

A TRANSFORMATION OF GAY IDENTITY IN BRAZILIAN POPULAR CULTURE

By

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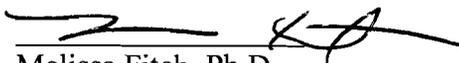
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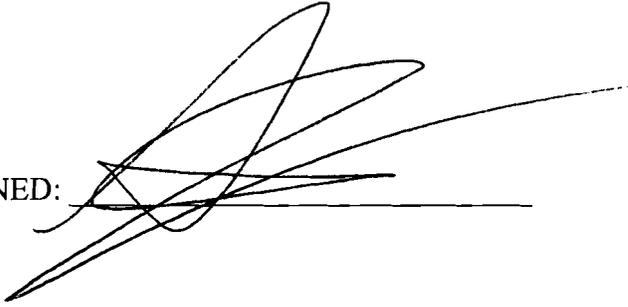


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ABSTRACT

Often seen as a threat to the male identity, family, and sociopolitical structures, homosexuality in Brazilian society has long been a taboo subject. Although the discussion of homosexuality was not acceptable, expressions, innuendos, and characteristics can be found seeded within popular culture. It is through the analysis of popular culture prior to, throughout, and after the military dictatorship of the 1960s and 1970s that the historical transformation of the gay identity in Brazilian society can be seen and its effects thereof now.

In the context of sexual modernity and freedom in Latin America, Brazil is a place that appears high on the list of countries attaining these attributes. Depictions of Brazilian sexuality are not characterized by reservations, and Brazilian popular culture contains the thematic strand of tropicalism. The popular representation of Brazil appears to be an unkempt reservoir of sexuality in which women freely express themselves as sensual entities by wearing provocative clothing and where men are free to roam the streets and are unrestricted in their promiscuity. This hypersexualized world is most conceptualized into the event of Carnival. Here, all social norms be they economic, ethnic, or, and most importantly social, are turned upside down. With this momentary suspension of social norms, many of the restrictions on sexual restraint are taken away and many see this as a time in which to carve a niche and express what was previously inexpressible. While Carnival is representative of sexual freedom for both men and women, it has been used as a propagation of homosexual expression. It is in this respect that Carnival, with all of its ties to Brazilian traditions, has become a gay iconic event.

Brazil is located in South America and encompasses nearly half of the continent's landmass. Brazil was founded in 1500 by Portuguese commander Pedro Alvares Cabral. Like many Latin American countries, Brazil became an increasing European interest due to its land prospects including brazil, a red dye. With the influx of Europeans came European ideals and institutions. Feudal lands became the standard for land distribution and the Columbian Exchange left many Native Indian populations decimated and enslaved. It was not until 1822 that Brazil gained its independence but while the country was independent, it suffered great political unrest and experienced many military coupes.

As can be surmised, Brazilian culture was centered on the concept of conquest. Only those strong enough could be the victor and in turn those victors are the epitome of being a man.

Any less was thought to be inferior and even womanly. Prestige became patriarchal and was inherited from father to son and it is in this respect that status was primarily marked by bloodline. One's family name often signified rank rather than actual accomplishments. Many of the elites of Brazil could be found in the northern areas and it is in this area that conservatism was most prevalent. The Northeast was exemplified by dry and barren territories and as a consequence, those living there were seen as true he-men (Muniz, Albuquerque and Ceballos 2002). It was in the Northeast that "real" men were born and as industrialization took place especially in the 1960s and 1970s, this characterization was most strived for within the Northeastern areas of Brazil.

With an increase in wealth also came the ability to send children away to boarding schools for education and many Brazilians were sent to schools throughout Europe as well as the United States. However, many of these countries were undergoing their own series of cultural revolutions especially centering around sex. The gay rights movements initiated in areas of England, France, Germany, Holland, and Scandinavian countries beginning after World War II. Movements continued to spread throughout Europe and continued into the 1960s ("LGBT Social Movements" 2008). In 1965, movements in the United States were established. Homosexual identity became an ever-growing presence in society and influenced many of the people living in the country at that time. Ideas of gay rights and acceptance increasingly became a forefront discussion worldwide and with such concepts being so outspoken, Brazil began to feel this effect take place in its own society. Many males began coming back to the Northeast with a new set of principles that challenged the long standing institutions (Muniz, Albuquerque and Ceballos 2002). The reported rates of males who have sex with males (MSM homosexuality) began to increase now that it was no longer fully hidden from the peering eyes of society. Male heirs no

longer felt it necessary to marry women which worked in concert with other period factors that contributed to the disintegration of the concept of a nuclear family (Muniz, Albuquerque and Ceballos 2002). The social status tied to bloodlines that male identity was based upon previously became threatened and so a new male identity rose out of this disintegration. No longer was a real man identified by his family name but now it was by his actions that he was deemed a true man.

Machismo is a cultural byproduct of the European conquest of Latin America. It is a common phenomena noted throughout Latin America and is central to hierarchies of all types be they social, political, or even economic. Machismo is a construct of hypermasculinity in which is noted by three aspects: open and rampant sexuality, violence, and excitement encompassed in the form of danger (Mosher and Tomkins 1988). It is a script that has become socialized and reduces roles into either those conquering or those being conquered. With this oversimplification stemming from European conquests becoming adopted into normal constructs, machismo then becomes a cyclical amplification. Those males born into a machismo dominated society will have innate behaviors that are further encouraged by the environment he is raised in. Behaviors such as risk taking, confrontation as the preferred action over fear, and callousness when it comes to interpersonal relationships are all supportive in the molding of a young male (Mosher and Tomkins 1988). Anything counter to these highly esteemed manners is deemed less than manly. Anyone falling into this area is then labeled inferior and consequently effeminate. To further strengthen this moral underlying were strong institutions. Organizations such as the professions, family, media, government, and, arguably the most important, was the church were constant reinforcers of the norms of masculinity (Sternberg 2000). It is in this socialization of these characteristics that the behaviors of male counterparts in not only Brazilian

societies but also of all Latin American societies can be analyzed, albeit with variances in each country.

With this archetypal male set up in Brazilian lifestyle, sexual domination was only too expected. Sex is the epitome of machismo. It is the act of force, conquest, penetration, and demonstration of the power dynamic. “True” males have many female sexual partners, often times even after they have married, and always have the control in when to have sex and with whom. The more female partners a male has had, the more it demonstrates his masculinity. However, a double standard presents itself within this backdrop of norms. A man is celebrated in his sexual expression whereas a woman, in the same situation is considered “unclean” and forsaking her expected identity which is likened to that of the Virgin (Sternberg 2000). With this new social construct taking root in Brazilian society, one can begin to see why male homosexuality was not an acceptable practice and was viewed as a threat to current institutions based upon machismo.

Even as Brazil’s industry began to flourish, the 1960s saw an increase in political turmoil in Brazil. In 1965, there was a suspension of political parties and the political rights of individuals were revoked indefinitely. By 1968, the president assumed the ability to exile anyone seen as a political critic. This in turn led to the governmental control of public sectors resulting in the many newspapers and press shutting down. The deterioration of politics eventually led to the suspension of legislative bodies with the assumption of power by military forces in 1970 (“Brazil” 2008). Eventually by the late 1970s, the military dictatorship began to dissipate and there became a developing emergence of leftist alternative press covering social topics never before seen in the popular press (Muniz, Albuquerque and Ceballos 2002). This emergence was due in large part to the return of dissidents that fled to Europe and the United

States during the dictatorship. It became a time of great revolt against censorship and it is at this point in Brazilian history that male homosexuality began to be openly discussed.

Due to the sexual oppression experienced in Latin America by homosexuals, many would migrate to the United States as a way of finding freedom to express their true identity (Foster 2002). Homosexuality in Europe at this time had permeated throughout all major culture institutions including television, movies, and books. Within Brazil, the major forefront of homosexual press was the *Lampião da Esquina* (Muniz, Albuquerque and Ceballos 2002). It was through this newspaper that homosexuals began to deconstruct the internalized script of what the male construct should be, the dominating male view reinforced by machismo. Finally, with the progress made by groups worldwide serving as a source of hope, homosexuality began to walk openly in the streets.

It was a subtle shift from being behind closed doors to being in public in the beginning, but there became marked areas within cities that were known to be “gay streets.” One person wrote to *Lampião da Esquina*, “From time to time, straight folk discover the street, but they do not invade it. It is a place where gays who have come out can feel at ease, without those still in the closet being made uncomfortable” (Emanuel 1979). What began with streets eventually turned into entire districts reserved for homosexuals wishing to mingle with other homosexuals. Bars and restaurants began being built catering only to homosexuals (Muniz, Albuquerque and Ceballos 2002). Despite great advances homosexuality was gaining, it was not an easy task. *Lampião da Esquina* became the foundation from which many homosexuals began to voice the injustices they were experiencing. The more homosexuals that came out in public, the greater the amount of violence that occurred against them took place. Homosexuals were unofficially placed outside the protection of the law and even when robbery, battery, or even murder took

place, if the victim was a homosexual, often no arrests were made (Muniz, Albuquerque and Ceballos 2002). Another writer to the *Lampião da Esquina* stated, “The district is, in my opinion, rather dangerous, and prejudice against gays is strong, although it appears on the surface not to exist” (Emanuel 1979).

It is around this time that a fractioning of views within the homosexual community arose regarding how they should obtain respect and recognition from the whole of society (Muniz, Albuquerque and Ceballos 2002). There became only two main views on how to achieve gay rights. One argument was that heterosexuals should be aggressively confronted until they acknowledge and grant gay rights. In this way, many argued for something mirroring anarchy in that those aligned with this view believed that gay rights could only be achieved through an overthrow of the rules set up by an “ignorant” heterosexual society. Comparatively passive, the other line of argument was that the gay community, in order to live peacefully yet still gain rights and acceptance, would still accept the rules of the current society and they did not necessarily see them as degrading. The latter view was often held by those not wishing to completely expose their homosexuality (Muniz, Albuquerque and Ceballos 2002).

The new homosexual movement in Brazil was occurring all over the nation, including in the Northeast. An interesting cultural definer is found when two differing views on the definition of homosexuality, the Mediterranean view and that of juridico-medicalization developed. The Mediterranean view was based on penetration. Only those being penetrated were considered homosexual. As long as a man was to be the penetrator, he kept his role of masculine. However, juridico-medicalization took on a different, broader approach and defines homosexuality as any act, including males kissing males in a proactive manner, constituted

homosexuality. With the topic of homosexuality taking stride in the public forum, it was then able to make its breakthrough from underground works to openly in popular culture.

The principle question to first arise is what exactly is popular culture? In order to understand popular culture one must first grasp the real underlying of what culture as a whole is. Culture at its basic anthropological definition is a system of symbols and their conveyed meanings and importance (Findley and Rothney 2006). It is manifested in the forms of art, language, food, political and religious beliefs, literature, lifestyle, and clothing to name a few. Within a societal context, culture can be subdivided into high and low. High culture is those manifested forms associated with the upper class. Connected with elitism, high culture can be thought of as classical music, ballet, and Greco-Roman art. Often considered “sophisticated,” high culture is held to be the culture of the rich, powerful, and educated. Conversely, low culture can be associated with things considered of the lower class and can be regarded as campy and less serious. It is the culture that the masses can partake in without express knowledge prior to partaking nor does it require an extensive amount of money. Known fully as popular entertainment culture, pop culture is the antithesis of high culture.

Popular culture is a fluid category that is in continuous metamorphosis. What allows for a definition is that at the core of popular culture is the theme of mass expression (Danesi 2007). It consists of multiple facets including cartoons, books, television, movies, and music. Popular culture permeates an entire population where things such as news, economics, and politics are only able to touch upon a few. It is here that homosexuality in Brazil was able to exist openly and it is here that one is able to see the true transformation of the homosexual identity as exemplified through popular culture.

One of the pioneering niches of popular culture in which homosexuality and aspects therein occupied was in Brazilian romance novels. Headlining this front was Cassandra Rios. Born Odete Rios in 1932, she began writing romance novels at an early age and published her first book entitled *The Lust of Sin* in 1948. During this time, women tended to be delegated a heterosexual role which demanded of its members to be good wives and mothers with sexual pleasure and lust not a construct of this role. Rios' literature was borne out of this restricted cultural tradition and incorporated radical new styles and contained breakthrough characters including homosexuals and transvestites. Historically, homosexuality emerged in Brazilian literature in the late nineteenth century and carried over into the earlier parts of the twentieth. Consistent amongst most of these works, however, were the themes of sin, disease, and crime (Piovesan 2007). Brazil has long been a deeply religious country and one of the edicts of Christianity especially in the 19th and 20th centuries was that homosexuality was an abomination. Despite homosexual characters being written about in popular culture, it wasn't until Rios that homosexuality began slowly to be redefined in a less shame filled context. Nonetheless, Rios ensured that the new role wasn't without a sense of reality. She kept the themes of sex, disease, and crime in her novels but now reconstructed them as barriers experienced. In realistically depicting homosexuality, Rios again was able to further reach out to her audiences.

Rios' works are unique in that she found a new niche amongst female readers of the time. Her books and short stories were written in a simple, clear, and direct language with little sophistication. This literary technique made Rios' books easily accessible and understandable which is one way they disseminated so easily throughout Brazil. Sexuality of any nature was an unmentionable topic and so in incorporating homosexuality, Rios initially treated the topic indirectly. In *The Lust of Sin*, the theme of lesbianism was embedded within narratives of

characters that were marginal and even strangers. At one point, a woman is discussing the others' future with her fiancé, from which she states, "If you can not become a wife one day, than never should you also be his lover. Never! But it was such, for a long time. Lovers of sin and lust." There is an underlying message here identifying with the lesbian culture of the time. Women were often forced to be the lovers and wives of men they didn't love because of the societal constraints. The sin in this context refers to not only the lusting of someone else, but also of the act of homosexuality. This reference is blatantly discussed when the two lesbian characters, Lyeth and Irez turn to the dictionary to adequately describe their feelings. "They wanted to mind the names allocated to women who as such loved. Curiously, they consulted the dictionary: Homosexuals, lesbians! Were they? ...They wanted to know why a love was so unnatural." In her book *Eudemônia*, Rios again confronted society's dismissal of homosexuals. Here, a lesbian is taken to a psychiatrist to be rid of her homosexual problem. In her first encounter with the doctor, she is told, "Miss Eudemônia, those who wanted to free themselves of the perverted instincts were successful in our clinics. Creatures have become normal and many of them today have a home and even children." It is evident that homosexuality was seen as a perversion of nature and that was fixable. To be a lesbian was to be imprisoned by ones instincts but, with medical help, a woman would be able to again fulfill her correct roles as a wife and mother.

Rios was never a condemner of homosexuality but rather herself was a lesbian. Though adamantly denying her works as mirror of her own life, Rios has had the burden placed upon her as the author who initiated the redefinition of female homosexuality. Rios' popularity grew and her work had reached to fifty books by the time the dictatorship took hold, after which she felt the grip of censorship similar to many other authors of the time. Her work was condemned by

the state, being targeted as trashy, homoerotic, and perverted deviations, and as a consequence, thirty-six of her fifty books were prohibited from being sold or placed in any libraries (Piovesan 2006). Once the ban was lifted in the late 1980s, Rios had turned from erotic love stories to only writing religious novels. In an interview, Rios expressed her feelings of comments that her work is pornographic, “[I like the sound of obscene] It’s a beautiful, sensual word. Pornographic is something else. My books are not pornographic, they are love books. They talk about the attraction one person has over another” (“The Queen of Smut” 2002). Rios’ work, though controversial, was never set out to be a voice of a growing minority. Her stories were simple and about love in a realistic and common context.

It appears that as Rios reflected on her life and the criticisms she endured, her greatest struggle was the criticism of being a female writer and the hypocrisy of society’s judgments on the content of women’s writings. In 2001, she told the magazine *TPM- Trip Para Mulher*, “I was massacred for writing what I wrote being a woman. Since the dawn of civilization women fight for the right to talk and to think. If a man writes, he is wise, experienced. If a woman writes, she is a nymphomaniac, a pervert. I always wrote with the naivety of someone who is born a writer.” Regardless of Rios’ intent, her early work prior to the dictatorship was monumental to the increased presence of homosexuals in popular culture during and after the fall of the government.

Censorship is a key power tool used by dictators in an attempt to control and suppress rising factions. Depending on the structure of the society and the demographics of the rebels, censorship can take on the form of education, newspapers, and ultimately, popular culture. In the late 1960s, Caio Fernando Abreu wrote a play “Sargento Garcia” about a young man, Hermes, who enters the military. Hermes enlists in the army but his true passions lie in his

studies of philosophy. In the beginning act, he is lost in thoughts and misses responding to a comment made by Sergeant Garcia. Garcia begins to question Hermes and comes to learn of Hermes' philosophical studies. This knowledge sets Hermes apart from the remainder of the cadets and it becomes clear that Garcia senses this difference. It is from this point on that there emerges a sexual strain hidden underneath the dialogue of Garcia and Hermes.

Though homosexuality is never explicitly stated, expressed, or discussed within the play, Garcia represents the hypermasculine homosexual. This type of homosexual doesn't typically view himself as gay but rather ascribes to the machismo definition of a heterosexual person in a homosexual context in which the penetrator is not considered gay. This masculinity is demonstrated in the power tactics Garcia utilizes. He has the cadets undress, demands answers, and possesses an authoritarian presence. In essence, his every action is calculated, not much unlike those of a predator. The prey in this encounter is Hermes. Hermes represents the unrealized and therefore unconquered homosexual. He is inexperienced yet open to possibilities. In the historical context, Hermes represents the major demographic of the homosexual population: young, middle class men (Ford 1995). The third type of homosexual that the reader encounters is Isadora. Once again, Abreu never explicitly states that Isadora is a transvestite but does hint at it. He writes within the dialogue that "No one forgets a woman like Isadora" and in one scene, Garcia forbids Isadora to "service him [Hermes]" because it is Hermes' "first time."

Almost twenty years later, "Sargento Garcia" was turned into a short film. The opening scene depicts Garcia seated in front of a room full of naked men. Garcia is strong and deliberate. His character is easily juxtaposed to Hermes who is rather delicate. His hair is long, his face is innocent, and he is lost in childhood flashbacks of wrestling in the grass with his friends. Analogous to the play, the interaction of Hermes and Garcia is full of sexual tension. The first

few shots present a homoerotic display of at least a dozen young, fit men naked in front of this older, authoritative figure. This power structure harkens to the certain sexual relationships arising out of a domination-submission power structure. Here, the actual pleasure comes not from sex, but rather from playing either the role of dominator, one who is in absolute control, or that of the submissive, one who has no control and can only obey commands from the dominator. Within this domination-submission power structure Garcia is able to feed his sexual desires without actively having sex.

For Garcia, controlling a room full of naked men in the guise of military training is sufficient. However, the sexual tension becomes more explicit when his control is weakened and thereby threatened by a cadet who is day dreaming. Hermes inadvertently challenges this domination-submission power structure which further separates Hermes from the other cadets. At one point when Garcia is trying to regain his authority, he slowly takes out a cigarette, places it delicately between his lips as he looks at Hermes, lights it, and then blows in Hermes' face. Though on the surface, this scene is innocently depicting a hazing of cadets, with an analytical eye, it becomes more apparent that the scene includes homosexual overtones. The soft and slow actions are Garcia's way of enticing Hermes meanwhile the cigarette is being used as a phallic symbol. This marks an important departure of the movie from the play. Whereas the 1960s version of this story was shrouded in allusions, two decades later and a weakening dictatorship lead to more graphic depictions of homosexuality throughout the remainder of the movie.

After the faceoff between the sergeant and the cadet, the film's next scene takes place while in Garcia's car as he is giving Hermes a ride home. They come to a cross walk and are in the midst of a conversation in which the sub-context centers on sexuality. Depicted again is the phallic symbolism between the two men revolving around the lighting of a cigarette. Tension

climaxes and underlying currents surface when, finally, Garcia slowly drags his hand over Hermes' thigh and grabs for his crotch. Hermes' expression is one of fear and confusion yet the viewer is never shown what dialogue is exchanged or how Hermes reconciles this new dimension of sexuality because the film quickly changes scenes to a brothel where the viewer meets Isadora, a transvestite. She shows the two men to a room where Hermes and Garcia have sex. Here Garcia takes charge, telling Hermes to undress and lay on the bed. The imagery is raw and without tenderness. Garcia is methodical whereas Hermes is portrayed as in pain. Shortly after, Garcia raises, dresses, and leaves, once again taking back the power and control lost in the beginning of the film.

Sargento Garcia illustrates a key way homosexuality was openly displayed in a socially restricted time period. Many factors came together to allow for such a graphic representation of homosexuals during the dictatorship. One key factor, however, was that the film was made toward the end of the dictatorship. With power waning, the government's strict control on film also weakened. However, it is not to say that *Sargento Garcia* was shown without controversy. In order to understand how this movie came to be released in Brazil, one must look at the social message of the film. *Sargento Garcia* never outright supports homosexuality but rather seemingly condemns it. Garcia, the perpetrator of gay acts in the film, is presented as the hypermasculine. This makes him less threatening because Brazilian society supported the machismo characteristics of men, and he is a sergeant in the military which further adds to his respect. When he engages in sex, it is not about love but control of subordinates. Therefore, the sex scene is not a threat to the nuclear family. Hermes is also an innocent figure. He never outright speaks of his wavering sexuality and ultimately, throughout the sex scene, he is shown in pain. In this manner, there is a "serves you right" message conveyed. Hermes dared to act on

his gay feelings and in the end he paid, making the point that to be gay will bring about suffering. The social message here is that homosexuality is not something that is fun or pleasurable but rather unnatural.

Finally, there is Isadora. A film is written, shot, and edited with a particular purpose in mind and so all characters in a film serve some sort of purpose. Isadora plays the role of the “sissy.” The sissy is the cliché homosexual depicted in other popular culture around the world. It was the first socially acceptable gay, male role in Hollywood that was openly welcomed (The Celluloid Closet 1995). This is because the sissy was neither wholly male nor female and so was not a threat to masculinity and yet a welcomed friend to women. Isadora is a slight variance on the sissy in that she is a transvestite. Isadora looks and acts like a woman. She wears a nightgown with her hair done up, wearing lots of jewelry, and during the sex scene between Garcia and Hermes, she is momentarily seen sitting in front of a mirror putting more makeup on. Isadora’s only hint at masculinity is in her box jaw and larger hands. Consequently, to viewers she may actually indeed be a woman running a brothel and consequently is acceptable because she isn’t presented as male or gay.

Sargento Garcia is a paradox not unlike the paradox found in most popular culture regarding homosexuality at this time. It offers the gay community gay figures even having sex but must cast it in a negative shadow in order to not be censored. Nevertheless, the progress of open acts of homosexuality being broadcasted in popular culture marks a significant social turn that, as will be demonstrated, sets the path for experimenting with homosexuality in other realms of popular culture in the future.

In discussing the popular culture of Latin America as a whole today, telenovelas are a key component. Telenovelas follow a soap opera design within a miniseries format. Born from

Latin American radionovelas, telenovelas generally run a pre-determined time of about 5-6 days per week for about five months. Brazilian telenovelas are unique for several reasons (“Telenovelas in Latin America” 1999). Firstly, Brazilian telenovelas are structured more complexly. They are inherently melodramatic and contain several subplots, often intertwining, within one major context. They tend to deal with social justice issues by having character settings designated by rich or poor and a neutral setting in which characters from the other two settings may interact. Brazilian telenovelas are especially applauded for their ability to accurately present Brazilian culture. This presentation is made particularly possible because Brazilian telenovelas are shot usually within fifteen days prior to being aired. By paying attention to viewers’ reactions, a telenovela may alter story plot by killing off a character, changing a personality, and altering relationship statuses. Currently, telenovelas in conjunction with football and the news help make TV Globo one of the largest networks in the Americas and the fourth largest in the world.

TV Globo’s success now was born out of the coup in 1965. TV Globo is owned by Roberto Marinho who had long supported the dictatorship. Once in power, the government interfered with an agreement between TV Globo and another parent network. In stopping the agreement, the government allowed Marinho out of a deal that would have taken one-third of TV Globo’s profits. The past dealings between the government and TV Globo have noticeably influenced what is broadcasted. With TV Globo’s main area of success centered on its telenovelas and their nature of representing Brazilian culture in combination with governmental interests, it becomes easier to understand how, despite high demand, homosexuality has yet to be fully embraced on telenovelas.

In 2005, TV Globo broadcasted the telenovela *América*. *América*'s main plot involved the struggle for romance between a young girl and boy born from poor social backgrounds. She eventually immigrates to the United States while he remains behind in West São Paulo State to become a successful rodeo cowboy. The subplots are numerous but one key plot involved the lives of two gay characters. The characters were so popular that the final episode was to include an intimate kiss between the couple. Though highly anticipated, this kiss was also highly controversial. So much so, that TV Globo pulled the scene from the aired episode. Within the same time period, MTV was broadcasting a show entitled *Beija Sapa*, a television talk show with two different versions targeting lesbians and homosexuals. The lesbian version aired November 2, 2005 and featured the first televised lesbian kiss during primetime in Brazil ("Gay Kiss Week [for the Girls]" 2005). With news of the cancelled scene and the reception of the televised lesbian kiss, the homosexual version of *Beija Sapa* aired with a kiss between the two actors from *América*, stating, "If you want a kiss, then a kiss you will get." Two years later, TV Globo again broadcasted a telenovela containing two gay couples, this time allowing for a different take on the presentation of the relationship.

In 2007, *Paraíso Tropical* aired primetime with two gay couples. In response to the public outcry centering on the final episode of *América*, *Paraíso Tropical* received praise for representing its couples as young, attractive, successful, and even living together in an upper scale apartment. However, the realistic portrayal of homosexual relationships on primetime television was still receiving censorship despite any social change taking place within the streets. TV Globo refused to pay any regard to gay and lesbian activist groups and prohibited any scenes of intimacy between the gay couples including kissing, caressing, and any forms of sex,

suggested or otherwise. It can be seen that the dictatorship has had far reaching effects, despite being dissipated for over twenty-two years.

Popular culture relies on historical as well as social trends as a driver. It can be used as a means of depicting the current fashion, entertainment, and merchandise; however, popular culture can also be used as a means of reflecting social movements. Homosexuality continues to be a controversial topic in Latin American countries and the increasing presence of the gay identity in Brazil can be seen documented, though perhaps subtly, in multiple forms of popular culture. Cassandra Rios served as a significant Brazilian figure for several different minority groups. Not only was she a prominent female writer, but she also began to break down stereotypes of lesbians. Her success is largely due to her writing career prior to the dictatorship in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Nevertheless, it paved the way for the representation of homosexuals in other media including plays, television shows, and movies.

Censorship led to a great bottleneck in open expression so writers, painters, musicians, actors, and directors had to instead rely on sly underhanded innuendos and references that their greater audience would perhaps miss or dismiss meanwhile gay audiences would pick up. Though the military regime stepped down in the mid 1980s, Brazilian culture is still dominated by the conservative model and reinforced by the same institutions as it has always been, such as via media, religion, and politics. Today, with increased Western influences, homosexuals have only now begun to fully express themselves and receive proper and realistic representation. The social restrictions are still present but as the world progresses, the voice of the minority will grow louder.

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