms that her kidnapers cannot differ right from wrong. The last music played in the documentary starts with the next shots, which show some of the frogs in the tank being caught up by a sieve. The next testimonial is of Mr. M (*Manda Bala*, 1:17:04-1:17:26), who says that "people start to lose their dignity", which is followed by a wider shot of the tank now getting unclogged. Mr. M's testimonial overlaps the shot, which states that "but as time goes by what seems to be absurd, is not absurd. Like a very bad cycle". Patrícia's testimonial and more clearly Mr.M's, both overlapped with the images of frogs in the tanks, create a circular argument, an argumentative entrapment which ends up both endorsing and "developing" both testimonials: Brazilian society is violent and everyone is a victim.

The next shots of the final sequence are of frogs being fried and served, overlapped with shots of Dr. Avellar being awarded a prize and delivering a speech about fear won over by perseverance, and of Jamil, who states that it is not sufficient to serve his job as a warrior when politicians are not doing their jobs. The scene of the frog dinner, which starts at the preparation at the kitchen and then moves to a restaurant table, where people toast merrily, is overlapped with Diniz images and testimonial, which states that God has sent some people to work and others to have fun, including himself in the latter category. Images of the building located at the Praça do Três Poderes, in Brasília, in which people look at a scale model of the city, are overlapped with Cláudio Fonteles' statement that he has learned that it is more important to keep bothering giants than achieving the impossible task of beating them. The last interview is Magrinho's, who states that he has ten children and cannot stop, since one of them may become president of Brazil and correct the country. The interview is then cut to a wide high angle shot of the Brazilian flag, which is in turn cut to the shot of the tadpole tank being unclogged. The credits start to roll down while the last tadpoles attempt to enter the drain. The last shot in *Manda Bala* is the low angle shot of the target carrier dressed as a woman being lifted from the ground; i.e., the sequence to the first shot of the documentary. The last sequence in *Manda Bala* completes the dissection of Brazilian society not with a solution to the problem, less with the suggestion that the conflict among its participants will eventually cease, but with a sense of diagnosis: the vicious cycle of Brazilian corruption and violence is what unites at last all the characters, which are being dragged to a not very promising future.

The thematic group that runs throughout the film and provides the most expressive metaphorical relation with other groups is frog farming. Several steps of the process of farming frogs appear in the documentary, including their resulting frying, and serving. The first shots of frog farming appear in the first three minutes of the documentary. In these shots, frogs are held captives in water tanks and subsequently caught by the hands of employees, already suggesting an entrapment which coincides with the kidnapping scenes that open *Manda Bala*. The relation between frogs and human beings creates several different textual references. The first relation, which is actually the justification for the insertion of the frog farm, is corruption, specifically the SUDAM case and Jader Barbalho's involvement with the construction of frog farms for public money laundry. The relation between frog farming and money laundry is made also through visual connection. After Paulo

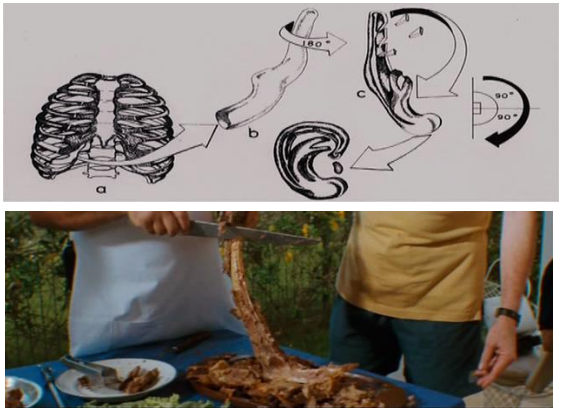
Lamarao explains that frog farm is a easier way to laundry money, Hélbio Dias starts to explain how money was stolen from SUDAM, and suggests that much of the money stolen was sent to tax havens (*Manda Bala* 0:22:05-0:25:00). Lamarão's and Dias's testimonials are crosscut with the process of frogs being put alive into boxes and being transported by cars to the airport and then abroad by airplanes. Such connection between frog farming and money laundry with exportation may also suggest the export of a life-style, in this case, of the problems of violence and corruption in Brazil. In either case, the reference to frogs and their relation to the human beings present a metaphor of the self-manipulation of society by its members that results as aforementioned, a vicious cycle. Ultimately, the theme of frog farming presents the idea that Brazilian society is cannibalistic.

Images 2.5 to 2.8: Frog farming in *Manda Bala*

The mutilated ear and the surgical procedures for its reconstruction form another thematic group that compounds the idea of a disrupted society in *Manda Bala*. Dr. Avelar's characterization is crucial for the development of such idea of disruption, since it reinforces the cyclical argument concerning corruption, poverty, and violence in Brazil. At first, Dr. Avelar's presence is justified by the reference to ear mutilation used for induction of ransom payment. Dr. Avelar's procedure for reconstituting an ear in two surgical steps is therefore argumentatively related to that. However, the doctor's constant emphasis upon the heavenly endowment of both his skill and success (he states that God replaces him during surgeries) establishes a connection with corruption: his religious justification of his work and success relates to Diniz's sarcastic reference to God as a means to justify his wealth ("I think God placed some of us on this earth to be workers like the ants and some of us to take advantage of life and

sing", *Manda Bala*, 1:18:30-1:18:55). In this sense, Dr. Avelar's wealth, similar to Diniz's, is presented as being acquired through less divine means than both participants seem to acknowledge.

The association between Dr.Avelar and the disruption in Brazilian society can be exemplified by the scene in which family and friends enjoy a barbecue on a sunny day at his country house (*Manda Bala*, 0:39:36–0:40:18). Dr. Avelar's voice-over testimonial begins with an explanation for the heavy security system in his office and home. According to Dr. Avelar, Brazilian government compels citizens to search for private security when abandoning them (i.e., not providing enough security). While the images show people either tanning or having fun at the barbecue, Dr. Avelar talks about his experience as a self-made man: even though he came from a poor family which could barely afford the expenses of medical school, Dr. Avelar persevered with the help of God. The reference to his poor background parallels Barbalho's, signaling again Dr.Avelar's association with Brazilian cannibalistic cycle of corruption and violence. Rather than being presented as a distanced repairer of mutilated ears, Dr. Avelar is portrayed as having an active role in the perpetuation of violence. Being rich and searching for safe conditions in which to enjoy his wealth, Dr. Avelar is helping to reinforce the disruption in Brazilian society rather that amending it. The shot of Dr. Avelar cutting a piece of cow rib in the barbecue scene visually encircles the doctor into the thread of anthropophagic experience, since human rib cartilage is the material utilized by Avelar to perform the surgery for ear reconstruction (*Manda Bala* 0:40:14-0:40:18).




Images 2.9 and 2.10: Dr. Avelar's ear reconstruction surgery and the cycle of disruption in Brazilian society

The analogy to the cow rib and the human rib suggests that the doctor is fed by (profits from) the system he himself helps to perpetuate. It is important to stress, nevertheless, that, in *Manda Bala*, such critique of the wealthy minority is accomplished through a rather reductionist perspective upon violence and poverty in Brazil.

The use of sound in *Manda Bala*, for instance, is a particularly important technical element for discussion because it brings several considerations about the representation of Brazil in *Manda Bala*. Lola Aronovich (2008), in her aforementioned review, states that the excess of soundtrack in the documentary brings a sarcastic tone to the interviews (paragraph 4). Indeed, the soundtrack in the documentary is abundant, and composed of songs by famous composers of Brazilian Popular Music, such as Baden Powell and Jorge Ben, and composers famous for their avant-garde experiments in music such as the *tropicalists* Tom Zé and Caetano Veloso. But the sound is also composed of background noise. One which is repeated in several different scenes and in several different contexts is the sound of birds singing in a sort of loop. The repetition of the bird sound brings forth the problem of stereotyping, which, according to Homi Bhabha (1996), is constructed by a reduction (the cultural other is transformed into a fixed image) and by constant repetition. The same bird sounds are applied to every location that appears to be surrounded by nature, i.e, a non-urban area.

Contrasting the bird background noise that contextualizes natural environments, the aerial shots in *Manda Bala* present the urban space in Brazil, especially the opulence of those who belong to the wealthier classes, and, consequently, Brazilian socio-economic hierarchy and discrepancies. The depictions of such economic discrepancies are unquestionably not constrained to the wide angle aerial shots: the heavy security system of Dr. Avellar's clinic, the scene of the barbecue in his house (in which a dog runs down a water slide in slow motion), and the sequences of bullet-proof cars are usually not shot from the sky. The aerial shots, nevertheless, mark a strong visual discrepancy, such as in the aerial crane shot in which a *favela* is contrasted with the high buildings that stand behind it (*Manda Bala*, 1:14:03-1:14:17). It is also the aerial shots, which captures the *favelas* and the private mansions in São Paulo from a privileged perspective, that presents and contrasts Patrícia's (the sky, seen from a high building) and Magrinho's (the *favela*) backgrounds.

Images 2.11 and 2.12: The view of the wealthy minority and Brazilian socioeconomic discrepancies in *Manda Bala*'s aerial shots

In addition, the aerial shots are important for evincing an argument that is manifested in the production notes: the depiction of the paranoia of Brazilian wealthy minorities concerning personal security. According to *Manda Bala Press Notes*, one of the objectives of the documentary was to focus on rich Brazilians, in an attempt to escape from what they name the usual representation of poverty in the developing world:

> Instead of focusing solely on the poverty that afflicts well over half the Brazilian population, the film attempts to expose the paranoia of the wealthy minority. […] For too long, films about the problems of the developing world have been dominated by images of the slum, of poverty, and of violence, all the while excluding the culpable parties. MANDA BALA exposes a new perspective on this problem. (*Manda Bala Press* 5)

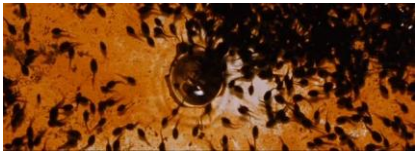
The aerial shots in *Manda Bala* present therefore the function of evincing the economic division between poor and rich. However, I believe that the view from the top in the documentary is not straightforwardly or uniquely the gaze of the wealthy minority ("the culpable parties"). It is also the gaze that attempts to dissect the contradictions of Brazilian society from a "single privileged vantage point" (Shohat and Stam, 2003, 8), and that, as a result, ends up presenting a reductive view of such contradictions. Even though it attempts to present a new perspective upon Brazilian socioeconomic discrepancies by portraying the view from the top, *Manda Bala*

expository and totalizing structure leaves little room to picture the poor, for instance, beyond violence, and marginalization beyond national political and economic systems.

### 2.2 *Manda Bala* and Brazilian margins

The margins presented in *Manda Bala* are the physical margins outlined by economic discrepancies in Brazilian society. In the urban space (the main locus of the documentary), the economic margins are visible through the concrete division between the above-ground level utilized and inhabited by the skyscrapped wealth and the ground level inhabited by the *favelados*. Outside the city limits, the economic margins are didactically presented with the visual aid of cartography, which traces the socio-political boundaries of Brazil. The northern regions of the country are exposed as the ones historically most affected by corruption, economic underdevelopment, and migration. The resource to such territorial viewpoint acknowledges and privileges the existence of a nation-state. The Brazilian flag that appears in the end of the documentary helps to support such existence. In its brief presence, the flag does not simply bind the territorial borders to the political system that has been portrayed throughout the documentary: the flag marks the existence of a nation that, in the case of *Manda Bala*, is highly problematic.

The imposing presence and movement of the giant Brazilian flag, which embraces the idea of a proud people and of an equitable political system, is contrasted by the subsequent image, that of the tadpoles running down the drain. In *Manda Bala*, to reflect upon the use of the flag as a symbol of Brazil by the end of documentary means to question its suitability to represent Brazil, i.e., to question its proud symbolization of a nation that in reality is not in such a good shape. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that *Manda Bala*'s pessimistic representation of Brazil reinforces the idea of a Brazilian nation. Rather than questioning its construction (of the idea of the nation), *Manda Bala* constructs a narrative of the nation of its own.

Images 2.13 and 2.14: The imposing flag and the tadpole drain: representations of Brazil in *Manda Bala*.

Benedict Anderson (1991) defines nations as imagined communities, "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). I have already mentioned here the way in which Brazil, in *Manda Bala*, for instance, is conceived as limited: the geo-political boundaries of the country are of extreme importance in conceiving such idea. Another important element in *Manda Bala* is that the nation is based on sovereignty, i.e., on the principles of a democratic ruling which has freedom as its basis. In the documentary, political corruption is seen as a break in the democratic system, especially because it confiscates freedom from its citizens. The documentary also suggests that the disrupting of freedom creates a separation among its inhabitants, e.g., between poor and rich people. Nevertheless, the sense of community is there, since the participants help to construct the idea that they all share the consequences of political corruption together. Patrícia, for instance, when saying that she forgives her kidnappers, not only evinces this fissure in society (as class division), but also establishes a common shared experience with her kidnappers. Lastly, the imagined facet of the idea of nation is exemplified by the fact that, even though not all Brazilians appear in the documentary, their presence can be traced in the few participants that appear in the documentary. The participants are presented as being the members of such nation-state; they represent Brazilian political organization and socio-economic strata.

The use of participants to represent specific groups of citizens in a given nation (the politician, the poor, the rich, the attorney, and the policeman) furnishes *Manda Bala* with a sociological tone. As Jean-Claude Bernardet (1985) reminds in *Os Cineastas e as Imagens do Povo*, one important element of a sociological model of documentary filmmaking is the use of sampling to present a general picture of a given situation: the specificities of each personal experience is taken aside, since what matters is the general experience that a specific participant represents (19)—his/her voice is used "to provide evidence or substantiation for what the commentary addresses" (Nichols, 1991, 37). In *Manda Bala*, such favoring of a generalized depiction is clear in the class conflicts between rich and poor. Magrinho, for instance, is taken to be a representative not only of the poor people that are driven to criminality by lack of good living conditions but also of the immigrants from the northeast (even though he states that he does not come from the northeast, he states that most of his colleagues and inhabitants of *favelas* do). Such reductive and problematic depiction of the participants in *Manda Bala* favors also a distance between them, created by economic disparities, i.e., it defines the margins of the participants' identities.

Nevertheless, as I have already mentioned, the participants are also representative of a more general communality, the nation.

*Manda Bala* presents corruption as the chief disorder in the political system, which has disastrous consequences to the civil population: besides increasing socio-economic discrepancies in the country, corruption produces disorder in several other levels of society. One visual and argumentative form that Manda Bala uses to inscribe the negative effects of corruption is frog cannibalism. The cannibalism of frogs, according to the explanation given by frog farmer Diniz, is usually a consequence of lack of food. The difference between the way human beings and frogs attack their own species, still according to Diniz, is that frogs attack from the front, eating the enemy's head first, while human beings attack from behind. Inserted within the first ten minutes of the documentary, the first scenes of frog cannibalism appear before the direct reference to corruption, and after the sequences of a home video tape of a kidnapping, Mr.M's first testimonials and Diniz's. The kidnapping home-made video and Mr. M's testimonial--in which he retells his experience in a car robbery, in which the thief leaves counting money on the streets—only apparently contradicts Diniz's distinction between the way humans and frogs attack one of their own.

The images previously shown or suggested are ones of face-to-face human violence. Nevertheless, when the sequences about corruption start to appear after the frog cannibalism scene, and the relation between Diniz's frog farm and corruption case coming to shore, Diniz's statement--no longer important whether concerning to a reliable or non-reliable testimonial--doubles its meaning: face-to-face violence, "humanly" speaking, occurs only after concealed attacks are made, such as those in corruption. Such argument resonates in Magrinho's argument: while they steal with the pen, we steal with guns. The reference to frog cannibalism as a consequence of malnutrition, which might be considered questionable (since it comes from Diniz, a participant depicted as a person with dubious qualities), is actually supported by the documentary itself, which leads to fast and problematic conclusions about Magrinho (and the poor people whom he represents), as if every person became a thief or violent in lack (of food, of money, of jobs, etc.). The documentary puts everyone in the same drain (Brazil), even though it creates a distinction between human thieves (the ones who produce the lack and attack from behind) and frog-like thieves (the ones who suffer the lack and attack face-to-face).

Image 2.15: Frog cannibalism in *Manda Bala*

Cannibalism was an important trope for avant-garde artistic movements. In Brazil, the Modernist *Movimento Antropofágico*, was based on the devouring, not on the passive assimilation, of foreign culture; an operation that re-inscribes the Western discourse of cannibalism--in its construction of cultural difference as savagery[30]--into a discourse of creative difference. In Brazil, according to Sérgio Luiz Prado Bellei (1998), the avant-garde *Movimento Antropofágico* had a nationalist basis, which aimed at "absorbing both foreign and native cultures as the means to construe a hybrid and unique Brazilian cultural identity" (91). If cannibalism had been a recurrent theme for the construction of the "ethically abhorrent"[31] in colonial discourse, had been construed as "the real or imagined practice that marks the otherness of the barbarian outside the gates" (Bellei, 96), the Brazilian avant-garde *Movimento Antropofágico* represented a rupture of such thought. The idea of anthropophagy for the Brazilian avant-garde represented more than a simple hierarchical inversion of the colonial discourse, because it proposed a critique of its ideology of exoticism, by means of the "mixture of native cannibalistic wisdom and Western modern technology" (93). The "revival" of the *movimento antropofagico* by the *tropicalistas* musicians in the late 60's had a similar discourse of hybridism, aimed at mixing the tradition of Brazilian music with the pop culture imported from abroad.[32]

There is a contradiction in the abundant uses of tropicalist music in *Manda Bala* and the clearly negative attribution to cannibalism it constructs. I sustain that *Manda Bala* ends up endorsing the colonial

[30] For an introduction to cannibalism and its association with colonial thinking (as well as to other possible readings of the theme), see: Hulme, Peter. "Introduction: the cannibal scene". In: *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Eds.). Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[31] Wasserman, Renata R. Mautner. *Exotic Nations: Literature and Cultural Identity in the United States and Brazil, 1830-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.14.

[32] For an informative introduction to the tropicalist scene, see: Veloso, Caetano. *Verdade tropical*. Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997.

perspective of considering cannibalism as having that "ethically abhorrent" quality. The potential subversion of cultural hierarchies that might be attributed to the music of the *tropicalistas* is lost in the documentary, to the point that the music becomes one more mark of the cultural exotic, being fused with the background bird noises and cannibalism itself. Adding to the view of cannibalism as abhorrence and dysfunction is the metaphor of physical dismemberment that is presented in the documentary. Both the act of cutting off and that of repairing the ear suggest the disruption of the order, in this case of the "natural" physiognomy of the body, which becomes not only the visual mark of kidnapping but also the metaphor for political corruption and for cannibalism. In the same manner as Dr. Avelar's surgical intervention attempts to reconstitute, fake, or improve the model of God's perfection, so does *Manda Bala* dissect the body of Brazilian society in order to diagnose its dysfunctions. From its privileged gaze that can pin down the nation Brazil, *Manda Bala* is able to condense the country's portrayal into the image of the cannibal. It is important to remember that the cannibalism of Brazilian society, as Aronovich (2008) observes, cannot be dissociated from its savage quality in *Manda Bala*. From the documentary's adopted perspective, the mutilated ear, as representative of Brazilian savagery, can be "objectively" recognized in unrelated practices within Brazilian society; not only in Dr. Avelar's daily surgical practice, but also in poor children's play (in a clearly rehearsed scene with children from poor background playing of kidnapping, ear cutting menace included). Although never fully stated, all these assumptions help to emphasize a negative depiction of Brazil

In sum, *Manda Bala* provides its viewers with a portrayal of the "top" of Brazil, of the discourses and the practices of its dominant sphere: not only of the political and legal institutions that help serve the privileged few and foment the socioeconomic exclusion of many, but of those who, from the top of their privileges, become increasingly anxious for protection against those whom they cannot control, the poor. In this sense, *Manda Bala* suggests that the privileged top is not innocently exempt from violence, but is in fact constituting and reproducing the social exclusion that is institutionally fomented by the political system. That is *Manda Bala*'s greatest political potential: to make the discourse from the top visible in its construction. It is important to note, nevertheless, that the documentary ultimately endorses the discourse which it could more effectively expose, challenge, and undermine by showing how it—the discourse from the top—works.

I have attempted to play in this chapter with the idea of dissection as a way to approach *Manda Bala* in its portrayal of corruption and violence as a terrible disease which disrupts the supposedly natural functioning of Brazilian society. The use of reference to medical and biological vocabulary such as dissection and disease are inspired by the documentary itself. *Manda Bala*'s expository structure, which implies an alleged unbiased objectivity (in spite of the explicit technical procedures to enhance its narrative), aligns with the gaze of the surgeon who "objectively" analyzes and diagnoses its patients, and with the view of the rich entrepreneur who, seeing the city from an upper distance, cannot differ poverty from violence, as if they were inseparable sides of a same coin. For Alba Zaluar (1998), discussions about the complex phenomenon of urban violence in Brazil are too often simplified by the reduction of poverty (and of poor people) to the position of both victim and villain, of both cause and consequence of violence[33] (252). *Manda Bala* reiterates that discourse through its cause-consequence structure, with which the fear of the upper class becomes justified. A different gaze towards the context of urban violence is presented by *Favela Rising*, which attempts to dismantle the apparent indistinguishableness between violence and poverty through a distinct view of the top.

[33] According to Zaluar, "the picture is therefore paradoxical. Those who most suffer as victims of the private and diffuse violence are also the ones mostly accused of being its agents. Poverty is the determinant element, either of victimization or of the violent action. The very idea of causality has contributed to this position, repeatedly used by both journalists and academics (…) This idea shows itself to be inadequate to think about the complex arrangements through which different types of violence manifest themselves" (252, my translation) "*O quadro é, assim, paradoxal. Os que mais padecem enquanto vítimas da violência difusa e privatizada são também os mais apontados como seus agentes. A pobreza é o determinante, ora da vitimização, ora da ação violenta. Para isso tem contribuído a própria idéia de causalidade, repetidamente usada tanto pelos jornalistas quanto por acadêmicos (...) Esta idéia mostra-se inadequada para pensar os complexos arranjos pelos quais as violências, de diversos tipos, se manifestam*" (Zaluar 252).

# CHAPTER 3
# RE-VIEWING THE TOP: *FAVELA RISING* AND THE POLITICAL NARRATIVE OF ASCENT

> Otherness becomes empowerment, critical difference, when it is not given, but re-created.
> (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1997, 418)

Likewise with *Manda Bala*, a telephone conversation turned out to be a crucial moment for the development of *Favela Rising*, the documentary about cultural group AfroReggae directed by Jeff Zimbalist and Matt Mochary, released in 2005. The anecdote goes as follows: calling Zimbalist "from a shantytown in Brazil", Mochary "told [Zimbalist] to pack [his] bags because he'd found the story [they]'d been searching for" (Zimbalist, "Director's Statement", paragraph 1). The story in question was AfroReggae's, the cultural group from *favela* Vigário Geral, in Rio de Janeiro, which has been gathering great attention for their successful promotion of different forms of art as means as to transform the lives of children and young adults who live in the *favelas* and are often used as workforce in drug traffic. In its beginning, AfroReggae worked in Vigário Geral uniquely; today, two subgroups work in *favela* of Cantagalo (Rio de Janeiro), and other projects are developed in and outside Rio de Janeiro, in partnership with different organizations and institutions--including with the police, which, being the most expressive (and perhaps only) presence of the state in the *favelas* (in the alleged attempt to contain the violence of drug traffic), has for long built a tense relationship with the *favelas.* After a visit to England in 2006, AfroReggae inspired and formed partnership with a project in the United Kingdom, entitled *Favelas to the World,*[34] which is also dedicated to make art as a means of social transformation.

According to AfroReggae's official website, the group "initiated in 1993 with a newspaper called the Afro Reggae News – whose objective was to create a means to diffuse information aimed at valorizing and spreading black culture, specifically for youth connected to rhythms such as reggae, soul, hip hop, etc" (AfroReggae Website, "História"). With the strengthening of the organization, AfroReggae became able to continue the empowerment of black culture by pursuing its main objective, that of

[34] *Favelas to the World*. Homepage. http://www.favelatotheworld.org/

> [offering] cultural and artistic formation for the youth living in the favelas (shantytowns/ slums) as a means for them to create their own citizenship and have access to alternatives to narco-trafficking and menial jobs, and to furthermore transform themselves and empower other youths along the way. (AfroReggae Website - História)

The statement of AfroReggae's mission is a great introduction for, if not a summary of, *Favela Rising.* The documentary attempts to register the various facets of AfroReggae into a story of community empowerment through art work. Such story, and the optimistic tone that emerges from it, is based precisely in the themes of the empowerment of black identity and the alternative to drug trafficking that AfroReggae offers to children and young adults.

*Favela Rising*'s structure follows a chronologic line that embraces the history of AfroReggae as a cultural group, and also as a music band (entitled AfroReggae as well). The history of AfroReggae and their music, goals, and accomplishments is presented in its relationship with the history of Vigário Geral (and the *favelas* in general) as a marginalized community, which for has been suffering from the violence related to drug traffic for a long time. The documentary presents some expository, more "objective" sequences that introduce the political and historical context of Vigário Geral by juxtaposing information given by the participants with images that support the information. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, *Favela Rising* has a strong narrative appeal,[35] focusing on the story line of Anderson Sá's life, one of AfroReggae's leading singers. It is mainly through Sá's testimonials, and the themes that emerge from his testimonials, that the documentary develops, adding an emotional and personal trait to it. The main metaphor in the documentary, that of the rising of the *favela* as a reaction to its historical marginalization, is also reinforced through Sá's personal history: his recovery from an accident that could have made him paraplegic becomes the climax of the documentary; in one of the final sequences, the strength of Sá and of the inhabitants of Vigário Geral is reinforced with Sa's walking out of the hospital triumphantly. This does not mean that *Favela Rising* relegates the history of Vigário

[35] Even though narrative, in broad terms, refers to the arrangement of accounts (in this sense; there are many different types of narrative—literary, journalistic, etc.), I refer to *Favela Rising*'s narrative in the sense that it focus on the story line (plot) of a character and of a community, which approximates the documentary's structure to a "fictional" narrative--for instance, a fiction film, a biography, etc.).

Geral to a background position; quite the opposite: this history becomes inseparable from the lives of those who are personally related to it.

Besides Sá, *Favela Rising*'s main participants are members of AfroReggae: José Júnior--AfroReggae's founder and current executive coordinator; Altair--AfroReggae's percussion player; JB--one AfroReggae's leading members and ex-employee of drug traffic. Besides AfroReggae's members, participate in the documentary Sá's relatives--Sá's wife, Michelle Moraes, Sá's mother, and grandmother—writer Zuenir Ventura, investigative journalist André Luis Azevedo, and children and young adults from Vigário Geral. Some of the interviews of AfroReggae's members are visually arranged with the use of close-up shots, and high-key lighting that creates sharp shadows. Such techniques drive the attention to the participant's testimonials and facial expressions, adding a dramatic tone to the interviews. Besides the use of close-up shots, and high-key lighting, other elements help to engage the spectator emotionally towards the story told, such as slow motion cameras, and the use of a keyboard line as musical theme. Other technical element that is distinctive in *Favela Rising* is the abundant use of hand-held camera (in contrast to the static and carefully composed shots of *Manda Bala*), and the post-production manipulation of colors that enhance the washed out images produced by video-cameras.

The possibility of resisting socioeconomic exclusion and transforming society, which the work of AfroReggae opens up and which *Favela Rising* endorses, is stressed in different reviews of the documentary. Andrea Strong, in her text about *Favela Rising* published in *The New York Times* Advertorial, for instance, states that the documentary is "a passionate and universal story of the power of change at that is at the fingertips of the collective human experience" (paragraph 7). Kenneth Turan (2006), from the *Los Angeles Times*, reminds that "'Never doubt,' Margaret Mead famously said, 'that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.' A vibrant documentary, 'Favela Rising,' makes the case for that philosophy in the strongest possible terms." (paragraph 1). The idea that an organization of people can make a difference in the world is indeed the central inspiration of activist media.[36] And *Favela Rising* seems committed to that inspiration,

[36] Even though activist media is not the focus of my dissertation, *Favela Rising* and other films that have inspired my research certainly raise the issue of activism, especially in its relation to global mobilization against political oppression and uneven living conditions. I use as reference two works that study the relation between activism and globalization: Kelly Cristina de Souza Prudencio's (2006) doctoral dissertation *Media Ativista: A Comunicação dos*

not only in its portrayal of AfroReggae but also in its project of production and distribution as well.

In the words of Jeff Zimbalist, stated in the Director's Statement available at the documentary's official website,

> FAVELA RISING celebrates the strength of the human spirit to assert itself in the face of human rights violations, social injustice, and unexpected adversity. Chronicling the rise to greatness of the AfroReggae movement, the film shows how the music and culture of Brazil's underclass transform into a catalyst for grassroots social-change. But most of all, FAVELA RISING is the story of a community that works. The success of the film should be judged on how well it serves to activate its viewers; how well it inspires action. (paragraph 5)

Zimbalist's statement explicitly affirms its commitment to a project of social transformation. To activate viewers implies that the documentary should exceed its role of exclusively providing either pleasure or information for its viewers during the screening; it should compel viewers to act in the "real world" in order to produce changes, presumably in their own surroundings. Instead of making a distanced portrayal of AfroReggae and of Vigário Geral, the documentary aims at making such portrayal vibrate; that is, it aims at having material significance both in terms of political commitment and political transformation.

The intention of engaging spectators into political action that Zimbalist articulates in his Director's Statement is also explicit in his uttered motivations for making *Favela Rising*. In the beginning of his Diretor's Statement, Zimbalist affirms that he had been looking for a successful community to portray, one that "succeed, that overcome great adversity, that unite and reach and achieve" (paragraph 1). According to Zimbalist, the importance of finding such portrayal lies in the possibility of offering an alternative image of the world to those massively produced and broadcasted by the media. "When I find myself surrounded by stories of the world falling apart", affirms Zimbalist,

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*Movimentos por Justiça Global na Internet*, and Daniel Yencken's (2008) master thesis *Local Uses of Global Media: Activist Videos from Florianópolis on the Centro de Mídia Independente Brasil Website*, both works available at UFSC´s website. These two works show that (and perhaps are the result of) struggles against all sorts of marginalization and political oppression have been highly spread with the use of the internet and other types of media. Unfortunately, despite the heavily use of the term activism not only in these two works but in many others, it is difficult to find a handful definition of the term.

"naturally I imagine the world as a place falling apart. The more access I have to stories of communities that work, the more I imagine a world in which people are also realizing change and breaking the odds stacked against them" (paragraph 2).

Rather than serving as a measure of the impossible, that is, of the level of accomplishment of Zimbalist's expressed objectives and motivations, the gathering of Zimbalist's remarks about *Favela Rising* helps me establish connections between the documentary and the discussions about globalization. The use of cinema to circulate new images of the world seems to exemplify well Appadurai's (1996) concept of *mediascapes* as "imaged-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality" that circulates through the media and that gives way to new forms of "imagined lives" (35). The project of *Favela Rising* charges imagination with a political strength, because it proposes, through its narrative, a possibility of social change. Despite seeming rather utopist, *Favela Rising*'s project is related to Appadurai's notion of imagination: its use in the construction of different forms of (imagining) lives. Instead of understanding imagination as the maintenance of a point of view, Appadurai, and, I believe, *Favela Rising*, suggest that imagination can change points of view.

The exhibition of *Favela Rising* in poor neighborhoods in the United States attests the activist concern of its producers, and their aim at engaging spectators into community transformation through the circulation of a successful story. The "U.S. Favela Tour", as such exhibition program was entitled, indicates a potential process of identification between Brazilian and North-American marginalized communities, and perhaps the shaping of new social formations or alliances that are not conformed to geographical proximity only. As Anelise Reich Corseuil (2009) states, "Favela Rising is emblematic of this awareness of interculturality and new perceptions of community identity going beyond the nation to locate specific social groups that are dislocated from the center" (8). Such process of identification beyond national margins is also exemplified by another element of *Favela Rising*'s project of distribution, the *Favela Rising Educational Curriculum*, which attempts to make *Favela Rising* serve as a medium to discuss issues related to violence and poverty in the U.S.

*Favela Rising*'s distribution project may still be tied up to a bi-national exchange--the work of AfroReggae in Brazil serving as an inspiration to "solve" U.S. own problems of marginalization--but the political message it brings about can hardly be defined in terms of a national project. This does not mean that AfroReggae and *Favela Rising*

do not take into consideration the role of the state in the production of socioeconomic margins, that the historical and political context of Brazil is overlooked in *Favela Rising*'s portrayal, and that marginalized groups in the U.S. can be completely identified with those in Brazil. It means that the AfroReggae and *Favela Rising* focus on the possibility of other types of articulation of differences and construction of new identities that defy the notion of homogeneous national identities. As Corseuil (2009) observes, in portrayals such as *Favela Rising*'s,

> "[t]he relationship between local and global issues where State policies (national and foreign) are questioned by more individualized and collective efforts problematizes the role of the State/governmental apparatus in relation to its ability to organize and mobilize communities in which problematic issues such as exclusion, violence and misrepresentation of specific ethnical groups are at stake. (2)

The problems of violence and drug traffic that *Favela Rising* presents, in this sense, are related to national (Brazilian and North-American) contexts but are also related to the mobilization of identities other than the national, such as black identity. This type of mobilization prevents me from reading *Favela Rising* as a "universal story of the power of change" (Strong). As I understand it, *Favela Rising* does not relate to globalization because it attempts to efface differences in favor of an arbitrary unity (globalization as universalism, standardization), but as an attempt to resist such type of effacement through other forms of cultural alliances.

For Fernão Pessoa Ramos (2008), *Favela Rising* simplifies Brazil's intricate context of violence into a story of hope, a simplification that positions the gaze of the documentary within North-American pragmatics. In his book *Afinal, O Que É Mesmo Cinema Documentário*?, in a chapter dedicated to the representation of violence in Brazilian contemporary documentaries, Ramos analyzes *Favela Rising* together with several Brazilian productions, such as *Ônibus 174* (José Padilha, 2002), *Falcão, Meninos do Tráfico* (MV Bill and Celso Athayde, 2006), and *Fala Tu* (Guilherme Coelho, 2003). Ramos differs *Favela Rising* from the Brazilian documentaries that share the same theme mainly because of *Favela Rising*'s "positive" tone. According to Ramos, the inspirational tone of the documentary is tightly related to North-American progressive mind: "*Favela Rising* distances itself from the national production, adding to the exasperated figuration of horror a

pragmatic, more Anglo-Saxon touch"[37] (239, my translation). Even though Ramos does not define 'progressive', one can relate to what Ramos names the American Hero, personified in the character of Anderson Sá, who, as the American self-made-man, triumphs over (transcends) social and physical constraints. In Sá's triumph, Ramos observes the valorization of work and individual perseverance of Anglo-Saxon cultures (239).

Nonetheless, it is exactly *Favela Rising*'s multi-faceted hopefulness that intrigues me. Despite the risk of falling into the trap of universalism, such hopefulness suggests the potentiality of imagination as a transformative social force. Successful or not, *Favela Rising* implies, at least, the possibility of conceiving cultural flows beyond those restricted to national categories uniquely, and of political resistance and social transformation. In the following section, I sustain how such hopefulness is worked out in the documentary through a narrative of political ascent. By narrative of political ascent I mean the use of imagination as a transformative social force, which transforms the act of rising, for instance, into a political narrative. By working through narrative, *Favela Rising* also stresses the possibility of change through language and images. My reading of *Favela Rising* is based on Eliana de Souza Ávila's (2008). For Ávila, *Favela Rising* works with the metaphor of mobility and immobility. Immobility represents the entrapment of *favela* inhabitants into a fixed identity, associated with violence and drug traffic; whereas mobility represents a move away from this fixed identity in the name of an empowering one, associated with art, music, and black heritage. According to Ávila,

> What renders Afro-Reggae transformative, just as other workshops mentioned by Anderson -- like (Afro) hairstyling, etc. --, is its historical and symbolic rearticulation of race: from its disempowering, mainstream image (of fixity: unable to move out of the control of the drug lords) to its empowering, emancipatory one (of mobility: able to move on and gain autonomy from the narcotraffic). (paragraph 2)

Ávila argues, however, that, in *Favela Rising*, immobility is presented as disability; this association ends up reinforcing the dominant gaze that entraps the identity of the disabled as immobile; i.e., "such a representation suppresses the mobility (of resignification) that the

[37] "Favela Rising se afasta da produção nacional, dando um toque pragmático, mais anglo-saxão, à figuração exasperada do horror" (Ramos 239).

experience of 'disability' demands, thus reproducing the disempowering effects of mainstream discourse" (Ávila paragraph 3). Borrowing on Ávila, therefore, I would like to expand on the metaphor of mobility as empowerment of the *favela*.

### 3.1 Narrating Political Ascent: *Favela Risin*g's Structure

I would like to start my analysis of *Favela Rising*'s structure at its title, particularly at one of the ideas it conveys: *the act of rising transforms the favela*. To ponder upon such an apparently plain idea helps to lay aside distinctions between the structure of the documentary and its title, as if the latter's aim would be basically to condense in a few words all that is shown through the former. If something is missed whenever words such as "documentary" stand for *Favela Rising*, it is probably the strength of ideas that are set forward through images, sounds, and words, i.e., through "structure" as well as title. And what is exactly set forward through *Favela Rising*, and through *the act of rising* (that) *transforms the favela*?

What *rising* operates in *favela*, and that *favela* operates in *rising*, is a transformation that entails a political act. Despite being an inflected form of the verb 'to rise', whose most common denotation is the act of standing up, the noun 'rising' has a peculiar meaning. It is the synonym for either insurrection or uprising, the latter defined as "an act or instance of rising up; especially: a usually localized act of popular violence in defiance usually of an established government" (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). The *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* defines 'rising', more briefly, as an "armed rebellion; revolt", while the thesaurus connects the word to the act moving up, and thus to ascent (*Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus*), as well as to the aforementioned act of revolting (*American Century Thesaurus*). Rising, in association to ascent, already suggests action, and transformation through movement. It is the main definition of rising--as uprising--nevertheless, that confirms the association between the noun and political acts. Rising, therefore, might be associated not only to the strictly physical act of moving up but of rebelling against "the established government".

Nevertheless, the transformation that takes place when *Favela* meets *Rising* implies a narrative act as well, the telling of the story of a community which becomes empowered, and consequently transformed. The phrase *Favela Rising* then succinctly presents the narrative line of the documentary: the inhabitants of the *favela* of Vigario Geral, who for long had their lives entrapped into, and defined by the quotidian

violence of drug traffick, are eventually transformed by the work of AfroReggae. The narrative potential that the title of *Favela Rising* implies reverberates in the entire documentary. As aforementioned, *Favela Rising* portrays social transformations in Vigário Geral basically through a story line, than through an argumentative structure. By doing so, the documentary highlights the narrative potentiality of every historical account, and thus its political (in the sense of being transformative) potential.

In short, the phrase *Favela Rising*, as I read it, merges the act of rising as a political act with the telling (narration) of such act, a narration which, for that matter, also becomes political. In addition to these two dimensions of the political in the documentary (of rising as political transformation, and of political transformation as/through narration), it is necessary to include a third. The transformative act of rising, in *Favela Rising*, is also attached to the physical act of rising. The result of these three dimensions is a story that places movement as an indispensable act of political resistance against socio-economic margins. Therefore, besides the association to rebelling, I would like to maintain in my reading of *Favela Rising* the physical connotation of rising as moving up as well, since the political meaning of rising is also explored through metaphors and cinematic references to rising as the physical act of standing up. That is, the transformation that operates in *favela* in its association to *rising* is political also in the sense of its being a physical act. The images of children playing with kites, of people dancing on roofs, and the wide-angle images of the *favela* in the documentary, for instance, are ways of attaching political relevance to ascent. The most noticeable connection between physical and political significance of rising in the documentary, nonetheless, appears though narrative itself, more specifically through the personal narrative of AfroReggae's singer Anderson Sá, and his transcending physical impairment.

The phrase *Favela Rising* therefore implies a narrative of both physical and political transformation in the *favela*, or rather a narrative of the *favela* that places physical action as political. This idea (of a narrative of the *favela* that places physical action as political), I sustain, presents itself at least at an ideal level; as Ávila (2008) states, *Favela Rising*'s narrative may also be read as politically restrictive through its support of the dominant negative association between disability and immobility. In this sense, *Favela Rising* suggests that physical mobility is indispensable for political resistance, disregarding the political fight of the disabled against the discourse of a supposed political immobility.

Thus the transformative political effect that the emancipatory narrative of *Favela Rising* supports indicates a disabling conception of the *favela* that the documentary seeks to evade. Although there is neither an actual fight for power between specific groups in the documentary, nor an organized act of 'popular' rebellion against an institutionalized power, nonetheless the documentary transforms the meaning of rising as rebellion as well. The war between the police and drug traffickers in Brazil is consequently not the rebellion to which the *rising* in the title stands for. The documentary indicates that such war is the effect of a violent conformity of the inhabitants of the *favelas* into a negative representation: the figure of the drug trafficker secludes the community; it reiterates, and justifies social exclusion. Rising in the documentary thus implies movements that might create different images of the *favela*, no longer delimited by the dominant negative association of *favela* to criminality, and dehumanization, as Ávila (2008) observes.

One may note such attempt of a representational transformation, for instance, seeing that *Favela Rising* makes direct references to the socio-economic hierarchy in Brazilian classes--or, in other terms, to the "*morro/asfalto*" relation—while managing to change the focus away from such hierarchy. As a documentary, *Favela Rising* shows evidence of social discrepancies in Brazil, but focus upon other evidences, that of social discrepancy being made less damaging to the ones who have historically suffered from it through collaborative work, and through affirmative identity. As a consequence, the argument constructed by *Favela Rising* supports the idea that a new type of community is necessary (and is already actually real), one that does not reinforce the social exclusion that comes from below, that is, from the city center that marginalizes its periphery.

Instead of existing through exclusion—those who are not from the *asfalto*, those who occupy the excluded site of the binary opposition rich/non-rich--*Favela Rising* proposes that the inhabitants of Vigário Geral should open a third possibility. This third possibility is that which rises over the unbalanced dichotomy 'rich/*favelado*', that which gives a transformative meaning to the *favela*. Because of such emphasis on a different conception of social ascent, *Favela Rising* rearranges the gaze of/from the *favela* and of its inhabitants: from the dominant gaze that places the *favela* in a marginal relation to the *asfalto*, to the gaze of the *favela* as affirmative difference. Physical references, especially spatial, therefore, are ways of conceiving this new possibility of community. The title, once again, is highly suggestive of these possibilities of community formation that require not only new conceptions of identity

but of the sharing of space as well. The common representation of the *favela*, for instance, is that of houses built upon a hill. However, despite their height, the *favelas* are the image of social exclusion; they occupy the low level of social hierarchy. Considering political and economic contexts, therefore, the verticality of the *favelas* is the mark of their marginalization. In the documentary, the physical reference to rising and thus to verticality attempts to escape such constituted hierarchy.[38]

The relevance of ascent, which in the documentary is directly related to the possibility of political transformation, may be identified also at the first shot of the film. *Favela Rising* opens up with an underwater high-angle shot that is fused with several other shots of musicians (the first of them is Anderson Sá) and of a large audience at an AfroReggae concert. The underwater shot is apparently subjective, presenting to the spectator the sight of a person being sunk under water during nighttime, looking up to a sole round source of light coming from above, one that resembles moonlight. If one is to regard such shot as subjective, one might picture the source of the gaze being unable to rise to the surface, and thus may perceive an atmosphere of suffocation. The shot, initially a fragmented image, becomes shortly contextualized within the narrative of Anderson Sa's life: it is related firstly to Sá's habit of surfing late at night and later to the serious accident in which Sá was involved when surfing.

Image 3.1: Subjective underwater shot in *Favela Rising*'s opening sequence

The strong subjective association between the shot and Sá is repeated when one of Sá's relative reports the accident in voice-over while the underwater shot runs for approximately 30 seconds without interruption (*Favela Rising* 1:07:16 – 1:07:43): besides the illustrative

[38] Patrick Neate and Damian Platt (2006), in *Culture is our Weapon*, a book about AfroReggae, make a more realistic and incisive remark concerning the rising of the *favelas:* "this upward expansion is the most common manifestation of social mobility in Brazilian favelas. If you can't, or don't want to, leave the community, you construct more space for yourself and your extended family by going up" (2).

effect (the event narrated by Sá's relative comments the image), such juxtaposition gives the effect of Sá's incapability of self-reporting the accident at the moment of the shot, since he is the one who is metaphorically underwater during such interval. The underwater shot advances and supports the story line of a single participant; it helps to establish Sá as the main participant in the documentary. As a type of reconstitution of the unique and challenging event in Sá's life, the underwater shot becomes a metaphor for Sá's subsequent triumph over the suffocating submersion into the water as well.

The underwater shot, even when not connected to the context of Sá's accident, still delineates the narrative of rising that *Favela Rising* sets in motion. Whether standing for the view point of a single participant or not, the underwater shot is also both an image of submersion and of possibility of emersion. The shot therefore sets forth an unrestricted possibility of being challenged, and released, which is related but not exclusive to Sá's personal history. Rather than attempting to overstate the significance of the first shot in *Favela Rising*, I would like to discuss the way in which such shot, besides establishing, metaphorically, the challenge of resurfacing, becomes, among others in the documentary, an image of potentiality. By image of potentiality I mean the double possibility of reading that the shot offers besides its conformation within Sa's storyline, a tense duplicity that the documentary structure not only offers but makes use of. The underwater shot as an image of submersion becomes a metaphor for fixity "as the sign of cultural/historical/radical difference" (Bhabha, 1996, 37), for the entrapment of the inhabitants of Vigário Geral into negative difference yet to be overcome, that is, of their immobilization (Ávila, 2008)

Equally, nonetheless, the underwater shot becomes a metaphor for potential emersion, of moving away from such fixity of disempowering difference. Comparable to the title, the underwater shot summarizes the narrative of empowering transformations in the community. Perhaps even more suggestively, the shot indicates narrative as the crucial element for the transformation of the community. As an image of potentiality, the underwater shot shows the possibility of becoming part of different narratives; one, for instance, of a community trapped into negative difference, another of a community able to move away from such entrapment, i.e., of a community that is able to mobilize an empowering identity. That is, the first shot in *Favela Rising* is

indicative of the power attributed to narrative not simply as the way of telling stories, but as the possibility of writing diverse ones.[39]

Although the metaphor of i/mmobility in *Favela Rising* reaches its climax with Sá's accident and temporary impairment, the association between immobility and identity fixity appears in other sequences of the documentary. In his opening statement, for instance, Sá illustrates the frequent scenes of violence related to drug traffic in Vigário Geral with his own experience of witnessing a murder as a child. What follows the description of the murder Sá witnessed is his statement of not being afraid to die. Such statement may stress Sá's courage, especially after a brief introduction of the constant presence of violence in his community, and, consequently, of one's constant contact with death. The statement, nonetheless, gains a particular meaning after Michele Moraes, Sá's wife, affirms that Sá had many times declared his preference for death over physical impairment. Sá's declared long fear of impairment dramatically weighs his actual provisional impairment presented at the final sequence of the documentary. The negative significance that physical impairment has for Sá is related to a potential/actual personal experience *and* to the danger of a collective imprisonment.

In Sá's opening testimonial, such negative association between physical impairment and collective imprisonment becomes explicit. In Sá's own words, "the slums have forever been stagnant, paralyzed. It's as if the spinal cord of the favela has always been broken" (*Favela Rising* 0:02:42 – 0:02:53). Sá's statement is repeated in other scenes of the documentary, which emphasizes the use of physical immobility as the narrative of entrapment into negative difference which the inhabitants of Vigário Geral previously, at least according to the documentary, lived. To use the metaphor proposed, once the spinal cord of the *favelas* was fixed, it became able to walk again; which means that the *favelas* restored their potential for being attached to different meanings than those that prevail in a dominant gaze over the *favelas*. That is, the physical movement of rising, in *Favela Rising*, represents the denial of the negative fixed identities attributed to *favelados* (at the

[39] Such potentiality is also present in the shots of children playing with kites. It is known that the kite is used as a signal, as a mean for delivering messages in drug traffic. According to Jeff Zimbalist (2005), in an interview to David Tames to *NewEnglandFilm.com*, he was willing to maintain the ambivalence of the image of the kite in the documentary: "to me the kid with the kite is symbolic, he's the target of both the drug trafficking army and he's also the target for the AfroReggae organization. These two armies, one an army of drug traffickers and bullets and the other an army of artists and percussionists and dancers are targeting this child. The flying of the kite by an innocent youth at play is also the first role that one takes part in becoming a soldier in the drug trafficking army" (paragraph 18).

same time it, contradictorily, reinforces the dominant negative connotation of physically impairment).

Sá is the main representative of the metaphor of i/mmobility. The period when the spinal cord of the *favelas* was broken, according to Sá, was the period when children like himself would be confronted with scenes of violence in their daily lives. Sá, still in his opening testimonial, affirms that "instead of falling asleep with our mothers singing to us, we fell asleep to gunshots and people screaming. The sound of violence" (*Favela Rising*, 0:03:05 – 0:03:24). Once again, Sá's piece of testimonial appears first as a general statement about the inhabitants of the community, and is further contextualized within the narrative. In such testimonial, Sá makes reference as well to his group of friends who, like himself, were raised in constant contact with drug trafficking, and ended up eventually involved with it (most of them killed by it). In any case, this piece of testimonial, still out of a more particular context within a broader narrative structure, strengthens the status of Sá as the main participant in the documentary. The piece of testimonial does not present Sá as the main participant by including the reference to Sá's childhood friends, that is, by limiting his story to a strictly personal context. On the contrary, such piece of testimonial delineates Sá as the main participant by linking his personal experience to a collective one. The initial sequence in *Favela Rising*--the underwater shot and Sá's testimonial included--thus establishes a metonymic association between Sá and the whole community of Vigário Geral, now understood as the group that lives at the place and share similar problems and feelings. Such metonymic association is constructed and made stronger throughout the documentary.

The importance of the depiction of Sá's recovery from the accident, presented in the final sequences of the documentary, lies in the fact that it becomes the metaphor for the recovery of the whole community, and of its possibility of transcending (rising) above the challenges of fixed identity. The narrative of Sá's life reinforced by the documentary--to the point that Sá becomes sanctified--is never fully detached from the narrative of empowerment of the community as a whole. Sá's accident, for instance, is portrayed as having a profound impact in the future of AfroReggae as a social group. Sá's accident affects thus both his closest friends and the community, revealing his position as a leader in the community.[40] The period during which Sá's

[40] In a previous scene, such position is already suggested. Mistakenly accused of raping a girl from another *favela*, Sá confronts a group of drug traffickers from that *favela*, who enter

future becomes uncertain as to his physical mobility is portrayed as a period of great tension, a hiatus during which not only the future of AfroReggae but of Vigário Geral seem suspended. The portrayal of Sa's first walk after the accident at the hospital is, if not an actual reenactment, at least staged in order to intensify the feeling of miraculous recovery. A vibrant music starts as the close-up shot of Sá's apparent hesitancy as to whether he is able to walk his way out of the hospital discloses his recovery (*Favela Rising* 1:12:10 – 1:13:58). The suspense and its subsequent relief help to add a hopeful tone to the narrative in *Favela Rising*.

Images 3.2 and 3.3: Narrative suspense during Sá's recovery in *Favela Rising*'s ending sequence

The narrative structure of *Favela Rising* is therefore of considerable relevance in that is in accordance with the metaphor of i/mmobility as community dis/empowerment (Ávila 2008). Nicholas Barber (2006), from the Independent, remarks that "*Favela Rising* is an award-winning documentary with a charismatic hero, a vibrant setting, a galvanising (sic) message, and an edge-of-your-seat structure to match those of any fictional film." Interestingly, the comparison that Barber

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Vigario Geral to meet Sá. According to Sá's testimonial, despite his fear, facing the drug traffickers with the truth was preferable than running away. The dangerous negotiation with a drug group rival to Vigario Geral's attests Sá's courage. His leadership and charisma are also stressed when he mentions the day a drug dealer congratulated his and AfroReggae's job for taking the drug dealer's nephew out of drug traffic. Sá is not the only member of AfroReggae whose qualities are praised in *Favela Rising*. José Junior, one of AfroReggae's initiators, and one the of group leaders, is praised for his ability to convince children out of drug trafficking as well. The appraisal of other AfroReggae's constituent's qualities, nonetheless, does not change Sá's role as the protagonist of *Favela Rising*. It is interesting to compare his role as a supporting participant in Carlos Diegues's and Rafael Dragaud's *Nenhum Motivo Explica a Guerra* (2006). In Diegues' and Dragaud's documentary, Sá, Altair, and JB are portrayed as being AfroReggae's spokesmen, and by-products of AfroReggae methodology of "recruitment". As Jose Junior explains, young adults are randomly chosen to become leaders of the group. It is through the confidence provided by such recruitment that the young adults are actually able to develop their full potential. In Diegues's documentary, it seems, the network constructed by AfroReggae is more evident than in *Favela Rising*, which seems to privilege the individual and the emotional side of the matter.

makes between *Favela Rising* and fiction films is much different from the comparison made between *Manda Bala* and fiction films, which were discussed in the previous chapter. The elements highlighted by Barber in his appraisal of *Favela Rising* are much more related to plot development in narratives (i.e., to the story)--character, setting, message--than to the formal elements that help constitute and organize such plot, that is, its discourse--photography, editing, sound--which are the source of comparison between *Manda Bala* and fiction films. "An edge-of-your-seat structure" is possibly the expression from Barber's quote that can best make this distinction, since the expression is highly suggestive of the way in which the narrative of *Favela Rising* engages the spectator into an appealing plot. As aforementioned, the narrative engagement provided by *Favela Rising* might be approached also from the perspective of the cultural fluxes that are involved in globalization, especially as a form of providing material for the imagination to conceive new form of lives beyond those that can be imagined in terms of national boundaries.

This does not mean that plot development in *Favela Rising* dispenses with rhetoric; such observation would imply that the documentary does not construct a view about the historical world (Nichols 1991), which it does. In effect, the argument in *Favela Rising* is presented through a structure of plot development, rather than through an expository structure, as in *Manda Bala*. The centrality of Sá's personal history in the structure of the documentary attests that characteristic. In expository documentaries, images serve as evidence for the argument about the historical world that is being presented. In *Favela Rising*, the images serve as evidence for an argument being presented as well (for its emancipatory discourse); the difference is that plot development is the way through which the argument is presented. The argument that a group of people can resist fixed identity is made evident through changes occurred in the narrative of Sá and of Vigário Geral; from the entrapment into negative difference to the succeeding identity empowerment.

A notable example of the difference between an expository and a plot focused structure are the shots of youngsters killed due to drug trafficking (*Favela Rising* 0:08:49-0:09:11). These images are inserted after Sa's initial testimonial, within a moderately long, and expository sequence that depicts the present-day involvement of children and young adults with drug trafficking. Besides the shots of assassinated youngsters, the sequence depicts police corruption and violence with amateur night-shot footage of bribe and unfounded aggression of

policemen against *favela* residents on the streets.[41] In addition, the sequence presents a testimonial of an unidentified adolescent who gives details of life within the circle of drug traffic; his description of torture committed by drug traffickers shocks the interviewer--the camera registers him asking the adolescent whether such information puts any of the two in risk.

The sequence, therefore, is mainly expository, producing an apparently neutral representation of the historical world: it depicts the intricate context of drug traffic, one that ends up involving and disrupting the community. Most emphatically, the sequence depicts the lethal outcome of drug traffic for the youngsters of the *favelas*. The shots of assassinated youngsters is a straightforwardly statement of such conclusion. Nevertheless, these images of death serve more than the purpose of being evidence for an argument about the historical world, i.e., as a support to a statement (often, in documentaries, presented as a transparent or rather unbiased register of the world). These images of death are images that belong to a narrative of the *favelas* in which children are entrapped into drug traffic, and eventually lead to death, i.e., a narrative that must be replaced. The traditional expository sequences in *Favela Rising* therefore, are inserted within a wider narrative structure that forces the revision of the state of things, of an established representation of the historical world. The supposed state of things is itself conceived as a narrative--"Instead of falling asleep with our mothers singing to us, we fell asleep to gunshots and people screaming. The sound of violence" (*Favela Rising*, 0:03:05 – 0:03:24)--one that gives place to an empowering one, that which AfroReggae supposedly begins and the documentary attempts to rewrite. Narrative thus constitutes the very way through which argument is developed in *Favela Rising*.

The narrative of the inhabitants of Vigário Geral, of AfroReggae, and of Sá is a chronologically progressive narrative marked by a before and an after, i.e., by a moment of transformation.[42] The crucial moment

[41] Police oppression is firstly presented in *Favela Rising* in its initial sequence. The sound of helicopters fades in over shots of Vigario Geral's inhabitants, suggesting the state of constant surveillance under which the inhabitants of Vigário Geral live. The police interference suggested in this shot, together with the shot of police corruption and violence will eventually culminate, in *Favela Rising*'s structure, in the sequence that depicts the massacre of Vigário Geral, occurred in 29 August 1993.

[42] Transformation which follows destruction, according to José Junior and Altair, is part of what they name the Shiva effect--after the Hindu God Shiva--, which they claim to be an important belief for AfroReggae. Curiously, when making an online research about the Shiva Effect, I accidently ran into a forum discussion topic of *Favela Rising* at the *Ironweed Film*

for this transformation in the narrative is the massacre of Vigário Geral, the distressing event to Brazilian history that is portrayed in the documentary. In 29 October 1993, after drug traffickers from Vigario Geral had killed four policemen, a group of more than 40 policemen attacked Vigario Geral in revenge, shooting civilians randomly, and killing 21 people which had no connection to drug traffic--Sá's brother included. The event naturally shocked and mobilized the community, and had a national repercussion through the media.[43] The massacre changes Sá's personal life plot as well: as a young child, Sá testifies, he dreamt of becoming a powerful drug lord who would bring welfare to his community--a sort of Robin Hood. Sá in fact got involved with drug traffic, but later quit, and eventually became an active figure in AfroReggae, even after having lost a relative in the massacre. Sá's grandmother believed that his personal loss would lead him to a different path, more specifically to drug traffic (*Favela Rising* 0:13:44-0:15:45). The history of AfroReggae changes after the massacre as well. The initial group of AfroReggae becomes more organized after the massacre; first with the publication of a newspaper,[44] later with percussion workshops for children, and finally with the AfroReggae music group. In the narrative developed in *Favela Rising*, Sá's personal history and that of AfroReggae entwine at the event of the massacre, the moment that inspired the transformation of their context. Sá testifies in voice over:

> One day I was caught up in sadness about the massacre. I had a fight with my girlfriend, my sister, my mom, and I wasn't doing well at work. I went home and wrote a song called "Tô Bolado" (I'm overwhelmed). I'm from Vigário, I love my community, but I'm pissed off, so I started to think about using music as an instrument of change (*Favela Rising*, 0:21:44 – 0:22:29).

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*Club Website*, entitled "Shiva Effect in Action". The text says: "The Shiva Effect is the creation of order out of chaos. First chaos strikes then order arises out of the ashes. Jeff Zimbalist and Matt Mochary's Favela Rising dramatically illustrates this point." (http://www.ironweedfilms.com/node/1140). Access: 24 Aug. 2009. 16:51.

[43] 1993 was also the year of another massacre, the "Candelária", occurred three months earlier, in July 23. A group of policemen shot over more than 40 street children who slept on the stairs of Candelária church, in Rio de Janeiro's historic center. Eight children were killed.

[44] The AfroReggae News. One of the tabletop shots of the newspaper shows a picture of Malcom X, which will most certainly catch the attention of North-American audiences, and associate AfroReggae to African-Americans resistance. The empowerment of youngsters through the strengthening of their black identity is explicitly mentioned in a following sequence (*Favela Rising* 0:24:05-0:24:20). Sá mentions that *favela* youngsters lack the reference of non-violent black role models.

The event of the massacre, therefore, is a moment of transformation in Sá's life and of AfroReggae (and of the entire community as well), since what follows his testimonial is a brief sequence of the history of AfroReggae which culminates at a concert in Vigário Geral where children dance to the sound of "Eu tô Bolado" ("I'm Overwhelmed", *Favela Rising* 0:18-57 – 0:25:04).

The transformations that occur at the plot level in the narrative of *Favela Rising*, in the life of Sá, of AfroReggae, and of Vigário Geral, cannot be detached from the political significance that the documentary narrative presents as a whole. The narrative of *Favela Rising*, I suggest, should not be interpreted solely as a distanced objective portrayal of the transformative cultural practices that can be observed through the impact of AfroReggae's work; as a cultural work, the narrative of *Favela Rising* attempts to be an active part of transformative practices. That is, rather than simply portraying AfroReggae's discourse of transformation (as a static, observable, and distanced reality), *Favela Rising* embodies this discourse in its own documentary structure.

As aforementioned, the narrative of political transformation in *Favela Rising* is also a narrative of (physical) ascent. Besides the metaphor presented through images such as the underwater shot, the documentary utilizes other images that support a transformative political act through rising, such as the wide-angle shots of the *favela*. In classical narrative films, wide-angle shot are presented usually at the beginning of a sequence, providing spatial reference for the narrower shots that follow them. They may also function as transition shots that provide a temporal gap in the narrative, suggesting that time has passed by in between two sequences. In his study on the representation of Brazil in foreign films, Tunico Amancio (2000) observes that besides performing these two functions in classical narrative films, wide-angle shots are "*a privileged site for the manifestation of stereotype in narrative*"[45] (my translation, 157). The establishing wide-angle shot of Rio de Janeiro's famous spots such as the Sugarloaf, for instance, furnishes instant recognition for the foreign gaze produced by its repetition in different types of films (and other cultural devices).

*Favela Rising*, contrastingly, does not reiterate the iconic and touristic images of Rio de Janeiro. The wide-angle shots in the documentary place the *favela* as the focus of gaze. However, to place

[45] "um local privilegiado da manifestação do campo do estereótipo na narrativa" (Amancio 157).

the *favela* as the focus of the gaze does not mean to make it a passive object to be observed. Instead, the wide-angle shot of the *favela* helps to signify its territory as an active resource of transformative images. As aforementioned, *Favela Rising* portrays economic discrepancies in Brazilian society at the same time that it reinforces the possibility of moving out of such socioeconomic hierarchies. The wide-angle shots of the *favela* in the documentary manage to stress such possibilities through images, reconfiguring the space of the narrative for the viewer; from Rio de Janeiro's touristic sceneries to Vigário Geral.

The transformation of the *favelas* emplotted in *Favela Rising* and implied through the use of wide-angle shots can be observed in the documentary itself. In the initial sequence of *Favela Rising*, after Sá talks about his first childhood memories of violence, the title of the documentary appears over a wide-angle shot of the *favela*. The final composition of the shot is reached after a crane shot moves around the top of the hill and stops at an eye-level view of the *morro*. The edges of the framing are covered with an effect of blurring, similar to those in old films. These dark blurred edges eventually start to appear at the entire framing, producing a fade out effect. The title thus appears in block letters which are wrapped in barbed wire, signaling Sá's testimonial of Vigário Geral as the Brazilian Bosnia, i.e., signaling a war-zone state in the community. The initial wide-angle shot matches the gravity of Sá's testimonial with a freeze image of the *favela* together with bass tone music. The image is then attached to a definition of *favela*: "in Brazil, an urban slum or ghetto; illegal squatter settlement". The flat and freeze image of the *favela* that goes with the title and that precedes its definition condenses the apparently endless condition of the *favela* as motionless.


Images 3.4 and 3.5: Wide-Angle shots of the *favela* in *Favela Rising*'s initial and ending sequences

Nonetheless, both the dramatic tone and the still image that characterize *Favela Rising*'s title shot give way to an optimistic tone and to moving images at the end of the documentary. *Favela Rising* final credits are intercut with wide-angle shot of the *favela* in movement, repeated from different angles and following the beat of one of AfroReggae's songs. Differently from the title wide-angle shot, these final shots are now tridimensional and moving. In this example, it is possible to observe the way in which ascent operates as positive potentiality and as transformation: the wide-angle shots that draw the documentary to a close show that the *favela* cannot conform to its previous definition. It moves the gaze over the *favela* (objectifying gaze) to a gaze from the *favela* (positive difference). The formal choices in *Favela Rising*, therefore, reiterate the narrative of transformation through ascent constructed by the documentary. In addition, by replacing--through spatial markers of ascent--the usual ground position of the *favelas* in Brazilian socio-economic hierarchy, and the fixed identity that their inhabitants must overcome, the wide-angle shots of the *favela* signal the challenges to conceive an image of a homogeneous, and harmonious Brazilian national community in *Favela Rising*.

### 3.2 *Favela Rising* and Brazilian Margins

In sum, the portrayal of the successful socio-cultural work of AfroReggae in *Favela Rising* through a narrative of political ascent introduces some challenges for the analysis of the documentary's representation of Brazil. If *Manda Bala* allows for the mapping of the nation Brazil and of its community, and for the diagnosis of its socio-political problems, *Favela Rising*'s portrayal follows a different direction: it neither focuses upon the matter of the national; nor explores the meaning of being Brazilian, or the making of an imagined national community. The role that the nation plays in *Favela Rising* is significant, and yet contextual. To use Bill Nichols's (1991) terms, it is possible to state that the documentary makes a commentary about the historical world; the problem is that the definition of historical world in the case of *Favela Rising* stretches farther than what could be defined as the Brazilian nation. The political, geographical, and economic markers of a Brazilian nationality (Brazilian's government inability to guarantee good living conditions to its citizens, Brazilian police corruption, and Brazilian *favelas*) exist and to certain extent are investigated by the documentary. Nonetheless, such national markers are placed more as background than as the main focus of investigation (the focus of the

investigation is the production of exclusion). Once again, it is possible to relate the lack of focus on the nation to globalization, since what the narrative of *Favela Rising* stresses is the change that occur within the community of Vigário Geral (through the life of Sá), and the possibility of such change to occur in other communities as well, such north-American "peripheries".[46]

In the same way as the nation plays a contextual role in *Favela Rising*, the national identification of its participants is undermined in favor of a different sort of identification, restricted to the inhabitants of Vigário Geral (and potentially to other marginalized communities). Rather than presenting the inhabitants of the *favela* of Vigário Geral as an illustrative part of a national community, *Favela Rising* emphasizes the political power of the inhabitants of Vigário Geral as a community which, marginalized by the state, must shape its own margins. Once again, *Favela Rising* withdraws a general portrayal of Brazil. The rejection of a totalizing portrayal in national terms does not imply a more microscopic view of the nation (because its focus is not national); on the contrary, it emphasizes the impossibility of the idea of the nation-state and its institutions to embrace the particularities of each marginalized community.

In the first few minutes of the documentary, as aforementioned, *favela* is defined as "in Brazil, an urban slum or ghetto; illegal squatter settlement". The definition of *favelas* localizes the problem of marginalized communities, i.e., provides a particular territorial and cultural realm to the situation of "illegal squatter settlement" through the marker "in Brazil".[47] However, the "success" of this definition, it seems, works in the possibility of the contextual to relate to the general. It is possible to relate such generalization to the conformation of the particularities of the *favelas* to the already commented universalism.

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[46] The relevance of black heritage to AfroReggae's project is also a significant element that may destabilize the narrative of a national community in *Favela Rising*'s portrayal at the kernel of Brazilian's relationship with issues of race. As Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (1998) observes, Brazilian society, besides the widespread notion of its being a "racially democratic" nation, deals with racism at a private level. One of the results of such private relationship is that racist practices are never successfully condemned and dealt with in legal terms (despite the existence of anti-racist legislation). Through the valorization of the African heritage of the community of Vigario Geral, and the need of "black role models" for the children of the favelas, as Sá states, AfroReggae and *Favela Rising* bring the problem of race and racism to the fore.

[47] The insertion of definition of *favela* in the documentary is aimed probably at situating an audience who is unfamiliar to the expression, that is, non-Brazilian audience. In this sense, the insertion helps to establish the margins of spectatorship as well, also delimited by cultural, geographical, and political dimensions. Such spectatooirship markers--such as the presence of interpreters in *Manda Bala*--help to produce a North-American gaze in relation to Brazil.

Nonetheless, it is also possible to read such generalization as the attempt to stress the necessity of dialogue between marginalized communities, and the creation of new alliances as forms of resistance.

# CHAPTER 4
# THE MARGINS OF THE NATION, AND THE NATION OF MARGINS: *FAVELA RISING*, *MANDA BALA*, AND GLOBALIZATION

*Manda Bala*'s and *Favela Rising*'s configurations of Brazilian socioeconomic and national margins present significant similarities and differences, which, in this chapter, I aim at approaching through theoretical discussions about globalization. Globalization stands for the circulation of capital, people, and cultural products at a transnational level. Whether cultural or financial, these circulations, made beyond (or not strictly depending upon) national borders, may subvert the assumed homogeneity of national imagined communities by constituting new social formations, beyond or inside the legal borders of nation-states. The heavy and constant fluxes of migrations in big cities around the world, for instance, have both reinforced prejudice and intolerance against minorities, and produced new forms of resistance to alleged assumptions of cultural supremacy. As the work of Arjun Appadurai (1996) suggests, the different types of circulation--of people, of capital, of media--in contemporary times has placed the imagination as a constitutive aspect of human experience, shaping identities beyond (or not uniquely through) geographical margins. Thus globalization--should one accept or confront the concept and its meanings[48]--has influenced researchers to present different theoretical perspectives upon cultural texts, in an attempt to question fixed identities (North-American and Brazilian, for instance) when analyzing them. To use globalization as a conceptual parameter means to imply neither that identities were stable and have suddenly become fluid (through a historically linear process), nor that cultural theoreticians have become aware "only recently" of the

[48] In *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (2007)--although never fully solving the ambivalence implied by the title of his book--suggests a radical refusal of globalization--as glomeration, as the indistinguishableness of borders through the expansion of a single, global one, as a state of global injustice--through the creation of the world (as the possibility of always creating beginnings, of "reopening each possible struggle for a world") by itself, neither in the name of a god nor of a subject. I have called attention to Nancy's book just to point out that there is no academic agreement concerning the use of the name "globalization", even though the variety of authors and perspectives surrounding the subject suggest at least a general agreement about the existence of a "process" that brings up the adjective of "global". Besides, Nancy's refusal to comply with the name "globalization" is as a strong statement for the necessity of asking beforehand the meaning of global, to question its apparent neutrality—thus, the question: "What is a world"? (41).

unstable trait of culture. It means an attempt to work with this unstable trait in order to analyze cultural exchange.

Globalization neither implies an era after the national, nor implies the effacement of social formations understood in terms of national identities. As the definition from Fredric Jameson (2003) stresses, globalization is "as an untotalizable totality which intensifies binary relations between its parts--mostly nations, but also regions and groups, which, however, continue to articulate themselves on the models of 'national identities' (rather than in terms of social classes, for example)" (xii). Nations, therefore, are still dominant social forces, in spite of the transnational cultural flows that are currently taking place. Such national forces are exemplified by both *Manda Bala*'s and *Favela Rising*'s portrayal through different configuration of margins: in *Manda Bala*, social exclusion appears as being constitutive of Brazilian national identity. Besides, national forces appear acting in the documentary's very structure, which is based on a national portrayal (*Manda Bala*'s participants are representatives of Brazilian society). In *Favela Rising*, national forces appear as the context within which Vigário Geral is marginalized; being the excluded part of the national, the participants in *Favela Rising* are portrayed in their attempt to construct an empowering identity, different from (and not necessarily related with national identity) the one that is imposed to them. In both documentaries, nevertheless, the national as a social force can be perceived and is portrayed.

The challenge that surrounds my investigation, therefore, is that of analyzing two documentaries that provoke imagination beyond national margins and/but still reinforce national identities; that may be interpreted according to these identities (in the case, Brazilian and North-American) as well as to the social fluxes they evoke. Being North-American productions, *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* undoubtedly provoke North-American viewers' imaginations beyond the margins of their nation by the portrayal of different social, economic, and political contexts. The portrayal of something that is foreign "to us", that confronts "our" way of perceiving and organizing the world--this is the work of the imagination present in many of the films that Tunico Amancio (2000) analyses in *Brazil dos Gringos*, for instance, a provocation produced by the foreign world being framed but especially by the gaze that frames it. In this framing of foreign margins, the "subjective factor" that Sigfried Kracauer (1949) identifies in the representation of foreign countries proves to be usually the most influential, i.e., the preconceptions that frame the representation of a

culture by another. This is to say that the provocation that the representations of foreign countries or cultures produces usually reveal more of the gazer than the gazed, usually reinforcing a subjective essence ("we"), against which the foreign ("them") is constructed and compared.

And this "we", whose imagination might be triggered through the portrayal of Brazil in *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising*, also reinforces the interpretation of both documentaries through a bi-national perspective (North-American/Brazilian). Given the onscreen presence of interpreters in *Manda Bala*, the explicit warning stating that the film cannot be shown in Brazil, the campaign for distribution and exhibition of *Favela Rising* in the United States, and the use of the English language in both documentaries and in their divulgation material, it is possible to affirm that *Favela Rising* and *Manda Bala* have North-Americans as their implied audience (and perhaps audiences from other English-speaking countries). Some reviews of *Manda Bala* that have been published in the U.S., as previously observed in Chapter 2, have praised the documentary ability to provide an informative picture of the problems that have afflicted non-developed countries. Such type of comment establishes and reinforces a radical difference between developed and underdeveloped worlds, and the hierarchy between gazers and gazed. The ignorance of the problems that afflict "others" proves to be effaced when an organizing gaze structures the apparently chaotic way of a foreign way of living.

It is intriguing to consider the correspondence among the North-American spectatorship that both documentaries imply, the way in which the imagination of some of these North-American spectators were apparently moved (in reviews), and the subjective factors which might have governed the framing of Brazilian margins in each documentary. For instance, to reflect upon the correspondence between the portrayal of a cannibal society in *Manda Bala* and the appraisal of its comprehensive picture by some North-American reviewers; between the portrayal of Sá as a sort of hero in *Favela Rising*, and its description as a "passionate and universal story of the power of change" in reviews (Strong). It would be too precipitate, nevertheless, to hypothesize upon a cause-consequence relationship between these elements: we can only reflect upon the subjective factors that may govern a representation of a foreign country, and speculate about the effects of such representation upon the imagination of its viewers.

When I state that *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* might still reinforce national identities, I refer not only to their portrayals (as in

*Manda Bala*, which has the nation Brazil as its focus), but also to the "subjective factor" involved in such portrayals and their implied viewers (the ways in which the gaze of the North-American distances itself from the "Brazil" depicted). However, the way in which I would like to analyze the framing of Brazilian margins in the documentaries, however, is not focused entirely in the "subjective factor" of the gazer that might influence such framing—even though the "subjective factor" is an essential part of the analysis. In other words, I would like to analyze *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* not only as unilateral phenomena (the image of Brazil being produced by the foreign gaze), but as articulators of cultural differences. In this chapter I intend to analyze the documentaries in relation to globalization in two main aspects. First, from the perspective of national margins (how do the documentaries relate to globalization when portraying "Brazilian" problems?); and second from the perspective of socioeconomic margins (how do the documentaries relate to globalization in their portrayal of socioeconomic margins?).

## 4.1 Nation-States, Neighborhoods and the Global Imagination: Restrictions and Possibilities

*Favela Rising* and *Manda Bala* offer what seems to be an opposite and complementary depiction of the social forces related to nations-states. As aforementioned, the relation between globalization and nation-states should not be understood as exclusionary; nation-states and "national consciousness" keep existing and helping to shape the ways in which we conceive identities, despite the new identities and social formations that might emerge from global cultural flows. *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* seem to portray as well as gather some of these conflicting forces (national and transnational). Whereas *Manda Bala* reinforces the assumed sovereignty and homogeneity of nation-states and of imagined national communities through its portrayal of corruption and unequal distribution of mnwealth in Brazilian society, *Favela Rising*, through its portrayal of the work of AfroReggae in Vigário Geral, signals the existences of socio formations that defy the alleged homogeneity of the national community and that can influence political and social transformations beyond national margins.

*Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* suggest the tension between the national and the non-national by concentrating on different contexts. In *Manda* Bala, context is framed by the legal dimensions of the nation-state. That is, the context and the focus of *Manda Bala* are established

by the national borders that are displayed by the tutorial video about the SUDAM project at a certain moment in the documentary (*Manda Bala* 0:11:57). In this sense, regardless of themes (corruption, violence, and class division) that *Manda Bala* introduces, and which may be applied to other contexts, it is still mainly a portrayal of Brazil. Correspondingly, each participant in the documentary (save for the interpreters) is supposed to be a representative of the nation. As mentioned in chapter 2, the interviews in *Manda Bala* can be characterized as "sociological" because they gather several participants that are representatives of the problems with which Brazil is confronted.

A common language, a common territory, a common history, and common political and judicial systems (even though, as we know, the law does not apply equally to everybody): these are all elements that help reinforce and constitute a national identity to the participants in *Manda Bala*, in spite of their portrayed disparities. The portrayal and constitution of an identity despite difference in *Manda Bala* is a good illustration of Homi Bhabha's (1990) description of the nation as "an agency of *ambivalent* narration that holds culture at its most productive position, as a force for 'subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, as much as producing, creating, forcing, guiding'" (3-4), or to Judith Bultler's and Gayatri Spivak's (2007) observation that, "[i]f the state is what 'binds', it is also clearly what can and does unbind. And if the state binds in the name of the nation, conjuring a certain version of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes" (2007, 4-5). That is, *Manda Bala*'s portrayal of Brazil shows that nation-states are constituted by a double movement of creating internal divisions and attempting to efface these divisions in the name of a national unity. As Appadurai (1996) observes,

> [t]he nation-state conducts throughout its territories the bizarrely contradictory project of creating a flat, contiguous, and homogeneous space of nationness and simultaneously a set of places and spaces (prisons, barracks, airports, radio stations, secretariats, parks, marching grounds, processional routes) calculated to create the internal distinctions and divisions necessary for state ceremony, surveillance, discipline, and mobilization. (189)

The contradictory operation of the nation-state described by Appadurai is brutally illustrated in *Manda Bala* by Jaderlândia, the city name after Jader Barbalho: the identity of its inhabitants is created through their own exclusion.

Despite showing that the Brazilian state creates atrocious social exclusion through corruption, and that Brazilian citizens are radically apart because of that exclusion, *Manda Bala* still bases its portrayal upon a national unity. This is why it is important, in the exercise of reading *Manda Bala*, to question its presuppositions. In the documentary, the differences within the nation do not pose a significant threat to its alleged unity. Instead of implying that the nation is, after all, a narrative, the cohesion of *Manda Bala*'s structure (the accumulation of shots that compose its circular argument) implies a homogeneous nation despite its differences. *Manda Bala* portrayal is thus based on a naturalization of the national community, and on the obliviousness concerning its imaginative quality, i.e., concerning its characteristic as a social construction.

When speaking of the nation in relation to *Manda Bala*, I would like certainly to disengage myself from the position of some scholars who, according to Benedict Anderson (2002), condemn the national imagined communities as products of (mean) ideology, and thus, reduce the complexity of its condition as a social formation[50] (4-5). Nonetheless, I believe that it is important to consider that *Manda Bala*'s support of the essentialist narrative of the nation seems to go hand in hand with its privileged gaze over Brazil. Brazil is portrayed as a nation with (socioeconomic) conflicts, and these conflicts are portrayed as negative (since it is associated with savagery/cannibalism). Of course such negative attribution can be justified on the grounds of the social injustice of these conflicts, but that is not all. In *Manda Bala*, conflicts are also negative because they go against a thought (national) unity. And since Brazil is a unity with negative differences, it turns into the negative difference itself (a salvage society); again we encounter the privileged gaze that establishes an unequal binary relation with what it gazes upon. In other words, by taking the unity of the nation as a given, *Manda Bala* implies that the differences within Brazilian society are a sort of disease rather than a contradiction, and so it implies as well that Brazil is a negative model of society.

*Favela Rising* can be seen as an opposite and complementary picture of the forces of the nation-state. By focusing on a Brazilian marginalized community rather than on the nation-state's legal dimensions, *Favela Rising* portrays the contradictions of the nation and

[50] Benedict Anderson, nevertheless, is aware that nationalism also proved to be transmutable, capable of fitting into several political and ideological agendas (4).

its production of exclusion. As aforementioned, the nation produces its own "internal" exclusions while simultaneously shaping a homogenous identity. This exclusion, in *Favela Rising*, is reinforced right at the beginning of the documentary, during Sá's first testimonial, in which he states that "for many decades, the government has ignored the slums. The government has never thought of improving the lives of the people living in the slums, living in the hills" (*Favela Rising*, 0:01:24-0:01:34). It is interesting to note that, in *Manda Bala*, a similar statement is made by Magrinho, in a sequence in which images of him walking around the *favela* where he lives are intercut with the interview at his house (*Manda Bala* 1:13:24-1:24:14). Besides the topic of carelessness of the state, Magrinho's and Sá's testimonials have also another similar and related topic: Magrinho explains his position as a politician of the *favela*, describing himself in a similar way as to Sá's stated dream of youth: a sort of good outlaw (a drug lord, in Sá's case) that ends up assuming the role that politicians should perform. At this moment, a rupture in the supposed unity of the nation is already suggested; nonetheless, it is only in *Favela Rising* that this rupture is suggested as a possibility of resistance. In *Manda Bala*, Magrinho's testimonial is inscribed by the crisis of the Brazilian nation as a whole.

The exclusion within the nation and the possibility of fighting against this exclusion are signaled with Sá's first testimonial and are reinforced throughout the documentary with the portrayal of Vigário Geral as a neighborhood. According to Appadurai (1996), the production of neighborhoods is threatening to the homogenizing forces of the nation-state, since they represent possible sites of resistance and disruptions: "Neighborhoods as social formations represent anxieties for the nation-state, as they usually contain large or residual spaces where the techniques of nationhood (…) are likely to be either weak or contested" (190). But what does Appadurai understand by the term neighborhood? For Appadurai (1996), neighborhoods, "life-worlds constituted by relatively stable associations, by relatively known and shared stories, and by collectively traverse and legible spaces and places" (191), is the phenomenon by which locality,[51] a property of social life (rather than a physical place), is "materialized". According to Appudurai, neighborhoods are responsible for the production of local

[51] The definition of locality for Appadurai, "a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts" (178), suggests a (non-measurable) sense of belonging.

subjects,[52] "actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbors, friends and enemies" (179). Appadurai's definition of neighborhood seems applicable to the life portrayed in *Favela Rising*: people staring outside their doors wide open to the streets or talking to passers-by; concerts made in-between the streets; all these images brings a sense of a "life-world" that cannot be defined in terms of a national identity. The strongest relation between *Favela Rising* and globalization, therefore, is its emphasis on the production of locality, irreducible to the borders of the nation-state, and its potential for resistance.

Besides shared places, the characteristic of Vigário Geral as a neighborhood is intensified by its shared histories. In *Favela Rising*, the sharing of histories is also intensified by the use of testimonials. The testimonials of AfroReggae's participants, for instance, help to (re)constitute the events of the Vigário Geral massacre, a crucial shared history of the neighborhood. The massacre of Vigário Geral is presented by two different types of testimonials: a more informative one, presented by writer Zuenir Ventura, and a more personal one, presented by the inhabitants of Vigário Geral. These two types of testimonials are a good example of how the neighborhood is also built through an opposition to other neighborhoods. The background of Ventura's interview, for instance, is a bookcase filled with books, which contrasts to every background depicted in other interviews in the documentary: it suggests that Ventura is a researcher who is not from Vigário Geral, i.e., who comes from, literally speaking, a different background.

The difference between Ventura's and AfroReggae's members account of the massacre helps to characterize the event as well: while Ventura informs about the events of the massacre--"The Favela of Vigário Geral, which is a population of 30,000 residents was invaded by an infamous division of the military police. They entered houses and randomly murdered many people" (*Favela* Rising, 0:11:42-0:12:06)--the

[52] An important issue for Appadurai's concept of neighborhoods is that they "both are contexts and at the same time require and produce context" (185). The contradiction can be explained as following: neighborhoods are context because, in order to exist, they need to reproduce their own conditions of existence: "neighborhoods as existing contexts are prerequisites for the production of local subjects" (185). However, at the same, they are never static; in the course of its existence, new alliances are made, new natural challenges are imposed. Besides, neighborhoods always operate in opposition to another given neighborhood (which Appadurai entitles *ethnoscapes*); since this opposed neighborhood is not static as well, it needs to be continuously recreated. In this sense, neighborhoods are constantly producing contexts. This complex trait of the production of neighborhood is particularly relevant to the way in which I understand the narrative of *Favela Rising*: not as a defense of a right, fixed identity of Vigário Geral, but the defense of the existence of a neighborhood that, being a context and requiring context, is always open to change.

members of AfroReggae narrate the event through their personal experience--JB: "It's the worst thing I've ever seen, all those corpses laid out in a line. That image is tattooed in all of our minds forever" (*Favela* Rising, 0:12:53-0:12:59); Sá: "It was after 11 at night. I was in front of my house (…)" (*Favela* Rising, 0:13:00-0:13:40) This does not mean that Ventura's testimonial is less legitimate than those of the members of AfroReggae, but that it offers a different tone to the testimonials, more informative than personal. It also helps to constitute the neighborhood of Vigário Geral through opposition, in this case, with a person who does not share the same history as that of the local subjects, "actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbors, friends, and enemies" (Appadurai, 1996, 179). The authoritative v

The aforementioned metonymic association between Sá and other inhabitants of Vigário Geral is constructed by the use of testimonials. Sá's personal history cannot be detached from the history of Vigário Geral (his infancy, for instance, was the infancy of every children there); and the reverse is also true: AfroReggae, together with Sá, helps to reshape the identity of Vigário Geral. The moment Sá is threatened by the possibility of physical immobility is portrayed in *Favela Rising* as a moment of tension for the new identity of the neighborhood that Sá himself has helped to shape (the use of physical immobility to represent the threat of fixed identity reaches its climax in the final sequence of the documentary). Alongside the disempowering association between immobility and disability, there is the suggestion, in *Favela Rising*, that the neighborhood--even though it is constituted by a certain fixity ("all locality building has a moment of colonization", Appadurai 183), a sense of "relatively stable associations"--is also a mobile social construction in the sense that it is constantly producing itself and its local subjects.

The life of Vigário Geral, as a neighborhood, is different from the life of Vigário Geral as seen or missed by the police helicopter which appears in the initial sequence. The view from the police helicopter shows the coercive forces of the nation-state in action and its acts of exclusion; it is a view that places the *favela* at the bottom of society, and that flattens its surface (see the flat image of the *favela* from Magrinho's window in *Manda Bala*), homogenizing its exclusion. It illustrates Appadurai's (1996) observation that "for the project of the nation-state, neighborhoods represent a perennial source of entropy and slippage. They need to be policed almost as thoroughly as borders" (191). The view from the top of Vigário Geral as reinforced by the final aerial shots

in *Favela Rising*, contrastingly, seems to indicate the constant movement of the *favela*, the constant reorganization of its margins, and its constant production of local subjects.

### 4.2 Socioeconomic Margins and Globalization

The North-American spectator--the ideal spectator which *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* address--is presented to two very different portrayals of Brazil when watching *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising*: on one hand, the rather pessimistic analysis of the apparently never-ending cycle of Brazil's socio-economic disparities and urban violence produced by corruption in *Manda Bala*; on the other, the optimistic portrayal of a group that attempts to confront the effects of socio-economic disparities in a Brazilian *favela*. Despite their differences, both *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* make use of two recurring themes so as to provide very diverse framing of margins: violence and socio-economic disparities. These similar themes provide even similar visual metaphors, such as the injured human body (the dilacerated ear in *Manda Bala* and the broken spinal cord in *Favela Rising*) and the top and the bottom perspective (as spatial markers of socioeconomic hierarchy).

One important distinction between the portrayal of violence and socio-economic disparities by the documentaries is the understanding of the way in which both themes relate. As Ávila (2008) observes, AfroReggae's project is to "release [favela dwellers] from the fixed identity under which they are discriminated, dehumanized, and criminalized" (paragraph 2). In this sense, AfroReggae attempts to dismantle the alleged indistinguishableness between *favela* and violence, i.e., the illusory natural correspondence between the two. Manda *Bala*, contrastingly, as I sustain, ends up reinforcing the alleged indistinguishableness between poverty and violence because of its cause-consequence argument and expository structure. At the same time that *Manda Bala* shows the production of exclusion by the state--which should use its resources to create fair living conditions to its citizens--and shows that the wealthy minority is also responsible for such exclusion--when benefitting from the unequal distribution of wealth--it also reduces the participants into strict categories of outlaws and victims, and connects them through a totalizing argument.

In chapter 2, I have mentioned Jason Kohn's stated attempt to provide a different portrayal of poverty from those of "cinema verité". According to Kohn, "for too long, films about the problems of the

developing world have been dominated by images of the slum, of poverty, and of violence, all the while excluding the culpable parties" (*Manda Bala Press Notes*, 5). It is interesting to compare the association between poverty and violence in each documentary to its stated objectives. AfroReggae's project of dismantling the supposedly natural association between poverty and violence suits well *Favela Rising*'s, that of producing an alternative portrayal to that of "global disharmony" (Zimbalist, "Director's Statement", paragraph 2) reinforced by the media. *Manda Bala* attempts to provide a new perspective to the association by adding the "culpable parties" to the equation. One question to be asked is whether such addition, in *Manda Bala*, despite its intention of gaze reversal, does not reinforce "the patronizing clichés of typical 'third-world' documentaries" (*Manda Bala Press Notes*, 5). After all, *Manda Bala* implies that the rich profit from the perpetuation of poverty, but does so by portraying the poor as the rich's *violent* victim. That is, the documentary attempts to criticize the dominant discourse that foments marginalization without being able to strike at its foundations. By reproducing the dominant view of the poor as violent, *Manda Bala*'s sharp critique of the Brazilian fomentation of the privileges of the wealth unfortunately loses much of its power.

One can criticize *Manda Bala*'s reductive portrayal of Brazilian socioeconomic margins (and of Brazil) through its reductive portrayal of immigrants from the North and Northeast. The documentary makes the suggestion that these immigrants are responsible for the urban violence in the southeast regions of Brazil. The argument becomes explicit in one of General Attorney Cláudio Fonteles's interviews, in which he explains that "[t]oday, all the money has been concentrated in São Paulo. There's no money in the Amazon, Pára, Piauí, Ceará. In these poor regions people have to migrate in order to survive, so they migrate to São Paulo (…) So, here comes the violence" (*Manda Bala* 0:52:47-0:54:46). Fontele's argument--which is confirmed by Magrinho's statement that many people from the *favela* where he lives have come from the northeast--is problematic since it links violence to immigration, a connection that is itself prejudicial (and which is related to the violence committed against immigrants worldwide). In *Manda Bala*, this argument is linked to a previous one (corruption causes migration that produces violence, or, shortly, corruption produces violence), which seems to release the immigrants of the responsibility of committing violence (since they are induced to commit it by the corrupted system). This "release of responsibility", nonetheless, still reiterates the naturalistic and reductive portrayal of the immigrant (and the *favela*'s

inhabitants) as a "product of the environment", which is confirmed by Patrícia's statement that she forgives her kidnappers "in the sense that they were born in crime" (*Manda Bala* 1:16:24-1:16:47).

This is why it is important to read *Manda Bala* against its resource to the image of the "Brazilian violent poor victim" and the apparent neutrality with which such image is developed from *Manda Bala*'s cohesive argument. This does not mean to reject its portrayal, but to question some of its premises. The comparison between *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* is productive in this sense, not to polarize the discussion between a "bad" and a "good" portrayal, but to analyze how differences are articulated in each documentary in order to establish different identities, and how these articulations might be related to dominant cultural practices and (pre)conceptions. Both documentaries state that the quotidian of violence is imposed upon those who live in the *favelas*. There is a difference, nevertheless, in the manner in which they portray this imposition. *Manda Bala*'s focus is the (re)production of socioeconomic margins in Brazil by the top of Brazilian socioeconomic hierarchy, which leads the documentary to deal with fixed identities at the moment of their articulation; the problem is that it ends up reinforcing, re-fixing, and reframing the margins that it seeks to criticize. *Favela Rising* places the disempowerment of fixed identities (the *favelado* as seen by the dominant gaze) at the core of its portrayal--even, as Ávila's (2008) reading suggests, by making it again a problem through the reductive and negative portrayal of physical impairment (as restriction, immobility, stagnation). This different focus allows *Favela Rising* to portray the way in which differences (no longer those established by the dominant gaze) can be mobilized to affirm an active gaze from the *favela*.

Despite its reductionist quality, *Manda Bala*'s portrayal of the living conditions in big cities should not be taken for granted. After all, the unequal distribution of wealth and the strong class division within Brazilian society that accompanies such unequal distribution is one of its most reiterated themes. The conditions portrayed by the documentary--the fear of violence, and the search for security devices in big cities--have become, according to sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2009) the general picture of globalization. In his book *Confiança e Medo na Cidade*, Bauman states that cities have undergone a series of transformations related to a general loss of "community bonds", bonds which had for long been promoted by the state. With "deregulamentation," the individual could no longer count on the state, being left to find security in life on her own. Besides, with

"deregulamentation," more and more people became permanently excluded (since the state could no longer guarantee or promise that the condition of unemployment was temporary, for instance), and, once excluded, they became a threat to those that were still productive. That is, they became the "other" to be feared.

The contemporary city, Bauman states, has become a place of division in place of sharing. With the weakening of communal relations, its population becomes more and more reduced to two types of residents: the privileged minority and those permanently excluded. Whereas the former can escape from the quotidian life of the city through the enjoyment of a virtual life (that is, through the enjoyment of globalization), the latter are doomed to the space of city and its problems. The transnational dimension inhabited by the privileged minority lack the material problems that exist in the daily lives of the city: the physical encounter with the excluded part of the society, and the inevitability of their existence. However, as Bauman notes, this encounter, no matter how prevented, eventually takes place. This encounter with the excluded other only foments the prevention of its existence: the privileged becomes more and more secluded; the barrier higher and higher. It is the fear of difference that, according to Bauman, makes the physical separation in the city increasingly more indispensable. This transforms the city in a site of separation, the "*deposits of the problems caused by globalization*"[53] (32, my translation).

*Manda Bala* portrays a comparable situation in Brazil: seeing that the corrupted Brazilian state abandons their citizens, Brazilian citizens are left to "make their own luck"; they have to find a sense of security in life for themselves. The result of such situation in São Paulo is a city clearly divided. In addition, *Manda Bala* aligns with Bauman in its portrayal of the growing fear of violence (occurred in the encounter with the excluded other) and the enjoyment of a life detached from the sharing of space by the wealth minority.

In *Manda Bala*, these elements are treated with a certain irony, to the point that the fear of violence can be classified as paranoia. In fact, *Manda Bala* illustrates that the fear of violence is created by the violent socioeconomic division in Brazilian society, which is in turn perpetuated by the wealth minority: they (the wealthy Brazilians) possess the money that should be more equally distributed among the citizens, and, because of that, they are the ones who have to spend their

[53] "*depósitos de problemas causados pela globalização"* (Bauman 32, his italics).

money to distance themselves from the consequence of this unequal distribution.[54] The extreme case of the paranoia portrayed in the documentary is the anonymous entrepreneur Mr. M, who affirms to be impossible to survive in São Paulo without owning a bullet-proof car. Mr. M seems so preoccupied with his security that he intends to place two chips, from two different companies, in two different parts of his body, to trace him 24 hours whenever the technology is developed.[55] Dr. Avelar, for instance, profits from violence, and uses part of his money to avoid it: the enjoyment of Dr.Avelar's family in their country house is secured by the existence of a security guard and security cameras. Another ironic portrayal, which suggests the absurdity of the cycle created by unequal distribution of wealth, is the sequence in which subtitles show how the bullet-proof technique doubles the price of a car: the car is so expensive at the first place that it is only more absurd to spend more money to try to secure it. Before finding ways of escaping from violence (like attending escaping lessons), the documentary suggests that the wealthy minority should reflect upon their part in fomenting violence.

The likeness between Bauman's and *Manda Bala*'s arguments about the conditions of division and fear in contemporary big cities, nevertheless, does not settle their considerable difference. For Bauman, the fear felt by the wealth minorities in big cities is self-generative, i.e., it is not exactly grounded on any factual evidence. The wealth minority fears the encounter with difference (the excluded other), and attempts to escape from such encounter by secluding themselves. In *Manda Bala*, this fear, despite being mocked (after all, it depicts the fear of the

[54] Besides the individual profit from social exclusion (such Dr. Avelar's, and Cunha Lima's), *Manda Bala* shows that there is also a market (armored cars, helicopters, plastic surgery, security system) that profits from the paranoia of the rich.

[55] It is hard not to relate the level of paranoia suggested in Mr.M's desire for the control of his own body by private companies with the birth of the societies of control pointed out by philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1999) in his lecture "O Ato de Criação". According to Deleuze, if disciplinary societies (a concept developed by Michel Foucault) were characterized by the control of beings through the discipline of the body (in schools, in prisons, in the church), through rules that attempt to regulate the body, societies of control are characterized by the lack of centered controlling forces, such as organized institutions. In societies of control, the body is supposedly free of regulation, but is in fact monitored by distance. Deleuze exemplifies such operation with the image of the highway: even though it supposedly represents freedom of choice (one may choose to "take the road" and leave the ordinary life, and which road one wants to take), the road is itself a pre-chosen path. Today, the market is full of technological devices that provide apparent freedom for its users by regulation of use: cell-phones, internet, GPS, etc. What Mr. M desires is the supposed freedom that would come from the monitoring of his body by distance, a control that would keep him safe from the violence of the other.

wealthy as an exaggeration), is concurrently grounded on the image of the violent poor (the *favelado*, the kidnapper, the immigrant from the north and the northeast), of the mutilated body, of the diseased society, etc. Class segregation in Brazilian society, *Manda Bala* misleadingly suggests, is fomented by those that must protect their wealth with the help of private security companies and by those that are "led" to commit crimes against the rich.

The use of kidnapping ransom video is exemplary in this respect: it is placed in-between certain sequences in the documentary, helping to construct the argument that corruption and violence are associated. The first insertion of kidnapping ransom footage occurs in the first few minutes of the documentary, in-between the initial sequence of the target carrier dressed as a woman that is shot (*Manda Bala* 0:0:32-0:01:09). Over the gray and grainy video image of a blind-folded woman, who is rapidly identified as a victim of kidnapping as soon as voices start to menace its probable first viewer ("her life is in your hands"), the subtitles informing that *Manda Bala* is "a film that cannot be shown in Brazil" appears. It is hard not to dissociate the image of the ransom footage from the subtitles that accompany it: is not the current viewer of the footage (the spectator who receives it already edited and full of threatening meanings) almost inevitably associated with the foreign (Eurocentric) gaze, who stares, probably aghast, at the act of savagery so explicitly open to one's eyes, and wonders, with a sigh of relief, about the privilege of fearing the image at such a distance?[56] Besides, is not the foreign gaze, glimpsed at the moment it stares at its other, identified with the gaze of the Brazilian wealth minority, supposedly criticized by the documentary? Again, the political relevance of *Manda Bala*'s portrayal may be lessened by its resort to fixed identities, of the construction of the other as violent and savage, which leads to the topic of cannibalism.

The different articulations of socioeconomic margins in *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* can be observed in their resource to the image of the injured human body. In *Manda Bala*, the fragmentation of the human body provoked by kidnappers indicates that something is out of order in Brazilian society. The metaphor of social cannibalism is used to indicate this dysfunction. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this metaphor is

[56] Karen Backstein (2007), in her review of *Manda Bala*, also ponders upon such possibility: "*Manda Bala* opens with the hoopla born of its two awards at Sundance—a jury award for best documentary and an award from cinematography. Obviously the celebrities at that star-studded festival were shocked to learn how terrible things were in Brazilian largest contemporary city. Or maybe they just fear that eventually, here, it might happen to them too" (61)

used to indicate the way in which Brazilian corrupt politicians provoke the violence of the poor when stealing public money. According to Maggie Kilgour (2008), the metaphor of cannibalism, which has for long been used as "an ideological device for justifying racism and imperialism" (239), has changed throughout time. In contemporary societies, according to Kilgour, cannibalism is also used as a metaphor to criticize capitalistic consumption (241). This alternative use of cannibalism is also analyzed by Renata Wasserman and Anelise Reich Corseuil (forthcoming). In *Chronically Unfeasible* (Sergio Bianchi, 2000), for instance, Wasserman and Corseuil explain that the metaphor of cannibalism suggests the "confrontation between individuals within a capitalist transnational order" (7). There is a suggestion of such metaphor in *Manda Bala* when the frogs from Diniz's farm are being transported abroad by airplane. Nevertheless, as a whole, the metaphor of cannibalism in *Manda Bala* is circumscribed by national borders; less than isolating the critique of consumerist societies, this circumscription reinforces the distance between Brazilians and the privileged gaze that is able to establish such metaphor. Cannibalism in *Manda Bala*, therefore, is related to a Eurocentric discourse that places cannibalism as a break away from civilization (negative difference), which illustrates Shohat and Stam's (1999) statement that Eurocentric discourses persist after the formal end of colonization.

*Favela Rising* also uses the image of the injured body to indicate threatening conditions; not, as in *Manda Bala*, to the nation as a whole, but to the inhabitants of Vigário Geral. If, in *Manda Bala*, the cutoff ear represents the allegedly unnatural ruptures within Brazilian society, which could be metaphorically amplified as society's self-mutilation through cannibalism, in *Favela Rising*, the disabled body represents the dangers of becoming entrapped or paralyzed within disempowering fixed identities such as those of the violent *favelado*. Nonetheless, as Ávila (2008) states, by negatively associating political immobilization with disability, *Favela Rising* itself reiterates a disempowering association, itself fixes the identity of the physically challenged (as incapable, handicapped, limited, deficient, etc.). As previously mentioned in chapter 3, this association is mainly constructed by the narrative of Sá's personal history (who in fact states that he would prefer death to immobility/disability), but cannot be detached from the story of the community, which for long had lived with their "spinal cord broken", as Sá puts it (*Favela Rising*, 2005, 0:02:42 – 0:02:53).

Yet, I believe there is a difference in the reiteration of disempowering fixed identities through the image of the body in the

documentaries. In *Favela Rising*, the naturalization of fixed identities is at least partially challenged in the affirmation of black identity and of a way out of the poor/rich, up/bottom hierarchy. That is, to a certain point, the documentary suggests that it is necessary to affirm differences, not as festive (even though it can be produced through the enjoyment of dance and music) multiplication of differences--which, as Jameson (2003) notes, is proportional to the standardization of markets--, but as a political act that defies the naturalized fixity of identities and negative differences and, consequently, the injustices committed on the authority of such "natural" inequalities. Besides, *Favela Rising* implies that both the disempowering negative difference and the empowering are narrative political acts, that is, they are created and can be fought for and against. *Manda Bala*, in turn, does not question the construction of unbalanced and negative differences by the dominant discourse, making it harder for one to envision/create forms of resistance.

The difference between the framing of socioeconomic margins in *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* can be exemplified by their use of spatial references to bottom and top. In *Manda Bala*, spatial references to top and bottom help to illustrate the division and discrepancies between poor and rich. While the poor are secluded to the bottom surface of São Paulo, the rich have accesses to panoramic views from the top of high buildings and the facilities of air traffic, which, according to Mr. M, offers the only secure way to make business in the city. The top, therefore, indicates the growing distance and tension between poor and rich, and the unbalanced hierarchy of their relation. In *Favela Rising*, this unbalanced hierarchy is also alluded to in the few aerial wide-angle shots that begin with the framing of the beach shore (and the high buildings that stand in front of it) and end with the framing of the *favela*. As previously mentioned in chapter 2, the upper position of the *favelas* at the top of the hills contradicts its bottom position in the economic hierarchy. *Favela Rising* uses this spatial reversion to indicate a way out of the fixity of the socio-economic hierarchy and a change in the perspective (from a gaze of the *favela* to a gaze from the *favela*), not only by stressing the top spatial position of Vigário Geral, but by indicating the upward movement of rising.

In both documentaries, the view from the top represents differences and privileges. Nonetheless, these differences and privileges suggest parting portrayals of socio-economic discrepancies. In *Manda Bala*, the view from the top privileges differences that are disempowering; it represents a vantage point from which economic discrepancies might, if only for a few moments, be ignored by the

distant view of the city landscape--it is through this vantage point that the critique of *Manda Bala* is perhaps most incisive, because it shows that the fear of violence, which supposedly forces the wealth minority to higher places, is actually a deliberate avoidance of the harsh reality of social injustice. Contrastingly, In *Favela Rising*, the view from the top privileges differences that are empowering. It suggests a vantage point from which the disempowering difference--imposed from the gaze that looks down to the bottom side of the economic hierarchy--gives way to positive one (the valorization of African heritage, for instance).[57]

The parting framings of socio-economic margins through the view of the top are also exemplified by the presence of helicopters in both documentaries. As aforementioned, the helicopter in *Manda Bala* signals the distance between rich and poor in São Paulo (and in Brazilian society), and the vantage point from which such distance become momentarily less troubling. It signals what Jason Kohn defines as "the new reality in Brazil": "[t]he businessman leaving his bulletproof car, flying through the city in a helicopter while being continually tracked through a GPS satellite connected to a microchip resting somewhere underneath his skin" (*Manda Bala Press Notes* 5-6). In *Favela Rising*, the sound and image of the helicopter in the beginning of the documentary signal the interruption of life of the inhabitants of Vigário Geral by the police; they indicate an institution of danger, rather than of security; of control, rather than of welfare.[58] Interestingly, these

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[57] Here I make use of W.E.B. DuBois' notion of black double-consciousness which appears in *The Soul of Black Folks* (1903). In this book, DuBois describes the conflicting existence of black people in slaving America: the perception of oneself as a negative "other". In DuBois words, the American world "yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (364). However, double-consciousness also has an empowering side, which is the possibility of affirming a positive difference. For DuBois, the Negro is "a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight" (364). That is, double-consciousness, at the same time that it implies an imprisonment into negative difference because it comes as a "revelation" of the dominant gaze, offers the possibility of affirming a positive difference.

[58] The anti-kidnapping squad in *Manda Bala* is portrayed as an institution that fails to promote enough security for their citizens because it is too small to supply for the needs of a city of 20 million people. In this sense, the portrayal of the police in *Manda Bala* corroborates the main argument of the abandonment of the citizens by their government, but maintains the dominant gaze that violence needs to be contained since it is out of control. The portrayal of the police in *Manda Bala* seems to stress not only the "science-fiction" (*Manda Bala Press Notes*, 5) quality of the (out of) reality of the upper class in Brazil but the language of fiction films that Kohn wanted to use in the documentary--does not Jamil, when describing his adoring guns ("Boom!"), or riding his motorcycle, reminds us of (excessively) determinate policemen or soldiers from American movies?

two distinguishing occasions in which the helicopter appears are complementary. Both the helicopter of the entrepreneur and the police helicopter indicate an implication of a certain view from the top, a view that, either by escaping from or policing "the poor", seclude them to a marginal position in society.


Images 4.1 and 4.2: The View from the Helicopter in *Manda Bala*


Images 4.3 and 4.4: The View of/from the top in *Favela Rising*

Similar to the image of the helicopter, the use of homemade footage in *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* present opposite and complementary perspectives of exclusion. In *Favela Rising*, the homemade footage reveals the repeated violence of the police against the inhabitants of the *favela*. Instead of being inserted as evidence of the violence of the poor, and thus to reinforce its "othering", *Favela Rising*'s homemade footage offers evidence of the institutional violence against the poor "other"--however, as stated in chapter 3, *Favela Rising* focuses less on these images of evidence than on images of narrative potential, since the images of exclusion, as AfroReggae and *Favela Rising* argue, can be replaced by images that do not reiterate it.

By the comparative analysis of *Manda Bala*'s and *Favela Rising*'s configurations of socioeconomic and national margins, therefore, it is possible to observe that both documentaries can be related to globalization. In *Manda Bala*, because of its national focus, this relation can be made in a more "thematic" way: in the portrayal of the fear of violence/marginalized other which characterizes globalized cities (Bauman 2009). *Manda Bala*'s view of the top, therefore, signals

globalization as the privilege of those who can fly around places and avoid the contact with margins. *Manda Bala*, in its national portrayal, also relates to globalization because it shows the forces of the nation in action, producing exclusion while creating a sense of national identity among its participants.[59] *Favela Rising*, signaling the exclusion produced by national forces, also signals the existence of neighborhoods that can resist such exclusion by articulating differences that are not conformed to *Manda Bala*'s view of the top, and that can be associated with other neighborhoods and other forms of resistance. The privileged view of the *favela* in *Favela Rising* is related therefore not to globalization as privilege (from the top), but to globalization as the possibility of other social formations that defy dominant ones. In other words, *Favela Rising*'s configuration of margins calls attention to that other globalization, which Appadurai (2009) names from "below".

[59] I thank professors Eliana de Souza Ávila and Alessandra Soares Brandão for signaling me some other crucial aspects in which *Favela Rising* and *Manda Bala* relate to globalization. Both documentaries and my reading fail to explore the global dimensions of both corruption and drug traffic, and the transnational circulation of capital stimulated by these parallel economies. To locate (and isolate) such problems within "underdeveloped countries" means to evade the question of how global market (and the socioeconomic unbalances intensified by it) works today also through national politics.

# CHAPTER 5
# FINAL REMARKS

This thesis proposed an analysis of the configuration of Brazilian socioeconomic and national margins in the documentaries *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising*, drawing chiefly upon the concept of globalization. The effort was to analyze the documentaries not as static portrayals uniquely, but as texts that set out different types of cultural forces at the moment they attempt to organize a relatively stable portrayal of a given reality, or, to use Bill Nichols' (1991) terms, at the moment that they construct an argument about the historical world through representation. In this sense, the theoretical discussions about globalization hold by authors such as Arjun Appadurai and Fredric Jameson provided a context--within which the documentaries could be analyzed--as well as a framework for the analysis of the corpora. This is because the discussions about globalization, besides attempting to describe the complex "disjunctures" of the "global cultural economy", as Appadurai names it, attempt to bring new analytical tools to understand them.

As framework, the discussions about globalization allowed me to consider the "subjective" factor--the ways in which the representations between cultures are affected by political and historical factors, and by (pre)conceptions of a culture about another--that Sigfried Kracauer (1949) analyzes in the representation of foreigners in Hollywood films in relation to Appadurai's conception of culture as the articulation of differences that constitute the identities of given groups. The analysis of the configuration of socioeconomic and national margins in the documentaries therefore attempted to take into consideration the factor that cultures are not static. As I have stated in Chapter 4, the "subjective" factor (especially understood as preconceptions) could hardly be ignored in portrayals such as *Manda Bala*'s. Nevertheless, in other documentaries, such as *Favela Rising*, which intends to activate viewers politically less than portray a foreign culture from an established distance, an analysis limited to preconceptions was less productive. This is not to say that *Favela Rising* eliminates foreign/national relations, but that it calls for other types of conceptual parameters. Appadurai's (1996) definitions of imagination as "an organized field of social practices", and of mediascapes as "imaged-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality" that gives way to new forms of "imagined lives" (35) seemed especially pertinent for the analysis of *Favela Rising* and its project of bringing new and positive images of/for the world. Imagination, in the case of *Manda Bala*, was

equally important, since it suggested the maintenance of Brazil as an "empire of the imaginary"[60] (Amancio 45), a locus for the Eurocentric gaze to project its beliefs about its cultural other.

As context, the discussions about globalization helped me understand how nation, for instance, could play different parts in *Manda Bala* and in *Favela Rising*. The reinforcement of national margins in *Manda Bala*, in opposition to the stressing of other social formations in *Favela Rising*, is very significant in that it shows the homogenizing forces of the nation in action. That is, *Manda Bala* illustrates well the argument, present not only in Jameson (2003) but also in Appadurai (1996), that the nation is still the major force in conforming group identities, even though globalization has intensified social formations not strictly defined by national boundaries. *Favela Rising* seems to support this argument when portraying the marginalization of the *favelas* by the Brazilian state while showing that social formations beyond the nation are being continuously formed. Together, *Manda Bala* and *Favela Rising* compose an intriguing example of some of the disjunctures of globalization, of the simultaneous contradictory forces that act upon people. One of the conclusions of this investigation, therefore, is that the two documentaries gather opposite and complementary forces at play in globalization, such as national and transnational social formations.

The choice of the term "margins" was made taking into consideration the double use of the concept (globalization as context and as framework) as well as the documentaries thematic parallelisms. I considered, then, that the socioeconomic and national margins are not only portrayed by the documentary (in ways that can be associated to the context of globalization), but also constituted by them (since cultural differences are not preexistent to the filmic portrayal). And what margins are constituted in the documentaries? An answer to this general question was first attempted with a close reading of each documentary, which attempted to establish a dialogue between the context of production of the documentaries (the production notes available at the official websites), their reception (gathering of different reviews), and their structure (analysis).

As developed in chapters 2 and 4, *Manda Bala* presents an argumentative, expository, and circular structure based on the representation of Brazil as a nation-state, whose enormous socioeconomic disparities and urban violence result from a history of

[60] "império do imaginário" (Amancio 45).

governmental corruption. Such representation is consistent with director Jason Kohn's stated objective of testing the hypothesis that "there is a literal connection between large-scale political corruption and street violence in Brazil" (*Manda Bala Press Notes*, Director's Statement). Many international reviews compliment *Manda Bala*'s ability to test such hypothesis by joining apparently disconnected elements (frog farming and ear reconstruction surgeries, for instance), which are revealed to be interconnected pieces of the same problem. In chapter 2, I have made an analogy between such ability to connect disjointed facts into a totalizing structure (notably created by editing) and the surgical procedure for reconstituting mutilated ears presented by the documentary. In my opinion, *Manda Bala* attempts to make sense of the chaotic condition of Brazilian society in a similar way as Dr. Avelar attempts to amend the body that has been disfigured by violence. The search for coherence is present in *Manda Bala* not only through its assertive and harmonious structure (harmonious in the sense that every group of participants and problems are connected as parts of a puzzle) but also in its portrayal of Brazil as a nation suffering from a dysfunction. In Chapter 4, with the help of *Favela Rising*, this alleged argumentative coherence could be more understandably related with the maintenance of a dominant gaze through which differences are negatively fixed. The unfair Brazilian socioeconomic margins are portrayed in *Manda Bala* as a disorder in the supposedly regular functioning of society.

If the image of body mutilation attempts to critique the violence produced by the irresponsible governmental representation of Brazilian citizens, and the desperate effort of the wealth minority to protect themselves from that violence, such image also reinforces the metaphor of a society malfunctioned by the disruption of its natural order. One of the consequences of such thought is that it implies a natural condition for the body, that there is a right place for its citizens to fit in. In this sense, it views every lack of order as a type of disease. This is exemplified and reiterated not only through the image of the retaliated ear (which can only be replaced by a fake ear, a more-the-less image of the previous ear), but especially through cannibalism. The cannibalism of frogs, provoked by lack of food, is associated to a type of social cannibalism, provoked by lack of fair living conditions. However, cannibalism provoked by malnutrition exists only because of the cannibalism committed by corrupted politicians and the upper classes--the shot of the cow rib that Dr. Avelar enjoys at his private barbecue is perhaps one of the most iconic in this respect, signaling the intercourse

between ear mutilation and cannibalism. Whichever is the case, whether it is cause or consequence, the metaphor of social cannibalism attributes to violence an abnormal, non-civilized quality. Being cannibalism a disease spread to every Brazilian (even though the poor commit it only because corrupted politicians force them to), it is difficult not to conclude that Brazil is a diseased nation.

In my reading, I share film critic Lola Aronovich's (2008) opinion about the treatment of cannibalism in *Manda Bala*. Cannibalism is not only portrayed as a disease produced by a society in dysfunction, but as an act of savagery. In this point, the "othering" gaze is imposed, a gaze that portrays the cultural Brazilian other as cannibal. This "othering" gaze is exemplified in the scene, pointed out by Aguero, in which Dr.Avelar attests that the act of cutting off an ear with one's teeth is salvage. In this scene, the voice that makes such answer ("yes, very savage", Dr. Avelar replies) becomes inseparable from the voice which triggers it ("very salvage, isn't it?"). Perhaps a desire to capture the estrangement between poor and rich, the "othering" of the Brazilian poor by rich Brazilians, the scene ends up blending the fear of the poor other by Brazilian rich with the foreign gaze that attempts to capture such fear. Nonetheless, even being this fear of the other reproduced by the documentary own perspective, it exemplifies well Zygmunt Bauman's (chapter 4) statement that contemporary cities are the places that condense the problems brought by globalization.

The general conclusion regarding *Favela Rising,* topic of chapters 3 and 4, is that the documentary does not portray Brazil, but a group that has its own particularities and fights within Brazilian society. The documentary portrays problem of Brazilian urban violence and economic disparities in Brazilian society, like *Manda Bala,* and also of institutional corruption (the police); generally speaking, it could be said that *Favela Rising* also deals with the socio-economic margins of Brazilian cities, since it focuses on a marginalized group in Brazil, the *favelados*. However, the documentary favors the presence of community over the national context and the participants' national identities. That is, *Favela Rising* does not present a micro-portrait of Brazilian society. This type of portrayal matches Zimbalist's stated objective of producing a view that could activate its viewers and provide an alternative to images of "global disharmony" presented by the media.

The predominantly narrative structure of *Favela Rising* is much significant in its relation to that project of social change. As Eliana Ávila (2008) argues, AfroReggae works to dismantle the dominant association between poverty, blackness, and violence (negative

difference), and does that through the mobilization of positive differences (such as the valorization of African heritage). In the documentary, this dismantling of negative difference becomes a political act, a deliberate creation of a different story of Vigário Geral and of its inhabitants. The emphasis to narrative as political act implies that such change of story attempts to reach neither truth nor essence, since it must be continuously created. The "openness" that such narrative practice implies, as a have analyzed in chapter 4, is in accordance with Appadurai's notion of locality and neighborhood. Despite establishing necessarily some sense of stability, neighborhoods are always producing context, and consequently always changing. *Favela Rising*'s narrative of political ascent implies such constant change, which prevents Vigário Geral from being objectified by the portrayal, and AfroReggae from being portrayed as the answer to every poor neighborhood in the world (even though it should inspire other neighborhoods). That is, less than turning the work of *AfroReggae* either as an object for observation or for "salvation", *Favela Rising* attempts to engage into its narrative of social transformation.

Of course the infinite construction of neighborhoods implied in *Favela Rising*'s narrative act does not prevent contradictions or resort to dominant narrative strategies: there is too much of narrative in *Favela Rising* in the classical Hollywood structure sense of the word, which ends up overdramatically stressing the heroic qualities and vicissitudes of Anderson Sá's life. The resort to such traditional effect of narrative accords with Ávila's critique of *Favela Rising*'s reinforcement of reductive essentialisms in the use of metaphor of immobility as physical disability. Nonetheless, *Favela Rising*'s narrative of rising as political act is not parallel to *Manda Bala*'s cyclic argument based on fixed identities. And here again the potential political effect of narrative is important: while fixed identities and differences are used as the base of *Manda Bala*'s argument (and are therefore reiterated by it), in *Favela Rising* they are understood as social and political construction that must be contested. That is, differences have to be politically mobilized in *Favela Rising*, and corrected in *Manda Bala*. Such difference in approach makes a difference in portrayal: while *Manda Bala* portrays uniquely a supposed given reality, *Favela Rising* is in itself an attempt to change reality.

What results from the two isolated readings of the documentaries is that each allows for a distinctive understanding of margins. The margins of *Manda Bala* are the national and the economic, while *Favela Rising*'s must be continuously constructed and empowering difference.

The fact that each documentary puts forward different margins, as the work of Jameson, and mostly of Appadurai, shows, confirms the hypothesis that the documentaries can be analyzed as the very site in which such margins are configured. And from this comes the main conclusion of this dissertation, that the documentaries bring opposite and conflicting forces of globalization: *Favela Rising* when suggesting social formations beyond the margins of the nation, and when placing imagination as an important social and political force; *Manda Bala*, when showing the forces of the nation, and the continuous production of fear and individualization in globalized societies.

Another conclusion about the documentaries, which seems to have direct relation to their production projects, is that spatial references of top and bottom help configuring socioeconomic and national margins. As sustained in Chapter 4, *Manda Bala* signals the top as the space from which the privileged rich can make use of without being tormented by the encounter with the poor other. This top, which signals socioeconomic hierarchy, is contrasted to the horizontal *favelas*, and reiterated through the view from entrepreneurs' helicopters and high buildings. This perspective of the top is imbued with a critique of that upper hierarchical position, and of the paranoia of the rich. Nevertheless, in several instances of the documentary, it is possible to notice that this criticized privileged gaze parallels the privileged gaze of the foreigner who can look at is cultural other from a vantage point. In *Favela Rising*, the upper geographic position of Vigário Geral is used against its low position in social hierarchy. The documentary insists on the act and image of rising as a move beyond this social hierarchy, not as utopian transcendence, but as the image of empowering difference. The reiteration of images of rising marks a possibility of change; the wide-angle and aerial shots of the favela demonstrate such transformation of gaze as action.

I would like to make a final remark concerning this configuration of margins through the spatial reference to the top. Jameson's notion of globalization reinforces the fact that "proliferation of differences" cannot be detached from the development of consumerism standardization. Such harsh perspective upon globalization is confirmed by Bauman, and by Appadurai (*Fear of Small Numbers*, 2009), who also discusses the crescent violence committed against minorities. However, Appadurai's work also stresses that culture is always transforming itself. Rather than being a festive and naïve thought, this calls attention to the possibility of transformation in spite of standardization. Appadurai names "globalization from below" the transformations that occur within,

and for the benefit of, unprivileged sectors of societies (which, are, therefore, in the bottom position in socioeconomic hierarchy); in groups, for instance, such as AfroReggae. That is, globalization, even though it exacerbates inequality, like Bauman reinforces, can mobilize transformative action. The conclusion that *Favela Rising* and *Manda Bala* are opposite and complementary forces of globalization--and here is my final remark--can be analyzed from these different references to the top: the view from the top (globalization as economic disparities) and the transformation of the top (globalization from below).

Both *Favela Rising* and *Manda Bala* are promising subjects for further and future research. I have insisted upon the comparison between both documentaries, since I wanted to investigate globalization, but each documentary allows an extensive research of its own. *Manda Bala*'s representation of cannibalism is a great topic for discussion. It could be investigated further in its relation to a colonialist view, in its opposition to the Brazilian modernist conception of cannibalism, and in its conception of a society as organism. Other topics for future research could be *Manda* Bala's analysis of Brazilian governmental corruption, and its attempt to experiment the "language" of fiction films in documentary (which suggests a promising comparative study with similar documentaries). *Favela Rising* provides innumerous topics for more specific researches as well, such as the place of music and dance in social movements and other topics which are already at work, such as reflexive documentary (already at work in Corseruil's work (2008), and race and disability (Ávila, 2008). Another topic for discussion in *Favela Rising*, which could be extended to *Manda Bala*, is gender, given the background position of women in the documentary (in *Manda Bala*, the woman only appears as a victim). Both documentaries could be further compared in their construction of space and the city; a comparison which intrigued me and which I attempted to develop but which, I guess, requires more knowledge and use of specific concepts. Together, *Favela Rising* and *Manda Bala* enrich the corpora of documentary films about violence in Brazil as well, and consequently can trigger a comparative study between 'foreign' and 'Brazilian' gazes, already suggested in Fernão Ramos's (2008) inclusion of *Favela Rising* in contemporary documentaries about violence in Brazil. Finally, *Favela Rising* could be incorporated to a larger corpus of North-American documentaries that relate Latin American social conflicts to global struggles.

I hope this investigation has addressed and contributed to Tunico Amancio's (2000) question as to the ways in which Brazil would be

portrayed without the clichés of foreign fiction films in documentaries (192). Perhaps it is still possible to talk about clichés in contemporary foreign documentaries about Brazil, urban and fearful new ones, which establish the margins of Brazilian underdevelopment from a vantage point of view. Nevertheless, it also possible to talk about images that might challenge clichés beyond national margins, and that move us viewers to find other concepts to try to understand them.

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