Introduction: Contemporary Screen Horror in Brazil

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Os melhores filmes flertam – em algum momento, plano ou cena – com filme de terror.
[The best films flirt – in a given moment, frame or scene – with Horror.]

(Kleber Mendonça Filho, Facebook, 2 November 2023)

In 1947, Siegfried Kracauer published his classic film history *From Caligari to Hitler – A Psychological History of German Cinema*, in which he postulated that the themes popular on German screens shortly after the First World War could be understood as harbingers of the tragedy that would sweep the country from the 1930s. By assembling a large number of films whose common denominator was not direction, style or popularity, Kracauer detected a recurring theme: the division of the "German soul" between submission and rebellion in response to the fear of chaos and tyranny. For the author, the recurrence of this theme could be seen as a kind of social symptom. By applying the concept of the history of mentalities to film analysis and extracting political and ideological references from films in the form of subtexts, Kracauer argued that:

> The films of a nation reflect the mentality of that nation (…) for two reasons. Firstly, [because] they are never the product of a single individual (…) secondly, because they are intended for anonymous crowds (…). By recording the visible world – regardless of whether it is reality or an imaginary universe – films provide the key to hidden mental processes (…). What counts is not so much the statistically measurable popularity of films, but the popularity of their pictorial and narrative themes. (Kracauer 1988 [1947], 17–18)

In view of the thesis presented by Kracauer in his study of the cinema of the Weimar Republic, many critics claimed that he had based his analysis mainly on the interpretation of certain iconographic and thematic configurations, being selective in his choice of examples on the basis of which he postulated a structural convergence between dramatic and social conflict, and on the other social conflict. But the persistence of Kracauer's version, even in contemporary studies of German silent cinema, is due to this imaginary that built an irresistible teleology between the films of the 1920s and the historical catastrophe of Nazism. And even with all the caveats, Kracauer was among the first authors to demonstrate that the relationship between a nation's films and its history should have a privileged place in the reflection on cinema, whether as a communicational product or as an artistic expression.

In Brazil, reflections on national cinema and its relationship with historical processes form the basis of the main theoretical debates developed in academic film studies by foundational authors such as Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes, Jean-Claude Bernardet, Ismail Xavier and Maria Rita Galvão.[1] In particular, issues related to social inequalities (of class, gender, race, age, religious affiliation, and so on), both in the city and the countryside, were privileged themes for Brazilian cinema at key moments in its history. As noted by Mariana Souto (2019, 20), Brazilian film production in the 1960s, for example, was constantly analysed from perspectives that considered social class issues understood through the paradigm of what was called, especially in the field of documentaries, the sociological model (Bernardet 2009), which consisted of an approach to reality based on a strong desire for answers that would lead to social transformation, and this reverberated in the poetics of the films, with an emphasis on generalisations and globalising understandings.

From the second half of the 1990s, in the period known in Brazil as the *retomada* or cinema of revival (Nagib 2009), a different trend was observed. According to Ismail Xavier (2018, 312), films began to recurrently feature a "fixation on a state or situation from the past, or on something that has just been lost" and, with this, they reveal a "dramatic potential linked to postponed revenge projects, which find in cinema a variety of manifestations that make the figure of resentment (…) almost a national diagnosis". In this period, according to Xavier, "the dramas signal a dialectic of desire and frustration, of power games between husband and wife, parents and children, neighbour and neighbour which, tempered by violence, mark the effect not only of material poverty but also of the feeling of rivalry and failure" (2018, 313).

In the 2000s, inequalities in social relations were also highlighted on the big screen, this time with more "detailed attention to the characters, to the

[1] For more information on these authors and their work, see Conde and Dennison (2017), Bernardet (2009), Xavier (1997), and Galvão and Bernardet (1983).

relationships between individuals, often intricately linked to intimacy and affection" (Souto 2019, 22–23), in line with the notion of the subjective turn (Sarlo 2007). An affect often mobilised by Brazilian films of the 2000s, especially those made by filmmakers belonging to the generation born between the 1970s and 1980s, is the affect of fear, particularly one constructed by the horror genre.

In devising this collection of essays we were particularly interested in the rich work of this generation of filmmakers, how fear and disaffection are manifested in their work, their engagements with the generic conventions of horror cinema and the extent to which the tropes of Brazilian film culture highlighted above, such as social transformation and resentment, are revisited and reconfigured.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HORROR?

Fictional horror seeks to provoke a specific experience of disturbance of the sense of reality that includes a kind of interpretive collapse. The aim of this collapse is to throw characters and spectators into a mysterious realm imbued with Evil – which is almost always disturbing and disproportionate. The world, in these stories, contains evil forces that are beyond our control or comprehension, and can annihilate not only our existence as subjects, but also as bodies. It is this feeling that the world will exterminate us without our knowing how or when that writer and genre theorist Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890–1937) called fear of the unknown (2012), which can be embodied in the form of supernatural creatures, uncontrollable forces of nature or the madness of humanity itself.

In this sense, fictional horror can answer both individual existential questions about the meaning of life and death (Thacker 2011) and collective questions about the place we occupy in the natural world and in the society in which we have lived (Wood and Lipp 1979). In the latter sense, in his provocative work *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema and the Modern Horror Film* (2005), Adam Lowestein argues in favour of the possibility of horror films having participated productively in the debate on major issues of the twentieth century, due to their ability to provoke a shocking encounter with Evil. Drawing on Walter Benjamin, he states that "the Benjaminian notion of 'shock' (…) attests to the oppressed and impoverished state of modern experience, in which sensory hyperstimulation requires shocks in order to register a reaction; but shock is also a potential catalyst for the awakening of historical experience" (2005, 16).

Authors such as Paul Wells (2000) and Brigid Cherry (2009), among many others, consider that horror in the twentieth century reflected the individual

and social anxieties of each moment humanity experienced, including two world wars, the creation of the atomic bomb, advances in medicine, the changing social status of women, economic crises, and so on. It is no coincidence that the transformations in institutions such as the family, the army, education and the medical sciences over the course of the twentieth century have often been on the radar of horror fiction.

And if, as all these authors suggest, horror narratives can be thought of in the context of the philosophical and political debates of their time, the fact is that, in the twenty-first century, the genre's omnipresence in the media landscape and its popularity around the globe also seem to have produced a new contribution from the genre to reflections on the reality shared by society, and this contribution can be identified in narratives in which horror is not presented as an extraordinary fact, but as an experience linked to the banality of everyday life. In this sense, Thomas Elsaesser (2015) linked some of the principles of horror to a contemporary trend he called "new realism". For Elsaesser, the new realism problematises the conventions of Bazinian realism that have guided the idea of cinematic realism since the 1940s, identifying "a portal or entry point that no longer takes for granted the centrality of the human agent" (2009, 5). Instead, "characters' actions, narrative spaces, and dramatic situations challenge the spectator's 'suspension of disbelief', by featuring protagonists whose view of the world is (…) marked by limits placed on their physical or mental faculties: restrictions, which, however, turn out to be enabling conditions in some other register" (Elsasser 2009, 5). For Elsaesser, it is typical in these films for objects, spaces and houses to take on a particular type of presence or activity, leading us to the conventions of the horror film (2009, 10).

When discussing analogous occurrences in literature, Karl Schøllhammer (2012) observes that contemporary realism has lost some of its character as a channel for political and social denunciation, and brings with it a sense of a certain historical vacuum in political and aesthetic terms. For Schøllhammer, fiction brings an emersion into everyday life and intimate processes that involve basic affections of pain, fear, melancholy and desire that lead us to a sense of finality and catastrophe.

In this volume we approach fictional horror under this broader scope, both in the sense of the history of its expressions in culture and its ability to offer a perspective for understanding the world (and in our specific case, Brazil). We are not talking about horror cinema in the classical sense, or even horror films necessarily thought of as genre films, but rather about perceiving, in certain films, a particular conception of the existence of human beings and their history as potentially horrific. This political approach to horror films can be seen in films made around the world in the twenty-first century, and also by a new generation of Brazilian directors who propose an articulation of horror,

dystopia and social drama capable of reflecting on the limits of the country's social and economic reality (Cánepa 2013; Miranda 2014; Caetano 2018).

BRAZILIAN NECROPOLITICS

During the so-called "Lula Era" (2003–2012) – a term used to identify the first two terms of office of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the first term of his successor, Dilma Rousseff, both representing the Brazilian Worker's Party (PT, Partido dos Trabalhadores) – the economic growth of the sub-proletariat and working class was accompanied by an intensification of the sense of violence and insecurity in urban centres, especially among segments of the traditional middle classes. This was one of the causes of a prolonged political crisis that resulted in the impeachment of Rousseff in her second term (in 2016). Subsequently, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, a far-right candidate, was elected in 2018 to the Brazilian Presidency, guided by the Military (who had led the Brazilian conservative dictatorship from 1964 to 1985) and by a group of different reactionary and ultra-neoliberal forces.

As observed by Roberto Schwarz (2020), Brazilian society was then living in a new chapter of its history, "with the marriage of convenience between neoliberal economic reform and the reactionary project of bolsonarismo". For Schwarz, this reactionary project signified a highly complex return to a kind of pre-enlightened times that include the de-secularisation of politics, prosperity theology (represented by Evangelical churches imported *en masse* from the US), firearms in civilian life, attacks on speed cameras and hatred aimed at organised workers. *Bolsonarismo* is antisocial, but germinates "in the soil of contemporary society, in the vacuum left by the failure of the state" (2020).

In similarly negative mode, and in confrontation with denialism led by the Bolsonaro government in the face of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brazilian philosopher Vladimir Safatle commented on the ethical tragedy that gripped the country. He posits that the ethical substance of a people is defined through the way they deal with death: "It was a major theme among the Greeks, namely, how society destroys itself from the moment when it does not give the dead the right to mourn" (Safatle 2020). According to Safatle, mourning mobilises issues linked to memory, universality, recognition, suspension of time and the notion of what is intolerable. For the author, if one of the greatest tragedies that the Greeks bequeathed to us, *Antigone*, is precisely about the unconditional defence of the right to grief (even for the "enemy of the State"), it is because it expressed the tacit awareness that the trivialisation of erasing lifeless bodies represented the surest way to dissolve the community itself.

Safatle continues, for a society like Brazil, founded on the binary genocide/oblivion, built on the rubble of the indigenous and African genocide by four hundred years of slavery, the act of remembering the political force of mourning is a decisive operation. For Safatle, because Brazil was formed from the original fantasy of the *tabula rasa*, "all possession would be a civilising process to remove this land from its archaisms of stateless societies. As a result, genocide would not be genocide at all, just the violent but necessary march of historical development." For this reason, he concludes, "In Brazil, 'development' means a form of 'disappearance', of erasure. A society that starts this way without ever being able to look back and recover what has been destroyed, can only end in catastrophe" (Safatle 2020).

A "horrific" interpretation of the social and political situation faced by Brazil from the centre-leftist "Lula Era" until its nemesis, the "Bolsonaro Era", is demonstrated in the analysis of Brazilian films offered in this volume. The Bolsonaro era corresponded to a kind of slow revelation of something that was sustaining Brazilian society: necropolitics, as defined by Achille Mbembe (2003) as the policy of death adopted by the State and broadly approved by the population, witnessed, for example, in the policing of favelas and the refusal to address or express much concern for children caught by stray bullets, in the ingrained homophobia, despite appearances to the contrary, that translate into Brazil topping the charts for the highest number of homophobic and transphobic murders on earth, and from 2020, in the deadly mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic. To grasp the full extent of this phenomenon, we can turn to the insights of Sayak Valencia (2010). The Mexican philosopher introduced the chilling concept of "Gore Capitalism" to shed light on this kind of phenomenon of necropolitics in ex-colonies such as Mexico and Brazil. Through this lens, Valencia emphasises the grotesque spectacle of violence inherent within neoliberal systems, prompting critical examination of the interplay between capitalism, power dynamics, and violence in contemporary society.

As a number of authors reveal in this volume, the Bolsonaro era was in fact initiated with huge protests against Dilma Rousseff's (PT) government in 2013. In the protests, a clear division was built between those who sought to radicalise the still very embryonic and slow conquests of inclusion and social justice of the government of the Workers' Party, and those who desired the radicalisation of a traditional Brazilian necro-state aimed at ensuring the maintenance of the violent structure of races, classes, and genders in Brazil. In that sense, it was no coincidence that Michel Temer, the vice president (of the right-wing MDB Party) who took office in 2016 after Rousseff was ousted by parliamentary coup, was systematically compared to a monster and a vampire in internet oppositional memes, newspapers, cartoons and even in Carnival parades during the two and a half years he was in power. He became the most

unpopular president of modern Brazilian history, but he still ushered in a period of right-wing populism.

As understood by Deivison Faustino (2023), the Brazilian far-right era is marked by the jingoistic mobilisation of broad popular sectors around a project that contradictorily articulates radical economic liberalism with a specific type of conservatism, bringing together Zionist-inspired evangelical churches, segments of the retail and agriculture sectors, heavily armed urban militias affiliated or not to military businesses, and (neo)Nazi organisations. According to Faustino (2023), this was a unique process for which some of the "old" sociological categories appear to have analytical limits, given the evident observation of a transnational re-articulation of political forces defending the status quo or, at the very least, reacting to potential threats – even if symbolic – to its alteration.

Considering the urgent need to understand how Brazilian cultural production has revealed essential insights into this dramatic historical process, this book brings together researchers of Brazilian cinema to understand the dialogue between Brazilian horror cinema and the country's political and social experience referred to by Ivana Bentes (2021) as "the greatest experiment in contemporary necropolitics". For Bentes, the anti-Enlightenment and violent or traditionalist Brazilian imaginary has become widespread, founding algorithms, meme factories, platforms, WhatsApp, and an underworld of networks. This obscurantist media age no longer has borders. Thus, according to the author, to understand contemporary Brazil, it is worth diving into the history of brutalities, mysticism, and popular revolts: in our view, and as this volume attests, many of these stories are represented in contemporary Brazilian horror films.

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF BRAZILIAN CINEMATIC HORROR

As demonstrated by the multiplication of Brazilian horror short films since the early 2000s and, more recently, the emergence of a substantial body of feature-length films, Brazil is experiencing a new wave of horror production. Key to defining the starting point and direction of this new wave was the return to the screens of José Mojica Marins (Coffin Joe), as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of this volume. Coffin Joe reemerged in the big-budget production *Embodiment of Evil* (*Encarnação do Demônio*) in 2008, which ended the cult trilogy that started more than forty years before with the feature films *At Midnight I'll Take Your Soul* (*À Meia-noite Levarei Sua Alma*, 1964), and *This Night I'll Possess Your Corpse* (*Esta Noite Encarnarei no Teu Cadáver,* 1967). Produced with the support of young filmmakers such as Dennison Ramalho and Paulo Sacramento, *Embodiment of Evil* sought to link Mojica's cinema to

international trends of the twenty-first century – notably *torture porn* – but it also made reference to the filmmaker's pioneering spirit in the dramaturgy of explicit violence, a hallmark of his work from the beginning. Since then, an articulation between filmmakers, critics, and their audiences through movies, exhibitions, magazines, websites and festivals suggests the constitution of a market space that has become progressively more relevant in Brazilian cinema. This increase is still far from being as impactful as homegrown Horror had been in the 1970s, when Brazil produced dozens of sexploitation horror feature films, attracting millions of spectators (Cánepa 2008).

With the *retomada* and resumption of Brazilian cinema in the mid-1990s, Horror slowly recovered, but the new generation of filmmakers and producers hardly identified with their Brazilian antecedents of popular origin. They had learned about the horror genre amid the chaotic universe of VHS rental companies and movie guides; the Horror features shown on TV; the international teen hits of the 1980s (such as the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, started by Wes Craven in 1984). A large part of these new directors also graduated from universities, on courses such as Communication Studies or Arts, and thus had a training that differs from the self-taught standard of the previous generation.

It should also be noted that a significant part of the production of popular Brazilian horror films was not available to these filmmakers to inspire them. Many of the famous Brazilian horror films of the 1970s still circulate only on precarious ripped copies of VHS tapes recorded on TV in the 1980s; a small number have been restored for viewing on Brazilian cable channels such as Canal Brasil. Most of these films received very little critical attention when they were produced, which hampered the construction of a consistent memory in relation to them. Thus, the directors of the new generation of Brazilian Horror kept Mojica as a reference, but they also drew inspiration from key names in international Horror of the 1980s such as Sam Raimi, John Carpenter, Lucio Fulci, David Lynch, George Romero, Lloyd Kauffman and Stuart Gordon, approaching the genre in a more diversified way.

In the second decade of the 2000s, the technical quality and the low cost of digital technology also allowed more ambitious independent productions to start circulating in international festivals dedicated to the horror genre (such as Rojo Sangre, in Buenos Aires, and Sitges, in Spain) and also to enter the market for Brazilian festivals such as the Brasília, Rio and Tiradentes festivals. Moreover, until the implementation of Law 12,485/2011, which established mandatory Brazilian content on cable channels, national production of all formats and genres was favoured, freeing up space on television for films made in an independent and shallow cost scheme, such as the films of Rodrigo Aragão (*Mud Zombies* [*Mangue Negro*, 2009]; *Dark Sea* [*Mar Negro*, 2013]). The excitement around horror films has even influenced more commercial cinema. In 2014, this was evident with the launch of feature films starring

famous Brazilian TV stars: *Isolados*, by Tomás Portella, starring the actor Bruno Gagliasso; *Quando eu era vivo* (*When I was Alive*), by Marco Dutra, starring the actor Antonio Fagundes and the pop singer Sandy. But the films that most openly discussed issues related to Brazilian society found more resonance among critics and academics, and are those included in the volume.

Despite the many crises and new beginnings of film production throughout its history, Brazilian cinema has never ceased to reflect, in different ways, on Brazilian history and culture. The legacy of colonialism and slavery in Brazilian history and social relations has been treated by national cinema in several different modes (comic, ironic, dramatic, revolutionary, underground, criminal, and so on). Since the 2010s, these themes have received a new framing that had hitherto not been developed extensively by groups of filmmakers: the horror framing. As the analysis of films in this volume demonstrates, in these films, Horror is not caused only by supernatural forces or insane characters, but also because of the atavistic problems of Brazilian society, such as racism, underdevelopment, poverty, isolation, and inequality. The films bring a gothic sense of decay, perhaps dealing with an anxious perception of the social changes that the country has been going through in the past thirty years, such as the universalisation of basic education, the reduction of poverty through minimum income programmes, the rise of the sub proletariat to the working class (Singer 2012) – changes that were violently interrupted after the election of Bolsonaro supported by the Brazilian traditional middle class.

Horror production in Brazil today, then, is linked to the video culture of the 1980s and 1990s, and to the emergence of publications related to the punk movement, underground comics and rock bands. In Brazil, fanzines such as *She-Demons Zine*, by Cesar Coffin Souza, and *B-Zine*, by Lúcio Reis, launched in the 1990s, are still a reference for some of the filmmakers who today produce horror films. A significant portion of them migrated their production to cyberspace in the early 2000s. This same generation, found initially in mailing lists on the Web, then electronic magazines, blogs and social media, created a culture of debate that introduced products (comics, records, books) that go far beyond the films themselves.

A word here on post-horror, a term first coined by Steve Rose in 2017 as an informal reaction to a small body of work produced in the US in the mid-2010s, and specifically to *It Comes At Night* (Trey Edward Shultz, 2017), in which the "monster" (the "it" of the title) is neither named nor shown. Given the ubiquitousness of the expression, particularly in the UK, where both a themed film event has been held at the Barbican and a monograph has been published using the term post-horror,[2] we want to highlight both the

[2] "Post-Horror Summer Nights" ran over five nights at the Barbican in 2022. See Post-Horror Summer Nights | Barbican. See also David Church (2021).

similarities and, more importantly, the differences in the corpus of films we are working with, and we stress in particular that the kind of films we discuss here cannot be conflated with post-horror, simply because they are arguably, in most cases, overtly political, well-made films from the 2010s with a tangential link to the horror genre.

In terms of similarities, coincidentally, our corpus of films begins precisely in 2008, the date of the first film included in Church's US-centred book-length study of post-horror. And it is worth noting that Brazilian producer Rodrigo Teixeira is behind a "core example" (Church 2021, 15) of post-horror, Robert Eggers' *The Witch* (2015),[3] as well as the Brazilian horror film *Friendly Beast* (*O Animal Cordial*, Gabriela Amaral Almeida, 2017), analysed in Chapter 14. We do not, then, argue against any link or inspiration being drawn from US horror film trends and some of the films discussed in the volume.

Implicit in Rose's definition of post-horror is that the films set up traditional genre expectations and then do not fulfil them (Rose 2022). This is only the case with a handful of the films discussed in the volume, including those that we have specifically labelled post-horror in Part 2. Not all of the films in this collection shirk the representation of monsters, or the "shocking spectacles and visceral disgust" (Church 2021, 7) associated with the horror genre. Furthermore, references to both the ability of post-horror films to cross over into multiplexes (Rose 2022; Church, in Heald 2021), and their distinctly slow style (Church 2021, 15) can be regarded as culturally specific: the market for Brazilian films within Brazil works to its own set of dynamics that confuses the art-house/multiplex binary, and independently produced films in Brazil have long been associated with a slower pace.

While Church's primary corpus, dating from 2008, is made up entirely of US and UK feature films, with a smattering of European movies being included in a secondary list of films, it is worth recalling that East Asian filmmakers such as Hideo Nakata and Chan-wook Park had already set the scene for a shift to "elevated horror" in the late 90s and early 2000s, and we thus agree with Church that "the post-horror cycle" is "an upsurge in an art-horror tradition that's been part of the genre all along" (Church, in Heald 2021).

Brazilian film audiences continue to consume US movies like there is no tomorrow, including so-called crossover horror films that have got "through the multiplex door" (Rose 2022) as well as more standard fare such as *Five Nights at Freddy's* (Emma Tammi, 2023). But we want to emphasise here that it does not follow that Brazilian horror, post or otherwise, is nothing more than a pale imitation of Hollywood fare. The individual chapters in this volume attest to the breadth of influences of Brazilian filmmakers, in which US horror

3 Teixeira also produced Robert Eggers' *The Lighthouse*.

directors such as John Carpenter, and World Cinema arthouse filmmakers such as Apichatpong Weerasethakul feature alongside Brazil's underground filmmaking tradition, for example.

ORGANISATION OF THE BOOK

This volume brings together for the first time in the English language readings of twenty-one feature-length films, one short film and one TV series released between 2008 and 2022 that engage with both Brazilian horror and the horrors of Brazil. The works examined in sixteen chapters in this volume by eighteen scholars from Brazil, USA and the UK, are:

Encarnação do Demônio (*Embodiment of Evil*, José Mojica Marins, 2008, 95 min)

Os Famosos e Os Duendes da Morte (*The Famous and the Dead*, Esmir Filho, 2009, 100 min)

Os Inquilinos (*The Tenants*, Sergio Bianchi, 2009, 113 min)

A Alegria (*The Joy*, Felipe Bragança and Mariana Meliande, 2010, 106 min)

Ninjas (Dennison Ramalho, 2010, 23 mins)

Trabalhar Cansa (*Hard Labour*, Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra, 2011, 110 min)

O Som ao Redor (*Neighbouring Sounds*, Kleber Mendonça Filho, 2012, 131 min)

O Diabo Mora Aqui (*The Fostering*, Rodrigo Gasparini and Dante Vescio, 2015, 100 min)

Mate-me por favor (*Kill Me, Please*, Anita Rocha da Silveira, 2015, 100 min)

O Animal Cordial (*Friendly Beast*, Gabriela Amaral Almeida, 2017, 98 min)

Era uma vez Brasília (*Once there was Brasília*, Adirley Queiroz, 2017, 100 min)

As Boas Maneiras (*Good Manners*, Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra, 2017, 135 min)

O Nó do Diabo (*Devil's Knot*, Ian Abé, Jhésus Tribuzi, Ramon Porto Mota, Gabriel Martins, 2017, 128 min)

Mormaço (*Sultry*, Marina Meliande, 2018, 94 min)

Morto Não Fala (*The Nightshifter*, Dennison Ramalho, 2018, 110 mins)

Os Jovens Baumann (*The Young Baumanns*, Bruna Carvalho Almeida, 2018, 81 min)

Azougue Nazaré (2018, Tiago Melo, 80 min)

O Clube dos Canibais (*The Cannibal Club*, Guto Parente, 2019, 81 min)

Tremor Iê (Lívia de Paiva and Elena Meirelles, 2019, 87 min)

Bacurau (Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, 2019, 131 min)

Todos os Mortos (*All the Dead Ones*, Caetano Gotardo and Marco Dutra, 2020, 120 min)

Desalma (*Unsoul*, Ana Paula Maia, TV series, 2020–2022)

In terms of the gender, regional identity and generation of the filmmakers, and the geographical representation of their films, the volume can be defined as expressive of advances in representativity made in relation to Brazilian film culture over the last twenty years. Just under half of the films in our corpus were directed by women, illustrating a remarkable upsurge in women-helmed film production in general, and engagement with the notoriously male-dominated horror genre in particular.

Films in this volume feature the megacities of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, along with the capital city, Brasilia and state capitals in the northeast, namely Recife and Fortaleza. Rural areas include upstate Sao Paulo, the interior of the states of Pernambuco and Ceara in the northeast and Rio Grande do Sul in the far south. Particularly under the PT governments (2003–2016) initiatives were put in place to fund audiovisual culture produced and filmed in areas of the country beyond the dominant Rio–Sao Paulo axis. The horror film map presented in this volume, and in production illustrates broadly the progress made in this regard. It is, however, incomplete, with the north, central and Amazonian states being notably omitted. A very small number of productions have been filmed in the Amazon region and featuring indigenous casts, for example. These range from problematic, exoticised and demonised indigenous representations, found in films such as *Curupira, o Demônio da Floresta* (*Curupira, Demon of the Forest*, Erlanes Duarte, 2021), to films located more squarely in science fiction production, such as *A Terra Negra dos Kawa* (Kawa, Sergio Andrade, 2018).

This volume only includes an analysis of the work of one Black director, and no Black women directors or producers, highlighting the huge amount of work that remains to be done around inclusion of Afro-Brazilians in audiovisual production behind the cameras. That said, there is in fact a growing body of Afro-Brazilian filmmaking at the intersection between sci-fi, fantasy and horror which is contributing to a boom in Brazil in all things Afrofuturist, or films that work speculatively with the dystopias of the present (Freitas and Messias 2018).[4] This boom ranges from feature films such as Glenda Nicácio and Ary Rosa's *Voltei!* to commissioned lockdown shorts such as Grace Passô's *República*, and music videos, for example rap artist Emicida's *Eminência Parda* (*Éminence Grise*, 2019). Further examples include the Carvalho Brothers'

4 Alfredo Suppia, a contributor to this volume, discusses many of these films in his forthcoming monograph *Southerly Short Circuits: The Brazilian Science Fiction Film* (SUNY Press).

short film *Chico* (2017) and the high-profile Black actor and activist Lázaro Ramos's recent big-budget directing venture *Medida Provisória* (*Executive Order*, 2022). Both films are set in a very near future in which the government takes action to "resolve security issues" by fitting Afro-Brazilian children and teens with electronic ankle tags in *Chico*, and the forced "repatriation" of Afro-Brazilians to Africa in *Executive Order*. In relation to *Chico*, Kênia Freitas and José Messias (2018) argue that the film's speculative elements are not to be found in an imaginary construction of a hi-tech future, but rather in a "poetic, cruel and magical resolution". It is in recognition of the growing list of Afro-Brazilian fictional films depicting such present-day dystopias that leads Freitas and Messias to call for a tempering of the positive perspective associated with Afrofuturism with an "Afropessimist" critical thinking (2018).

Another key example of filmmakers working within an Afro-pessimist logic is Jefferson De, who has directed a number of series for television in Brazil, and his feature film, *M8: Quando a Morte Socorre a Vida* (*M8: When Death Rescues Life*) was picked up by Netflix in 2021. A crime drama with elements of the supernatural, the film follows a first-year medical student, the only Black student in his class, who uncovers a plot by the school to use the cadavers of undocumented black youths, forcing him to confront the thinly veiled racism of his white classmates and the police, and revealing to him the innate power of *ancestralidade*, or shared Afro-Brazilian heritage and life experience.

The volume is framed around eight parts, each of which contains two chapters that are illustrative of the overarching part themes: precursors, post-horror, urban angst, folk-horror, colonial legacies, cannibalism, teen horror and dystopias. As is frequently the case in collections of essays, the parts are not intended to be comprehensive or exclusive, with themes such as urban angst, for example, permeating a great many of the horror films included in the volume. In our choice of corpus we have sought to illustrate what we regard to be the key features of the current horror revival in Brazil. The part organisation, then, is designed as much as anything else to demonstrate the wealth and diversity of contemporary Brazilian horror movies that engage with the political.

Part 1 of this volume is entitled The Reemergence of Horror in the Twenty-first Century. The authors of Chapters 1 and 2 highlight the importance of the year 2008, and underscore why it was "a significant turning point for Brazilian horror cinema". For a start, as highlighted above, José Mojica Marins released his long-anticipated final instalment of his Coffin Joe horror trilogy, *Embodiment of Evil*, which finds the character on the mean streets of Sao Paulo after a forty-year period of incarceration. In Chapter 1, Laura Loguercio Cánepa, an authority on the work of Coffin Joe, takes us through not only the film, its engagement with horror film history and its (conservative) vision

of twenty-first-century urban life in Brazil, but also two films by Dennison Ramalho, *Ninjas* (2009) and *Nightshifter* (2018), that dialogue directly with the work of Brazil's iconic horror character/director/producer. Cánepa argues that Ramalho reinterprets Mojica's legacy, drawing on both necropolitics and Sayak Valencia's "gore capitalism" (2010) to read the violence of the films as a critique of the growing Right in Brazil.

In Chapter 2, Alfredo Suppia and Lucas Procópio Caetano take as their starting point the metaphorical time-travelling of Coffin Joe in *Embodiment of Evil*, going on to discuss two time-travelling films, *Once There Was Brasilia* (2012) and *All the Dead Ones* (2020), set in Brasilia and Sao Paulo respectively. With their strange astronauts and ghosts, each film takes a different approach to both time travel and the way horror impacts Brazilian society. The authors demonstrate how the future continues to be largely absent from any understanding of Brazilian culture, which appears haunted by the past: both films hinge on the long-lasting history of exploitation and social inequality as the true source of horror in society.

In Part 2, Brazilian Post-horror, the three films discussed across two chapters illustrate a number of the features highlighted by Rose and Church as pertaining to the concept of post-horror, inasmuch as they "prioritise affect over monstruous entities", and their unsustained (but nevertheless evident) recourse to the conventions of the horror genre, which has resulted in die-hard horror fans questioning their inclusion in the horror canon in the first place. In Chapter 3, Laura Loguercio Cánepa and Rodrigo Carreiro analyse *Hard Labor* and *Kill Me Please*, films set in the urban spaces of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro respectively that combine realism with unexplained and/or unresolved mysterious, uncanny and fearful happenings to create a "horror atmosphere". As Cánepa and Carreiro underline, both films "became references in debates surrounding the horror genre in Brazilian contemporary cinema". The films share "a perception of society under imminent attack", of "impending catastrophe", which, the authors argue, "eventually materialised with the rise of an undisguised acceptance of the country's self-destruction".

Like *Hard Labor* and *Kill Me Please*, *Neighbouring Sounds* (2013), discussed by Fernanda Santos and Cecilia Mello in Chapter 4, is an urban drama (it is set in Recife in the northeast) that combines a realist aesthetic with the horror of social monsters. One such social monster, the character Clodoaldo, is a mysterious private security guard who offers to protect an upper-middle class street and its residents from criminals, but who we discover with the film's denouement, is seeking revenge against crimes perpetrated by the neighbourhood's wealthy patriarch against his family. Santos and Mello provocatively ask if the character Clodoaldo would be a Bolsonarista (supporter of Bolsonaro), demonstrating, in the very act of positing the question, the extent to which the films in this volume are read as engaging with the social and

political processes that led to the turn to the Right and that ultimately carried a figure like Bolsonaro to the presidential palace. One could perhaps ask the same question of Coffin Joe forty years on, of the frustrated and ineffectual small businessman Octávio in *Hard Labor*, the white *coronel* and henchman, and the Afro-Brazilian servant Sebastião, in *The Devil's Knot* (Chapter 9), and of many other "resentful" and/or subaltern characters depicted in the films included in the volume.

Like *Kill Me Please* and in keeping with Rose's definition of post-horror, *Neighbouring Sounds* ends without a clear narrative resolution (although violence and a bloody ending are strongly implied). Perhaps like no other Brazilian filmmaker of his generation, Kleber Mendonça Filho has engaged with "the archetypes and iconography of ghost films and haunted-house movies without crossing over into being a [conventional] horror film" (Rose 2022). A provocative and familiar still from Mendonça Filho's *Neighbouring Sounds* graces the cover of this volume. It could have been taken from any number of slasher/gore horror films. Instead, the brief shot that it is taken from, of the patriarch's son bathing in a waterfall in his family's old estate, uses a horror convention (an unexplained presence of an excess of blood) to make a social comment: that Brazil's traditional landowning elites have blood on their hands.

In Part 3, The Curse of Urban Violence in Brazil, the focus shifts back to the fears, violence and resentment that are engendered in the Brazilian context by life in a megacity. Like the films discussed in Part 2, class differences and the built environment provoke tensions among characters, which are drawn out by the filmmakers by making recourse to horror conventions. In *The Tenants*, Sergio Bianchi, one of only two "veteran" filmmakers included in the collection[5] (the other is Coffin Joe himself) describes in the fictional mode how fear of the unknown (in this case, a set of new neighbours who may or may not be linked to crime) is stoked by the media, by innate prejudice, and by ignorance, to produce a sense of impending violence and living on a knife edge. As Fabio Camarneiro discusses in Chapter 5, "Bianchi's film can be understood as an illustration *avant la lettre* of the narcissism and the resentment that would take over Brazilian political discourse a decade later". It therefore anticipates the debates about urban violence that supported Bolsonaro's election propaganda.

In Chapter 6 João Vitor Leal and Mariana Souto discuss *Sultry*, a partly realist tale set against the real-life backdrop of demolition and removals to make way for Rio de Janeiro's new infrastructure to host the Summer Olympics

5 Sergio Bianchi, born in 1945, is well-known in Brazil for making films that take the temperature of the country, which he invariably portrays, to borrow a title from his 2002 feature, as "chronically unfeasible".

in 2016. Ana, a middle-class lawyer with a conscience (she tries to support the working-class communities being removed by the State to make way for the Olympic Park), falls victim to a strange, plague-like condition, possibly linked to the strange misty weather associated with the specific climactic phenomenon of the *mormaço*,[6] that covers her body and leaves her powerless to help herself, let alone others. The films in this part, with their bleak storylines, highlight the crisis that ensues when the lower-middle classes feel that their rights and privileges are under threat (*The Tenants*) or when the middle classes seek to exercise agency and social justice in a society still dominated by an all-powerful capitalist elite (*Sultry*).

In Part 3, Folk-Horror Brazilian-style, we include two chapters that analyse two films and one TV series that are set in rural areas and engage with local folklore. In her chapter on *Unsoul* and *The Famous and the Dead*, Zuleika de Paula Bueno argues that folk horror adds an important layer of nuance to our discussion of horror films, and to our understanding of the emergence of neo-fascism in Brazilian society. It does this by inverting the logic of social horror: "the threat is not the other, but is hidden and grows within the community itself".

The Famous and the Dead, as well as tapping into the traditional celebrations of the so-called settler communities (small country towns made up mostly of populations of European descent in the south of Brazil), also draws attention to the dangers of popular internet culture, and the morbid fascination with fake crime stories, or creepypasta, a worldwide, online phenomenon that shares affinities with the horror film genre to which young people who are unable to escape the confines of small-town life, are dangerously drawn.

Unsoul is also set in a European-descendant community in the south of Brazil: the fictional Ukrainian-founded town of Brígida which, following a popular trope in folk horror, hides a dark secret of death and deceit surrounding a traditional annual (night-time) celebration. *Unsoul* is the only TV series included in this volume, but we acknowledge here that horror as a genre is globally migrating to the increasingly popular phenomenon of bingeable series. Fearful, unsettling and at times ultraviolent series that reflect on the horrors of contemporary society are proliferating on streaming platforms such as Netflix and Disney Plus: one of the best known of this phenomenon is of course the Korean-made and Netflix-produced *Squid Game*, which itself builds on home-grown feature films that dialogue with the horror genre, such

[6] It is interesting to reflect on the extent to which *Sultry* foreshadowed the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in its plot. Likewise, Luli Gerbase's *The Pink Cloud* (*A Nuvem Rosa*), released in 2021 but filmed pre-pandemic, portrays a state of lockdown provoked by something deadly in the air that is uncanny in its anticipation of events that would unfold worldwide in 2020.

as *Old Boy*. In the Brazilian folk horror context, we can mention *Invisible City* (*Cidade Invisível*, 2021), a Netflix series that references many creatures from Brazil's indigenous folkloric traditions, and which was successfully exported to Netflix screens outside of Brazil.

In Chapter 8, Felipe Falcão argues that the small town in the State of Pernambuco where *Azougue Nazaré* is set serves as a microcosm for Brazil and its national problems. The folklore represented in the film is Maracatu, a carnival celebration typical of the region, derived from enslaved communities and with religious overtones, which clashes with the growing evangelical Christian movement, by which Maracatu is dismissed as backward and diabolical. The weaponisation of religion, one of the lynchpins of contemporary neo-fascism in Brazil, and its victims, are found within the community in *Azougue Nazaré*, but unlike in *Unsoul* and *The Famous and the Dead*, the folklore typical of the region is not depicted as stifling the community, but rather it is treated sympathetically, as being inclusive, non-discriminatory and having the potential to facilitate resistance.

Part 5 is entitled Race, Gender and Brazil's Colonial Past and it includes two essays that reflect on the racism of contemporary Brazilian society, and in particular the challenges facing Afro-Brazilian women. In Chapter 9, Stephanie Dennison highlights how the five episodes that make up the portmanteau feature *The Devil's Knot*, set in different time periods in the same plantation home, represent the legacy of slavery responsibly, unlike *The Fostering*, a feature film Dennison cites by way of comparison which forgoes any representation of Black agency and resistance. Both films play as more conventional horror films than most others contained in this volume, but *The Devil's Knot* is still able to communicate a strong critique of race relations in Brazil, and without resorting to generic cliché and titillation. Dennison argues that this may be influenced by the input of Afro-Brazilian director and script-writer Gabriel Martins, the only Afro-Brazilian director whose work is included in this volume, as noted above.

In Chapter 10, Yuri Garcia analyses *Good Manners*, a Sao Paulo-set feature film that continues both the discussion of structural racism witnessed in *The Devil's Knot* and its centring of Black female characters. In *Good Manners* the traditional maid/mistress dichotomy is turned on its head, through references to lesbianism and lycanthropy: the wealthy and pregnant white mistress Ana initiates a relationship with the Black maid, Clara, only to die in childbirth and for her werewolf child, under the care of Clara, to terrorise Clara's poor neighbourhood. Garcia argues that in *Good Manners* the werewolf is less monstrous than the process of building and maintaining structures of inequality and necropolitics.

In Part Six, Social Cannibalism, the horror staple of eating human flesh is both literally and figuratively presented in two stylistically very different

films: *The Cannibal Club* and *Friendly Beast*. In the former, set in the populous northeastern city of Fortaleza, the main characters murder and eat poor victims in a sadistic, sexualised ritual. As Tiago Monteiro argues in Chapter 11, *The Cannibal Club* makes fierce comments about class struggles through grotesque and abject imagery, mainly involving supposedly "respectable men", thus functioning as an effective allegory of Brazilian society in the past decade.

In Chapter 12, Rodrigo Carreiro analyses *Friendly Beast*, arguing that while the film adopts the narrative structure of a slasher movie, it can be read allegorically as a fierce critique of social tensions and ideological polarisations. Like *Good Manners*, the film's references to the work of Brazilian sociologist Sergio Buarque de Holanda and his concept of *cordialidade* or false cordiality are clearly exposed. Taking place entirely in a restaurant in Sao Paulo, the ultra-violent denouement, like the plot of *The Cannibal Club*, mixes sex and cannibalism (clearly implied but not carried out on screen in *Friendly Beast*) in a kind of death drive that symbolises a highly turbulent political and social period.

In Part 7, Teen Horror on Screen, our attention shifts to movies that centre adolescent stasis and disaffection. In Chapter 13, through an analysis of *The Joy*, Gabriel Perrone reaches the startling conclusion that Brazil's (middle-class) young people, bored with "the peace of a tedious liberty", are prepared to surrender to anything that can provoke change, "without indications as to whether this would be for better or for worse". Constructed around a series of eerie prophecies and involving unexplained disappearances, sea creatures and impending death, life is in fact joyless for the group of teens from Rio de Janeiro that feature in *The Joy*. Like the teens in *Kill Me Please* who are fascinated by a serial killer, and those of *The Famous and the Dead* who appear to have a death wish, the young people have a troubled relationship with their own mortality. And like those in *Kill Me Please*, the teens' detachment from, or disinterest in, real life is at times represented as a kind of *zombification* of Brazilian youth.

In Chapter 14, Ana Maria Acker discusses *The Young Baumanns* in which the teens are literally held in stasis as a result of disappearing from a gathering in 1992 on the family's coffee plantation. Using VHS footage styled as home movies and with voiceover narration, the film attempts to piece together the mysterious incidents that led to the mass disappearance, with both the symbolism of a lost generation and the nostalgia for a lost time of privilege for landed elites, being foregrounded in Acker's reading.

The final part of the volume, Part 8, Tropical Dystopias, includes analyses of two films from 2019 with futuristic settings in a country under the rule of an authoritarian, controlling state, but which still manage to offer a glimmer of hope predicated on community resistance. In Chapter 15, Natália Christofoletti Barrenha discusses *Tremor Iê*, a film set in Fortaleza in the aftermath of

mass protests and a coup d'état which follows the daily struggles for survival of a group of Afro-Brazilian women. The analogy to the June Protests of 2013, referenced in a number of contemporary horror films, is clear, and directly influenced the filmmakers in their portrayal of a dystopian space, which also depicts the now familiar tropes of rampant real estate speculation and policing of behaviours that "deviate" from a neo-fascist norm. The Black women offer "small gestures of subversion and rupture" in *Tremor Iê* by celebrating their racial and sexual difference. Their existential status is left vague, and Barrenha argues that they therefore function as ghosts: our identification with them forces us to ask who are the real monsters in this society.

In the final chapter in the collection, Michael M.J. Fischer analyses *Bacurau*, Kleber Mendonça Filho's third feature film set in a fictional village in Brazil's northeast. A generic hybrid (part horror film, part Brazilian "Western", part Tarantino-esque pulp fiction), Fischer's reading focuses on the ability of the villagers to defend their community against aggressions from outside, in the form of both a group of foreign "hunters" intent on murdering them all for fun, and of a cruel, corrupt local government that withholds their access to water and which is in cahoots with the hunters. The victory of the villagers over their enemies may be violent, unsubtle and far-fetched, but it is deeply satisfying when viewed as a futuristic allegory of contemporary Brazilian society (the film was completed after Bolsonaro took power in 2018).

Like many of the films included in this volume, then, *Tremor Iê* and *Bacurau* are visionary and prescient, of the emptied streets and cutting off of communications of COVID-19 lockdown, but also of the power of oppositional groups, and particularly those who have been historically underrepresented (non-white, LGBTIA+, removed from the central axis of power of Sao Paulo/Rio de Janeiro/Brasilia), to defy the neo-fascist political direction of travel in Brazil as epitomised by a figure like Jair Bolsonaro and his millions of followers.

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PART 1

THE REEMERGENCE OF BRAZILIAN HORROR IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

1

The Return of Coffin Joe: *Embodiment of Evil*, *Ninjas*, and *The Nightshifter*

LAURA LOGUERCIO CÁNEPA

Your system has me trapped. The same system sets me free, and you can't do anything. Inferiors! You and all your world cannot offer a solution to those who would destroy it.

(Coffin Joe's opening speech in *Embodiment of Evil*)

On 8 August 2008, *Embodiment of Evil* (*Encarnação do Demônio*), directed by and starring José Mojica Marins (1939–2020), was released in Brazilian cinemas. The highly anticipated film would be shown in over a dozen festivals in the US, Italy, Greece, France, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, Argentina, Canada, and the UK in the following months. *Embodiment of Evil* was the last segment of the Coffin Joe trilogy initiated by *At Midnight I'll Take Your Soul* (*À Meia-Noite Levarei Sua Alma*, 1964) and *This Night I'll Possess Your Corpse* (*Esta Noite Encarnarei no Teu Cadáver*, 1967), very low-budget films that inaugurated the horror genre in Brazilian cinema and have, since the mid-1990s, gained international cult movie status on VHS and in DVD collections.

Made forty-one years after the release of the second segment of the trilogy, *Embodiment of Evil* obliged Mojica, his co-writer Dennison Ramalho, and producer Paulo Sacramento to adapt the original screenplay (first written in the 1960s) to create a narrative that encompassed what would have happened over such a long time. When the character was created, he became the main monster of Brazilian horror not only in cinema but also in comics, television, and radio

(Barcinski and Finotti 1998) and the only recurrent monstrous protagonist from a horror film series on the Latin American continent (Subero 2016), Coffin Joe was the sociopathic owner of a funeral home, feared by the people of a small town. He dressed like a vampire,[1] and he was obsessed with the continuation of his bloodline. Decades afterwards, the screenplay of *Embodiment of Evil* situated Coffin Joe in the urban environment, updating the story to incorporate the massive rural exodus that has completely changed Brazilian geography since the 1960s. Thus, in 2008, Coffin Joe was no longer the rich, young sociopath of the 1960s but an ex-con released onto the streets of São Paulo. In this new setting, he cast a shadow over one of the globe's largest metropolises, emanating an exaggerated persona characterised by Gustavo Subero (2016) as "queer machismo" (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. Screengrab of Coffin Joe's return to the streets of São Paulo from *Embodiment of Evil*.

[1] Resembling also a Brazilian Exu. "Exus are worshipped primarily in Quimbanda, which viewed in a simplified form is the Black Magic side (darkness, evil and association with cemeteries) to Umbanda, a syncretic religion celebrated mostly in urban areas of the south of Brazil. In the Gira dos Exus ritual, which lies at the heart of Quimbanda, celebrants at midnight incorporate deities, dance, drink, smoke, gyrate and use bad language, all of which is very reminiscent of the grotesque excess portrayed in certain scenes of Zé do Caixão films. Musical accompaniments to the worship of Exu include refrains such as 'It's midnight – come and take what is yours', reminding us of the titles of Zé do Caixão's earliest and most successful films" (Shaw and Dennison 2008, 55).

The distribution company 20th Century Fox launched the film as a Brazilian blockbuster, and everything was put in place to produce a big hit – including a graphic novel telling the story of Coffin Joe in prison (*Prontuário 666. Os Anos de Cárcere de Zé do Caixão* [Record 666. The Years of Imprisonment of Zé do Caixão], by Samuel Casal and Adriana Brunstein) and a photographic essay of seven actresses in the Brazilian *Playboy* magazine. The film cost around one million dollars (a significant amount by Brazilian standards and much higher than any film Mojica had ever made), and critics received *Embodiment of Evil* very well (Silva 2021), perhaps fearing underrating Mojica as had been the case in his career until then. However, the film was a colossal flop, attracting less than twenty thousand people to movie theatres.[2] Despite being a commercial failure, *Embodiment of Evil* started an unprecedented articulation among filmmakers, critics, festivals, and the public through film screenings, magazines, websites, and academic research, enabling a progressively more fitting place for horror in Brazilian film culture. At the same time, the movie served as a compass, pointing towards thematic and stylistic paths that would shape the emerging wave of Brazilian horror films.

Embodiment of Evil is the main subject of this chapter. More than a continuation of the original saga, the film is a review of its director and actor's personal and media trajectory, and it is also a turning point in the Brazilian cinematic horror of the 2000s. This influence was evident through either imitation or deliberate contrast, inspiring the creation of many other movies. Noteworthy among these are the short film *Ninjas* (2009) and the feature film *The Nightshifter* (*Morto Não Fala*, 2019), both written and directed by Dennison Ramalho. These works and their impact will also be examined within the scope of this chapter.

EMBODIMENT OF EVIL: AN ENTIRE CAREER IN 95 MINUTES

In February 1996, Brazilian heavy metal band Sepultura released the album *Roots*, which sold more than five hundred thousand copies in the US and one hundred thousand in the UK. One of the most successful songs of this album, *Ratamahatta*, composed and interpreted by Sepultura in partnership with Afro-Brazilian musician Carlinhos Brown, has Coffin Joe as a central character. The lyrics compare him to two historical figures: Lampião (Virgulino

[2] By way of comparison, according to the internet site Filme B (https://www.filmeb.com.br/), the film that most attracted viewers in Brazil in 2008 was the animated feature *Madagascar 2* (Tom McGrath and Eric Darnell, 2008), with more than five million spectators. In the same year, the highest-grossing Brazilian film was *My Name Ain't Johnny* (*Meu Nome não é Johnny*, Mauro Lima, 2008), which had a total audience of 2,115,673 viewers.

Ferreira da Silva, 1896–1938), leader of a group of criminals who committed violent looting in the northeast of Brazil in the 1930s, and Zumbi dos Palmares (1655–1695), the man who led the famous Quilombo dos Palmares, the place to where enslaved people fled in colonial Brazil in the seventeenth century. The lyrics also relate their names – Zé do Caixão, Zumbi, Lampião – to expressions that identify impoverished places in Brazil: *favelas*, *bocadas*, *malocas*, *bibocas*, sharing with audiences from different countries, a Brazilian repertoire of words, situations and historical figures.

When Ratamahatta music video was released, Coffin Joe. He was a distinctive figure in Brazilian media culture; yet, he was a fictional character who had not appeared on screens for nearly twenty years.[3] Yet, he was also a real person omnipresent in sensationalist radio and TV programmes and in the tabloid press. As a result, he blurred the lines between historical and fictional characters – as Zumbi dos Palmares and Lampião figures did in the twentieth century when they became characters of numerous fiction narratives. In *Ratamahatta*, these three outlaw characters embody resistance and marginality. The music video, animated in stop motion by Fred Stuhr, was a hit on Brazilian MTV, having been voted by the influential newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* in 2012 as the fifth-best music video ever made in Brazil. The video is set in a miniature of a Brazilian favela. It climaxes with a pagan ritual led by Coffin Joe near a vacant lot, bringing together drunks, beggars, witches and thieves. In a way, *Ratamahatta* summarises how Coffin Joe was worshipped by certain groups of fans in Brazil in the 1990s, linked to marginality and urban subcultures such as heavy metal and punk rock.

A few years before, Brazilian journalist André Barcinski had sent some of Mojica's films to the American VHS company Something Weird Video, which was run by Mike Vraney (1957–2014). In 1993, Vraney released ten of Mojica's films in the US market, with considerable success among cult film fans, researchers, and film critics from magazines such as *Fangoria*, *Rue Morgue*, and *Monsters International.* In 1998, Mojica returned once again to the spotlight as a result of the release of a biography by André Barcinski and Ivan Finotti (*Maldito: A Vida e o Cinema de José Mojica Marins, o Zé do Caixão* [*Damned: The Life and Cinema of José Mojica Marins, Coffin Joe*]), which inaugurated a new phase in his career in Brazilian showbiz and included successful exhibitions in the famous amusement park Playcenter, in São Paulo. Barcinski and Finotti's book increased the fandom around Mojica and the cult of Brazilian horror films in independent film festivals, fanzines, and "shot on video films" created by artists and researchers such as Petter Baiestorf and Cesar "Coffin" Souza (producers of the internationally recognised production company Canibal

3 Until 2008, the last appearance of Coffin Joe in a Mojica movie was in the self-reflective film *Hallucinations of a Deranged Mind* (*Delírios de um Anormal*, 1978).

Filmes), and Lucio Reis (author of the fanzine *B-Zine* and the first thesis on exploitation horror cinema in Brazil, at the University of Campinas, in 2002).

Two decades later, on 19 February 2020, just before turning eighty-four years old, and on the eve of the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil, Mojica died in São Paulo after a long illness. Contrary to what one would have expected in the early 1990s, when Mojica was seen as a marginal figure as he was portrayed in the Sepultura song, the filmmaker received several honours, with his funeral in the Museum of Image and Sound in São Paulo being broadcast live on all TV stations, in a grand hall, under the sound of live mariachi music (as he had requested), and being described by journalists as one of the greatest Brazilian filmmakers. The recognition he received in his last years attests to the relevance that horror cinema achieved in Brazil in the second decade of the twenty-first century, after existing for decades on the fringes of leading trends in Brazilian cinema. And it also demonstrates the complexity of Mojica's presence in Brazilian media and film culture over time.

Therefore, it becomes intriguing to explore the journey that has transformed Mojica, considered an outcast throughout his life (Barcisnki and Finotti 1998; Fernandez 2002; Tierney 2009), into a revered "father figure" of Brazilian cinema in 2020 – and the pivotal role played by *Embodiment of Evil* in this remarkable process of "rebranding". Nonetheless, part of the film's acclaim can be attributed more to its circumstances than its merits as a cinematic experience. The treatment given to Mojica by some cultural commentators was due to many influential groups and individuals who shaped the film's conception. Prestigious artists such as composer Andre Abujamra, fashion designer Alexandre Herchcovitch, experimental theatre director and actor Zé Celso Martinez Correa (1937–2023), and Helena Ignez,[4] the iconic actress from Brazilian underground cinema, took part in the film. Prestigious theatre actors and actresses (such as Luís Mello, Rui Resende, and Cristina Aché) played important roles, as did a former porn cinema actress (Débora Muniz) and directors of the Brazilian exploitation cinema of the 1970s (Jece Valadão and Adriano Stuart).[5] Journalists and underground artists (such as André Bar-

4 Helena Ignez was married to Rogerio Sganzerla (1946–2004), one of the filmmakers to whom the film is dedicated (the other is the critic Jairo Ferreira, 1945–2003).

5 Jece Valadão (1930–2006), a celebrated actor and director in Brazilian cinema renowned for his portrayal of "cafajestes'" (toxic male'), assumed the role of Coffin Joe's antagonist, the policeman Coronel Claudiomiro Pontes. Prior to *Embodiment of Evil*, Coffin Joe had not encountered any adversaries, and, for that reason, the interpreter for this role was chosen very carefully. According to producer Paulo Sacramento (in a semi-structured interview held on 30 June 2023), Mojica first had chosen Brazilian filmmaker and actor Anselmo Duarte (1920–2009) to portray the antagonist of Coffin Joe. Duarte was a prominent figure in national

cinski, Carlos Primati, and Nilson Primitivo) had cameos. The technical crew was crowded with prestigious professionals, such as the cinematographer Jose Roberto Eliezer, the special effects creator Kapel Furman, and the producers Fabiano Gullane and Debora Ivanov.

The core driving force behind the creation of *Embodiment of Evil* was the collaboration between Mojica and the duo formed by the producer and editor Paulo Sacramento and the assistant director and screenwriter Dennison Ramalho. They were instrumental in establishing a connection between the film and a fundamental trend in Brazilian cinema at the time: the *favela movie*, a genre of Brazilian cinema dedicated to depicting urban violence and crime on an impressive scale in impoverished areas with narrow alleys, precarious housing, limited sanitation, and dense population. The style previously showcased in successful films like *City of God* (2002, Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund), *Carandiru* (2003, Hector Babenco), and *Elite Squad* (2007, José Padilha), that succeeded not only at the Brazilian box office but were also nominated for awards at the Oscars and the Cannes and Berlin Film Festivals. The defining link between *Embodiment of Evil* and urban violence cinema appears to be the full-length documentary *The Prisoner of the Iron Bars* (*O prisioneiro da grade de ferro*, 2003), directed by Paulo Sacramento with Dennison Ramalho as assistant director. This film was shot within the confines of the penitentiary complex Carandiru before its prominent structure, the Casa de Detenção [House of Detention], was demolished in 2002. The documentary shed light on the haunting tragedy of the largest prisoner massacre in Brazil's history, which occurred in 1992 and left a lasting mark on the location, resulting in the death of 111 prisoners at the hands of the police.

Notably, the Carandiru Complex is from where Coffin Joe is released at the beginning of *Embodiment of Evil*. After forty years of confinement in this dreadful place, he emerges, donning his signature black cape. Upon his release,

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cinema but suffered severe backlash from the Cinema Novo movement after winning the Palme d'Or at the 1962 Cannes Festival for his film *O Pagador de Promessas* (*The Given Word*, 1962). According to Sacramento, Duarte rehearsed with the team once, expressing gratitude for the opportunity. However, during the rehearsal, he acknowledged that his career had reached its definitive conclusion, unable to continue any further. It was at this juncture that the team devised the idea of approaching Jece Valadão for the role. Despite being associated with a neo-Pentecostal evangelical church that frowned upon such endeavours at the time, Valadão accepted the role. Tragically, he had a heart attack and passed away during filming, leading the crew to enlist the actor and director of *rip-off* comedies Adriano Stuart to portray another policeman, Captain Osvaldo Pontes (Coronel Claudiomiro Pontes' brother).

he is met by his assistant Bruno (Ruy Rezende[6]) and a group of young individuals who, for reasons not fully explained, serve as his loyal (and not very competent) followers, assisting him in his quest to find seven women who will bear his offspring. As the villain takes refuge underground in a bunker built in a São Paulo favela, he gets into trouble with local witches, a priest, bandits, and the police (represented by a pair of police officers searching for revenge). The movie delves into these multifaceted clashes, shedding light on the complexities of Coffin Joe's life in the Brazilian landscape in an intricately and fragmented exploration of the character's complex integration into Brazilian culture since the 1960s. The integration undertaken by Sacramento and Ramalho encompasses a wide array of elements, ranging from popular Coffin Joe's films of the 1960s to his underground works, live performances in amusement parks, appearances in television programmes, and eccentric interviews on late-night TV and radio shows in which he presented himself as an investigator of the supernatural or connoisseur of the most terrible types of demonic cults.

In addition, Sacramento and Ramalho leverage the popularity of the torture porn subgenre, exemplified by franchises like *Saw* (James Wan, 2004) and *Hostel* (Eli Roth, 2006), along with the American torture porn film set in Brazil, *Turistas* (aka *Paradise Lost*, John Stockwell, 2006). *Embodiment of Evil* is full of explicit, realistic, and gory scenes, such as a woman sewn inside a pig and a mouse inserted into a woman's vagina. These highly performative scenes echo Mojica's signature style (Cánepa 2017). Although shocking (even for the twenty-first-century public), it is noteworthy that these scenes were present in the original script from the 1960s, when Mojica was already renowned for producing highly violent films, thereby cementing his reputation as one of the pioneers of gore and torture porn, alongside prominent figures such as Hershel Gordon Lewis in the US, Georges Franju in France, and Nobuo Nakagawa in Japan.

Mojica faced numerous conflicts throughout his career due to the excessive violence portrayed in his films. This issue was particularly pronounced during Brazil's military dictatorship, where his character engaged in acts of kidnapping, torture, and murder, reflecting, as noted by St Georges (2016), the human rights abuses committed under the dictatorship and continuing afterwards, perpetrated by the police and death squads throughout the country. However, St George notes that Coffin Joe advocates for liberation from the constraints of traditional morality while still reinforcing the purpose of life through procreation and the maintenance of the patriarchal system – which reveals that despite

6 Ruy Rezende, an experienced Brazilian film, theatre and television actor, was recognised for playing a werewolf in the *telenovela* Roque Santeiro (1985), one of the greatest successes of Brazilian television.

his radical agenda, his trilogy adheres to a conservative rhetorical framework. In fact, the ambiguity between conservatism and radicalism is one of the hallmarks of Mojica's work (Fernandez 2002; Cánepa 2017).

Ambiguity is a quality that runs through every aspect of *Embodiment of Evil*. The film intricately melds elements of dementia and transcendence that are emblematic of Mojica's oeuvre (Fernandez 2002). This fusion renders Coffin Joe a hybrid figure, embodying demon-like and evocative qualities of a cult leader. This amalgamation bestows upon him a dual nature, encompassing traits akin to a demonic force when he eliminates all those who pose a threat (especially figures representing society's authorities, such as police, prosecutors, and priests, but also innocent people who resist his rules), and reminiscent of a healer as he entices young women into bearing his offspring or garners zealous followers who will go to great lengths to safeguard him, buoyed by a sense of empowerment in his presence. As Diana Anselmo-Serqueira (2013) described, in his origins, Coffin Joe is a small-town gravedigger by day and philosophical murderer by night.

Another captivating amalgamation in *Embodiment of Evil* emerges through the re-enactment of scenes from the 1960s films. In its origins four decades prior, these scenes were modelled with resource constraints (which links Mojica's films to the notion of imperfect cinema as articulated by Tierney 2009). However, in the context of the 2008 sequel, the same scenes are transformed through digital images, which not only expand the context of the original stories but also make their special effects more modern in the context of the fantasy cinema of the 2000s. Additionally, *Embodiment of Evil* explores the attraction of performativity in violent scenarios, turning murderous deeds into bizarre artistic exhibitions (Piedade and Cánepa 2014).

Amidst these intricate dynamics, the film encapsulates a pivotal juncture in Brazilian cinematic history – a period characterised by new responses to the nation's harsh realities, offering keen insight into the looming threat of authoritarianism executed by agents of the State, the Church, and other official institutions. However, Coffin Joe is not presented as a resolution to this conflict due to his narcissistic and sexist fixations. In stark contrast to the stereotypical portrayal of a favela film's criminal figure – typically depicted as impoverished, of African descent, and overseeing local illegal activities – Coffin Joe assumes, in *Embodiment of Evil*, a resemblance to the militiaman, amidst the proliferation of private governance and the intricate web of criminal networks in Brazil. Within the narrative, the figures pursuing Coffin Joe – Colonel Claudiomiro Pontes (Jece Valadão) and his brother, Captain Osvaldo Pontes (Adriano Stuart), aided by the Priest Eugenio (Milhem Cortaz) – play an opposing force equally susceptible to excesses of sadism and fanaticism. In that sense, the film sustains Coffin Joe as a horror character who is the product of a horrific environment.

An alternative beyond violence appears conspicuously absent in the universe constructed in *Embodiment of Evil*, echoing the consistent theme across Mojica's body of work.

NINJAS AND *THE NIGHTSHIFTER*: FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF COFFIN JOE

The year 2008 marked a significant turning point for Brazilian horror cinema, not solely due to the release of *Embodiment of Evil*. It was when new digital cameras flooded the market, enabling amateur videographers to produce high-quality content that rivalled more expensive film productions – such as *Embodiment of Evil*, recorded on film. The technological shift gave rise to a vibrant community of filmmakers who had been connected since the early days of the commercial Internet in Brazil during the late 1990s. Emerging from various creative backgrounds, including fanzines, websites, blogs, independent festivals, and film schools, this multifaceted group consisted not only of filmmakers but also writers, musicians, critics, editors, and researchers. Today, the Brazilian cinema landscape is resonant with the presence of these horror filmmakers and critics. Some of them focus on making low-budget movies that explore gory and humorous formulas, attributes of much of Mojica's work.

In 2009, the zombie film *Mangue Negro* (*Mud Zombies*, 2009), created in the State of Espírito Santo, marked the debut of Rodrigo Aragão as a filmmaker. Aragão, previously dedicated to crafting special effects for horror theme parks, ventured into the independent circuit of festivals with this production. Simultaneously *Morgue Story*, was directed by Paulo Biscaia Filho – who, as a Grand Guignol researcher that run a theatre company in the State of Paraná, commenced his journey. These independent digital films, emerging from production centres outside the traditional hubs of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, not only found success at horror festivals but also secured international distribution. These movies are notably influenced by aspects of Mojica's legacy, including a guerrilla-style production ethos, a devoted ensemble of collaborators, a preference for visceral scenes, and a playful yet shocking essence. Many other horror films emerged within the independent circuit, with numerous filmmakers drawing inspiration from Mojica's oeuvre. This movement was further propelled by the cultural recognition attained by Mojica in 2008. However, it is Dennison Ramalho's work that incorporates more broadly the amalgamation of horror and social commentary observed in *Embodiment of Evil*.

In the immediate aftermath of *Embodiment of Evil*, Ramalho swiftly moved on to his third short film, *Ninjas* (2009). This production adapted the short story *Um Bom Policial* (*The Good Cop*) authored by Brazilian journalist

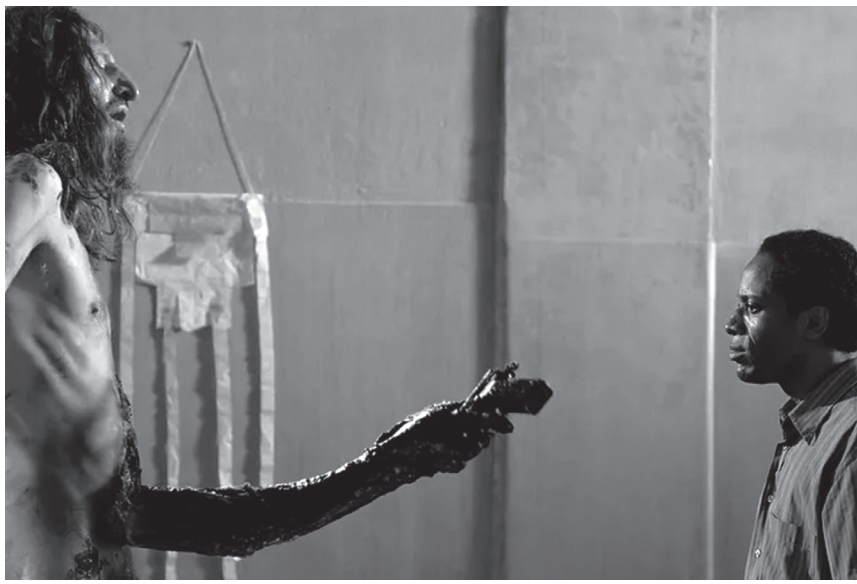

Figure 1.2. Screengrab from *Ninjas*: Jailton experiences one of his visions within the confines of a church. During this instance, an image of Jesus Christ hands him a firearm.

Marcos de Castro. Ninjas weaves the tale of Jailton (portrayed by Flavio Bauraqui), a devout Neo-Pentecostal Evangelical Christian who, as a military policeman, grapples with peculiar visions[7] (Figure 1.2). During a disastrous night operation in the alleys of São Paulo's poor suburbs, Jailton accidentally kills an innocent Black youth, leading to immense guilt and haunting by the boy's spirit. Plagued by delusions and depression, he takes a leave of absence from work, but his colleagues, aware of his trauma, summon him for a parallel mission to cleanse the ghosts and redeem himself. The solution they impose is forming the Ninjas extermination group, a masked paramilitary militia that carries out torture and murder in the suburbs.

Ten years after Ninjas (and after a short period living in the US, when he directed an episode of the notorious film anthology *ABCs of Death 2*, 2014), Ramalho released his first feature film, *The Nightshifter* (*Morto Não Fala*), another adaptation from a horror story by Marcos de Castro. Like Ninjas, the film combines elements of crime and horror genres, looking at relevant social issues such as police violence, death squads, racial issues, crime, and gender issues.

7 Clearly reminiscent of Cronenbergian imagery, particularly *Videodrome* (1982).

Figure 1.3. Screengrab from *The Nightshifter*: Stenio talking to one of the corpses in the morgue.

In *The Nightshifter*, the protagonist, Stenio (Daniel de Oliveira), works the night shift at a morgue in a large and violent Brazilian city, where he deals with numerous corpses of criminals from impoverished areas killed under brutal circumstances. Uniquely, Stenio possesses a paranormal ability to communicate with the dead, hearing their final confessions during his early mornings at work. However, when he starts hearing secrets about his own life, particularly regarding his wife Odete's (Fabiula Nascimento) affair with the bakery owner Jaime (Marco Ricca), he seeks revenge, setting off a chain of lies involving both the living and the dead. This path leads to a horrifying curse that endangers his life and puts his two young children in peril.

The Nightshifter shares common thematic elements with Ninjas and Mojica's overall body of work. These elements include a stripped-back realism (particularly when witnessing the life of working-class individuals continually haunted by the looming threat of severe poverty) allied with a fascination with spectacular violence infused with blood baths, jump scares, and haunting special effects. These films often feature gloomy and dark alleys and cemeteries, along with atmospheres of religious terror. However, what sets Ramalho's approach apart is his meticulous attention to technical details, a quality evident since his earlier short film, *Love From Mother Only* (*Amor só de Mãe*, 2003), which received numerous awards at both domestic and international film

festivals. This level of care and dedication elevates his work within national horror cinema, creating a distinct identity in the global horror film market.

Furthermore, Ramalho's films demonstrate a more coherent engagement with the critical aspects of reality and Brazilian cinema. Ramalho should not be considered a filmmaker who reproduces Mojica's style or combines it with contemporary international horror but as someone who sees Mojica's cinema as an essential part of a broad repertoire to be critically incorporated. This approach allows his works to engage more productively with contemporary Brazilian horror cinema, which is often conscious of and delves into issues related to gender, race, and social class.

Critic Adriano Del Luca (2019) noted that *Ninjas* was contemporaneous to *Elite Squad 2* (José Padilha, 2010). Both films are part of a trend in Brazilian cinema that used naturalistic realism to depict violence, police action, and torture against the poor, particularly Black individuals, often legitimising punitive narratives without questioning the social context. However, in *Ninjas*, violence and barbarism serve as vehicles for a story highlighting social contradictions, taboos, and prejudices in Brazilian reality while suspended in delirium, exposing the political implications of horror fostered by institutions like the police and paramilitary militias. During the militia's attempt to initiate Jailton into the world of criminal extermination, in the subsequent session of torture that aims to coerce Jailton into executing young Black men, the film intricately combines haunting elements involving a black child victimised by a Black policeman, cornered by a white captain, who compels him to murder two more Black individuals to secure his freedom. Even observing that the explicitness of racial violence surpasses the critical content of Brazil's post-colonial reality, blurring the line between representing reality critically and aesthetically corroborating that reality (Del Luca 2019), it is evident that the interest in exposing torture, so crucial to Mojica's work, takes on more critical contours in his young partner's film. *The Nightshifter*, on the other hand, muddles societal issues like femicide and violent killings brought on daily by organised crime and the police in major Brazilian cities with religious beliefs like the protagonist's capacity to communicate with the dead – which, if it does not have such a clear goal of social criticism, assumes Brazilian reality as a unique and essential component of a horror story that converses with internationally well-known movies like those of the production company Blumhouse, such as the James Wan-created *Insidious* film series.

BRAZILIAN HORROR AND 'GORE CAPITALISM'

Embodiment of Evil is a horror film starring the most well-known monster from Brazilian cinema that revives the punishing rhetoric prevalent in Brazilian society and cinema in the early 2000s. That recurrent rhetoric would

eventually create many cultural and journalistic products that, after a few years, would influence the far-right discourse that would assume the Brazilian presidency in 2018. Within this context, the screenplay by Mojica and Ramalho can be seen as a symptomatic embodiment of Brazilian interpretations of *necropolitics* (Mbembe 2003) within the realm of a horror film. Moreover, it specifically delves into the notion of "gore capitalism", an evolution of the concept introduced by Sayak Valencia in 2010.

The idea of gore capitalism aids in our comprehension of the movies discussed in this chapter. Valencia appropriated the word "gore" from a horror subgenre that alludes to graphic violence. The Mexican philosopher refers to gore capitalism as what occurs to nations on the periphery of capitalism due to the stricter logic of global capitalism. Valencia contends that through the actions of the States and organised crime that make a predatory use of bodies, using explicit violence as a tool of necro-empowerment, the ex-colonies offer the world a very high percentage of human viscera and dismemberment. The victimised corpses serve as messages in a set of symbols encapsulated by the ritualistic horror of the crimes – which denotes the devaluation of life and suggests brand-new strategies for making money off bodies and violence.

According to Valencia (2019), when we talk about gore capitalism, we are referring to a form of capitalism whose effects coincide with the creation of new wealth and the speculative use of people as raw materials. Coffin Joe, Jailton, and Stenio, the three male protagonists of the films examined in this essay, are inextricably connected to the problem raised by Valencia and are, to varying degrees, condemned by the movies. They, therefore, change into new monsters in a ruthless reality.

Brazil is one of the most violent countries in the world (Lima, Sinhoreto and Bueno 2015). According to a survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in 2013 Brazil made up 2.8 per cent of the world's population but accumulated 11 per cent of homicides (UNODC 2014). There seems to be no solution for a large part of Brazilian public opinion except for repeated bloodbaths in urban centres. These bloodbaths were frequently depicted in Brazilian cinema during the first decade of the 2000s in favela films such as *Elite Squad* (*Tropa de Elite*, 2007) and *Elite Squad 2* (2010), whose director, José Padilha, has been accused of fascism by many critics since 2007.[8] Padilha is also the producer of the Netflix series *Narcos* and the director of the Hollywood remake of *Robocop*, works in which he reaffirmed his curiosity and ambivalent view regarding the violence practised by agents of the State. The series *Elite Squad* is one of the most popular series in Brazilian cinema history, having brought around 20 million people to the cinema,

[8] See Dennison (2020).

with a strong video distribution (including unauthorised copies), turning it into a massive cultural phenomenon. Thus, *Embodiment of Evil* is a part of the Coffin Joe saga but also a product of its time. After the film's premiere, Brazilian horror movies also used this urban violence as a recurring theme, as seen in Ramalho's movies and filmed such as *Os Inquilinos* (*The Tenants*, Sergio Bianchi, 2009); *O Animal Cordial* (*Friendly Beast*, Gabriela Amaral Almeida, 2017), and *O Clube dos Canibais* (*Cannibal Club*, Guto Parente, 2018).

Embodiment of Evil's debut signalled a groundbreaking path toward the recognition of horror as a legitimate genre in Brazilian cinema. Like the effect of his debut horror picture, which was released in 1964 – the year of the military takeover that resulted in a twenty-one-year dictatorship in Brazil – Mojica's final feature film also signalled a significant turning point Brazilian History. As a portion of their cinematic upbringing, the younger generation, in contrast to Mojica's, had been exposed to horror films from the 1980s, which paved the way for a new wave of filmmakers. The closest disciple of Mojica, Ramalho, updated Mojica's aesthetic for the new millennium while also approaching his horror works from a distinctively modern Brazilian viewpoint. This uniqueness included necropolitics as a part of the protagonists' surroundings, providing a window into unpleasant facets of contemporary Brazilian social reality. *The Nightshifter*'s release during the first year of the Bolsonaro administration, marked by a defence of the military dictatorship, torture, and death squads, highlights the extent to which Ramalho's work explores and reinterprets Mojica's legacy.

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