

Translations and Interpretations of the Other:
The Reception of Three Brazilian Films
in the 1970s with German Migration Stories

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Wenn ich den Wanderer frage:
 “Wo kommst du her?”
 “Von Hause, von Hause”,
spricht er und seufzet schwer.

Wenn ich den Wanderer frage:
 “Wo gehst du hin?”
 “Nach Hause, nach Hause”,
Spricht er mit frohem Sinn

—Hermann von Hermannsthal, *Wenn ich den Wanderer frage*, 1837.

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II. Abstract

In Brazil during the second half of the 1970s, three films were released by different filmmakers in different styles, all representing stories of German migrants and their descendants: *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (Sylvio Back, 1976), *Os Mucker* (Jorge Bodanzky and Wolf Gauer, 1978), and *As Filhas do Fogo* (Walter Hugo Khouri, 1978). Material that appeared in the press at the time and is now available on the Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira database shows a wide range of interpretations of these films. Moreover, the texts reveal different understandings and translations of “German” in Brazil while also providing a complex overview of the political atmosphere. This dissertation aims to study the reception of the aforementioned films based on what was said about them in the press. Such a study can reveal hypotheses about the causes of the films’ diverse and sometimes contradictory interpretations. The methodology is based on the historical materialist approach of Janet Staiger in *Interpreting Films* (1992), which analyzes how historical contexts of production and exhibition of films influence their diverse interpretations. The source material goes beyond film reviews and includes film synopsis published alongside local movie theater showtimes, festival coverages, and interviews in order to assemble a broader scope of interpretations in an environment of spectatorship under censorship. Ultimately, the analysis reveals not only an alterity constructed around the German migrant, a disputed symbol of national and foreign representation, but also ideological disputes and the yearning for answers regarding unclarified topics of Brazilian history.

Keywords: reception study; Brazilian cinema; press; German migration; *Aleluia Gretchen*; *Os Mucker*; *As Filhas do Fogo*.

III. Zusammenfassung

In der zweiten Hälfte der 1970er Jahre wurden in Brasilien drei Filme von verschiedenen Filmemachern in unterschiedlichen Stilen veröffentlicht, die Geschichten von deutschen Migranten und ihren Nachkommen erzählen: *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (Sylvio Back, 1976), *Os Mucker* (Jorge Bodanzky und Wolf Gauer, 1978) und *As filhas do fogo* (Walter Hugo Khouri, 1978). Das in der Datenbank der Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira verfügbare Pressematerial dieser Zeit zeigt ein breites Spektrum an Interpretationen dieser Filme. Darüber hinaus enthüllen die Texte unterschiedliche Auffassungen und Übersetzungen von "Deutsch" in Brasilien und geben gleichzeitig einen komplexen Überblick über die politische Atmosphäre. Daher zielt diese Forschung auf eine Rezeptionsstudie auf der Grundlage der Presse ab, die Hypothesen über die Ursachen der unterschiedlichen und manchmal widersprüchlichen Interpretationen der Filme aufzeigen kann. Die Methodik stützt sich auf den historisch-materialistischen Ansatz von Janet Staiger in *Interpreting Films* (1992), der analysiert, wie historische Kontexte der Produktion und Vorführung von Filmen deren unterschiedliche Interpretationen beeinflussen. In dieser Arbeit werden nicht nur Filmkritiken, sondern auch Synopsen von Filmen, die zusammen mit lokalen Kinoprogrammen veröffentlicht wurden, Festivalberichte und Interviews gesammelt, um ein breiteres Spektrum von Interpretationen in einem von Zensur geprägten Zuschauerumfeld zu erfassen. Letztlich offenbart die Analyse nicht nur eine konstruierte Alterität um den deutschen Einwanderer als umstrittenes Symbol nationaler und fremder Repräsentation, sondern auch ideologische Auseinandersetzungen und die Sehnsucht nach Antworten auf ungelöste Fragen der brasilianischen Geschichte.

Schlüsselwörter: Rezeptionsästhetik; brasilianischer Film; Presse; deutsche Auswanderung; *Aleluia Gretchen*; *Os Mucker*; *As filhas do fogo*.

IV. Resumo

Na segunda metade dos anos 70 no Brasil, três filmes foram lançados por diferentes cineastas em diferentes estilos representando histórias envolvendo migrantes alemães e seus descendentes: *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (Sylvio Back, 1976), *Os Mucker* (Jorge Bodanzky e Wolf Gauer, 1978), e *As filhas do fogo* (Walter Hugo Khouri, 1978). O material de imprensa da época, disponível hoje no banco de dados da Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira, demonstra uma ampla gama de interpretações destes filmes. Além disso, os textos revelam diferentes interpretações e traduções de “alemã(o)” no Brasil, ao mesmo tempo em que proporcionam uma visão complexa da atmosfera política da época. Esta pesquisa, portanto, busca um estudo de recepção baseado na imprensa, que pode revelar hipóteses sobre as causas das diversas, e às vezes contraditórias, interpretações dos filmes. A metodologia é baseada na abordagem materialista histórica de Janet Staiger em *Interpreting Films* (1992), que analisa como os contextos históricos de produção e exibição de filmes influenciam suas diversas interpretações. Esta tese coleta mais evidências do que apenas críticas cinematográficas, tais como sinopses publicadas junto a horários de exibição nos cinemas locais, coberturas de festivais e entrevistas, a fim de reunir um escopo mais amplo de interpretações em um ambiente de espectadorismo sob censura. Por fim, a análise destes objetos de pesquisa revela não apenas uma alteridade construída em relação ao imigrante alemão, um disputado símbolo de representação do nacional e do estrangeiro, mas também disputas ideológicas e um anseio por respostas em relação a temas não esclarecidos da história brasileira.

Palavras-chave: estudo de recepção; cinema brasileiro; imprensa; migração alemã; *Aleluia Gretchen*; *Os Mucker*; *As filhas do fogo*.

1. Introduction

In Brazil during the second half of the 1970s, there was a curious theme recurrence in three films released by well-known but very different filmmakers — the stories involve German migrants and their descendants in southern Brazil. The first film, *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (Sylvio Back, 1976), is considered the very first feature film with the theme of German immigration in south Brazil. It is a political drama taking place from the 1930s until the 1970s with hints of suspense and surrealism. The story focuses on a German family that migrates to Brazil and is involved with Nazism. The second film, *Os Mucker* (Jorge Bodanzky and Wolf Gauer, 1978), a so-called fiction-documentary, portrays the Mucker social-religious movement from around 1874. Lastly, the third film, *As Filhas do Fogo* (Walter Hugo Khouri, 1978), is a fantasy horror film taking place mostly in the late 1970s. It is about German migrant descendants involved with parapsychology.

These films bear no immediate connection, having quite different styles and narratives. Moreover, they represent different historical periods. Considering that Brazil was under military dictatorship from 1964-1985¹, I was curious to see how audiences reacted to these films. Especially since Ernesto Geisel, an army general and himself a descendant of German immigrants, was President of Brazil from 1974 to 1979.

Today, Geisel is remembered as the president who initiated the political distension of the dictatorship. However, Marcos Napolitano, a history professor at the University of São Paulo, points out that there was only an opening agenda after 1978. Geisel's regime is responsible, for example, for 39 missing opponents and 42 deaths, as well as broad censorship of the press and the arts. Surprisingly, the regime also promoted a cultural policy that gave space to many artists who were openly against the dictatorship (cf. Napolitano, 2020, pp. 229 and 234). Meanwhile, as early as 1976, the political far-right promoted attacks against the Associação Brasileira de Imprensa (ABI) and the Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil (OAB), resulting in uncertainty and suspicion

¹ The project “Memórias da ditadura”, carried out by Vlado Educação - Instituto Vladimir Herzog and a reference in the dissemination of information about the military dictatorship, divides the period into three phases: the first (1964-1968), in which the new authoritarian regime was legalized through decree-laws, five Institutional Acts (1-5), and a new constitution; the second (1969-1978), when the state repression and violence intensified; and lastly (1979-1985), a time of political reopening, which included the “Diretas Já” movement for direct elections for president (cf. Memórias da ditadura, no date/b).

against the regime (cf. Napolitano, 2020, p. 252). In 1978, the regime opposition still suffered from bomb attacks originating from a right-wing group that was against the opening. They targeted particular people, universities, bookshops, and the press (cf. Napolitano, 2020, p. 294).

In 1975 Geisel rejected the end of the Ato Institucional nº 5 (AI-5)² and the possibility of political amnesty in a statement on national television (cf. Napolitano, 2020, p. 247). These actions revealed that the atmosphere in the country was full of insecurity, and the eventual opening of the regime was not self-evident. Hence, Napolitano demonstrates that the second half of the 1970s was marked by a regime that aimed for a transition to democracy. But they wanted to do it their own way and were still obsessed with demonstrating their power and authority, which led to apparent contradictory politics (cf. Napolitano, 2020, p. 234).

After demonstrations in 1977, the regime abolished the AI-5 the following year. As a result, the prior censorship, the power to close the National Congress, and the government authorization to arbitrarily persecute opponents also ceased, and the habeas corpus returned (cf. Napolitano, 2020, p. 262). The economic crisis worsened in 1979. In that year, Geisel was succeeded by João Baptista Figueiredo, the last president of the dictatorship, who remained in power until 1985. During this period, there was considerable opposition to the dictatorship, with widespread union movements, massive demonstrations, and strikes. The regime responded with political amnesty and the bipartisan system (cf. Napolitano, 2009, p. 103).

The second half of the 1970s was also a special moment for the cultural industry in Brazil. Randal Johnson, professor emeritus with the Latin American Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, argues that after 1969-1975, the period with the most intense repression, which put the military regime's legitimacy into question, there was an impulse to promote the field of culture, especially during Geisel's regime. Among the governmental measures were the active recruitment of administrators from

² The AI-5, enacted in 1968, is still seen today as emblematic of the military dictatorship and its violence and undemocratic practices, “autorizava o presidente da República, em caráter excepcional e, portanto, sem apreciação judicial, a: decretar o recesso do Congresso Nacional; intervir nos estados e municípios; cassar mandatos parlamentares; suspender, por dez anos, os direitos políticos de qualquer cidadão; decretar o confisco de bens considerados ilícitos; e suspender a garantia do habeas-corpus” (CPDOC, no date/b).

the political left or with their trust, the creation of the Fundação Nacional de Artes (Funarte), the reorganization of the Empresa Brasileira de Filmes S.A. (Embrafilme), the creation of the Conselho Nacional do Cinema (Concine), the revitalization of the Serviço Nacional de Teatro (SNT), and the publication of the *Política Nacional de Cultura* (PNC) (cf. Johnson, 1993, p. 37). According to Rosane Kaminski, professor of history at the University of Paraná, the PNC, in particular, sought to promote Brazilian regional peculiarities in the representation of the nation (cf. Kaminski, 2008, p. 193). Evidently, the government was interested in appeasing the political left while still controlling cultural production. These institutionalizations and restructurings also demonstrate a concern with a new revised “Brazilian” identity and reorienting the country towards the moral values of the regime.

Further on this topic, in their contribution to the *Nova história do cinema brasileiro 2* (2018), Arthur Autran and José Mario Ortiz write that after 1974, the cultural industry development and the state’s recent investments in it were followed by a new respect for “regional diversities” and updated conceptions of the “Brazilian” person, “national identity,” and the “national-popular.” Cinema is, then, rich in literary adaptations and representations of Brazilian history and culture, with an appreciation of a notion of “popular” and spectacularization of the “national” (cf. Autran and Ortiz, 2018, pp. 221-225) — the chosen “national” events are celebrated, dramatized, staged, and transformed in spectacle.

Filmmakers, critics, and researchers debated what “Brazilian cinema” was. The cinema environment was influenced by the domination of U.S. American films on the market, the difficulties of producing films in Brazil, and the aesthetics of Modern Cinema³ all over the world. Ultimately, there was a struggle to define what was Brazilian, how to represent Brazil, and which type of cinema should gain prominence

³ Modern Cinema emerged after World War II when several national cinematographies experienced a wave of experimentation and reaction to classical Hollywood cinema. This resulted in the Brazilian Cinema Novo, the Italian neorealism, and the French Nouvelle Vague, for example. The new productions questioned the established filmic structure and fantasized reality, which was incongruent with the war devastations. The stories are often not structured around cause and effect with didactic and moral goals — meaning circular narratives, unresolved conflicts, and distance from Manichaeism. The narrative and characters’ fragmentation reflect an also fragmented world. People were represented without the classic glamour, framed in everyday actions and contemplative moments, occasionally with existential questions (cf. Jullier and Marie, 2009, p. 152; Stam, 1981, pp. 84-87).

and state funding — should preference be given to commercial films, box-office successes, artistic, political, educational, or experimental films, categories that naturally blend?

Dário Sousa Nascimento Neto points out in his master dissertation, *A história dirigida: censura e filmes históricos no cinema brasileiro no pós AI-5* (2021), that the dictatorship had an interest in portraying and glorifying specific characters and events of Brazilian history to emphasize their version of civics and order. With this in mind, numerous financing possibilities and awards were granted for historical film productions (cf. pp. 66 and 159). Neto also relates this interest to the commemorations in 1972 of the sesquicentenary (150th anniversary) of the country's independence (cf. p. 53). In this context, left-wing filmmakers recognized the possibility of making historical cinema as a metaphor for the dictatorship's reality (cf. Nascimento Neto, 2021, p. 13).

Accordingly, Ismail Xavier, a professor of film studies at the University of São Paulo, mentions *Aleluia*, *Gretchen!* and *Os Mucker* as examples of films produced in the 1970s and 80s, which were inscribed in an authorial cinema in Brazil representing moments of history with social conflicts, but that did not try to celebrate national myths or myths of national origin (cf. 2001, p. 95). Moreover, he explains that the decades were marked by a revisionist impulse seeking to illuminate historical experiences while working with memory, archive research, giving space to yet unheard voices, to witnesses, to historical agents, looking for the interdicted information, and examining conflicts of interpretations of the facts (cf. 2001, pp. 97-98). It was an important time of questioning, especially because the regime concealed so much from the population, who was left without answers for the many unexplained crimes. Looking at the past was a clever maneuver to criticize the dictatorship and understand the roots of contemporary problems.

Brazilian cinema during the 1970s still encompassed not only historical films but a wide range of film productions, such as comedies, dramas, documentaries, children's and teenage films, and the boom of *pornochanchadas*, a genre characterized by a mixture of comedy of manners with eroticism in commercial, low-budget, and agile production films. At the start of the decade, the Cinema Novo movement also

continued. This was characterized by the refusal of Hollywood cinema and mass culture while seeking to create a national identity and discuss Brazilian political and social problems. There was also the Cinema Marginal movement, which focused on films that relied on an aggressive and absurd aesthetic, narrative fragmentation, and the impossibility of action. They tended to be produced with few financial resources.

The films *Aleluia*, *Gretchen!*, *Os Mucker*, and *As Filhas do Fogo* stand out in the decade for their references to German migration and cultural heritage. Before the 1970s, feature films with themes of German migration history were not standard. The sudden turn could be a response to the previously described search for an updated national identity and history or even as a reference to Geisel. But the scenario is much more complex. Brazilian immigration researcher Giralda Seyferth identified a tendency of German ethnic revival on cultural and symbolic levels happening in the 1970s, which would articulate individual, familiar, and collective discourses about a shared identity within German descendants — in the shape of colonization museums, folk and tourist events, and fiction and non-fiction literature, for example — which takes a more complex meaning when it is constructed in conflict with Brazilian nationalism (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 23).

Furthermore, historian Roswithia Weber notes the ethnic revival in southern Brazil in 1974, which marked the sesquicentenary of São Leopoldo's foundation, the first German settlement in southern Brazil. The celebratory events brought media attention and included attendance from Germany's ambassador and consul to Brazil and 14 journalists from Germany (cf. 2006, pp. 93-94). Moreover, on Brazil's part, Ernesto Geisel, his wife, and ministers attended, which was very much commented on in the press (cf. Roehe, 2005, cited in Weber, 2006, p. 94). According to René Gertz, a historian specializing in German migration and Nazism in Brazil, a wave of references to the persistence of racism, antisemitism, and neo-Nazism, commonly attributed to German-Brazilians, also appeared in the press during this decade (cf. 2008, p. 68).

Aleluia, *Gretchen!*, *Os Mucker*, and *As Filhas do Fogo*⁴ are exemplary case studies for a reception study due to their variety of representation on the theme “German migration,” but also because of how they play with the categories of “German” and “Brazilian.” These cultural products were released at a time when cultural differences were esteemed and respected. Simultaneously, there was a search for the “Brazilian” in the country. The migrant is then a disputed symbol between national representation and the foreign. Analyzing what appeared in the national press about these three films can reveal these complexities and also inform how master narratives about German migration persisted or were challenged during this time in Brazil’s history.

The films themselves could also be taken as objects of study as to how they inform stereotypes and master narratives. However, comparing the films’ reception allows me to study why some themes were evoked and others not; which discussions or polemics were aroused; which values were attributed to “German” in Brazil, and to which events and images they were attached. A reception study can provide a unique glimpse into what sparks the interpretations and the disputes for meaning, as well as how these three films involving different themes of German migration evoked different ideas of the cultural, social, and political meaning embedded in these encounters. During a time of political uncertainty, the interpretations of these films reveal a complex context in which the interpretations also aimed to position those who interpreted ideologically.

1.1. Research questions

I propose a reception study based on the printed press to analyze how *Aleluia*, *Gretchen!* (Sylvio Back, 1976), *Os Mucker* (Jorge Bodanzky and Wolf Gauer, 1978), and *As Filhas do Fogo* (Walter Hugo Khouri, 1978) were reviewed and interpreted at the time of their release. The main goal is to observe recurrences and dissonances in the

⁴ The film *Lição de amor* (Eduardo Escorel, 1975), based on the book *Amar, verbo intransitivo* by Mário de Andrade (1927), also released in the 1970s, tells the story of a rich family that hires a German immigrant to teach their children German and to have sexual relations with the eldest son. However, the story is set in São Paulo, where German migration had a different historical development in relation to the South, and the narrative does not develop from a predominantly “German” background with many German immigrants and/or descendants, as the other films do. For this reason, it was not included in the sample of this research.

reception and formulate possible reasons for its diversity based on the historical context, including instances of the political, cultural, and cinema spheres.

The secondary goal is to observe how the press translates and reads the “German” elements in the films: are identities and stereotypes of what it means to be German, a German migrant, or a descendant of Germans in Brazil challenged or reproduced? Equally, I am interested in how spectators’ different reading strategies influence how the meaning of “German” is articulated and affects the reception of the films.

1.2. Methodology

This research methodology relies on Janet Staiger’s *Interpreting Films* (1992), which proposes a historical materialist approach to reception studies. Her approach is to investigate films’ interpretations, specially written in the form of reviews in newspapers and magazines, and their historical interpretative strategies, demonstrating how they reveal ideological disputes:

I have tried to theorize a reception studies that has the following features: objects are not containers with immanent meaning but are constituted in historical context and sometimes conflict; signs are not fixed but may be contested; variations among interpretations are not random but have connections—usually uneven—to available discourses and interpretive strategies and to the real conditions of existence in a specific social formation; and interpretations are not predestined by social scientific categories of people but are related to individuals’ constructed self-identities and the relation of those identities to apparent textual address determined by available interpretive strategies and discourses about the Self. (Staiger, 1992, p. 211)

Unlike proposing how the audience supposedly interpreted a film through its modes of address, the method analyzes how people *actually* interpreted it. It starts from the premise that the apparently loose and contradictory interpretations are not accidental. Instead, they refer to specifically available discourses about the films’ themes, directors, and productions. They are also conditioned by reading strategies and how spectators position themselves and their identities in relation to the films. Therefore, the varied interpretations of the films can reveal the different associations with “German” in Brazil, which can be historically grounded. Moreover, the reading strategy can also affect how “German” is interpreted. Staiger elucidates how theories for

film analysis are understood in a reception study as reading strategies used by spectators to interpret a film:

notions such as auteurism, national cinemas, genres, modes, styles, and fiction versus nonfiction become significant historical *reading strategies*. That is, all of those notions, as methods by which to understand a film, have been significant interpretative strategies. Thus, instead of debating whether or not auteurism is a theory of the production of textuality, reception studies considers how auteurism as a theory has informed the reading of movies. (Staiger, 1992, p. 95)

Therefore, identifying the reading strategies becomes important for understanding the perspectives through which the films were interpreted. For example, as will be seen in chapter 3.2., using the authorship reading strategy, one can relate Sylvio Back's personal migrant history to the narrative of *Aleluia, Gretchen!*, and also lends the film credibility to the handling of German migration since the filmmaker tells of his own German milieu.

Staiger's case studies start from an event of interpretation. For example, in *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (2000), a collection of essays that continue the research initiated in *Interpreting Films*, Staiger analyzes the "sacrificial outing of Jodie Foster" after the release of *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). She looks for evidence of this event in printed media, film reviews, news articles, letters from readers, illustrations, and publicity material and analyzes them (cf. Staiger, 2000, p. 163). This dissertation, however, follows the opposite path — it starts from the texts and searches for events of interpretation. It allows for a more general view of the interpretations and to find out more about the meaning of the "German" references provoked by the texts and pinpoint when the "German" element is overseen.

Following Staiger in *Perverse Spectators*, besides reviews, the discourse that explicitly delivers a film interpretation, I also include the film synopsis, screening times in local movie theaters, film festivals coverages, making-of reports, film stills, and posters. Including material beyond the reviews expands the sample and tells us more about the spectatorship environment. The different forms of discourse, implying various mediations between the film and the reader, can be as important as the reviews since they reveal what was considered interesting about the film and possibly guide many later interpretations. Moreover, the material can impact the audience because it can shape first impressions of the film and be the beginning of the film experience.

Therefore, in my approach to analyzing the reception of the three films, I closely look at the mentions of each film in the press during the 1970s. I used the Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira, an online and open platform provided by the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, to achieve this aim. When I carried out the search, it showed 211 periodicals available between 1970-1979 — a time that includes the pre-production, production, and exhibition⁵ interval for the three films. My search did not restrict the geographical location of the periodicals. For each film, I searched respectively for entries with the terms “aleluia gretchen”, “mucker”, and “filhas do fogo.”

Although there are other libraries for other periodicals in Brazil, I narrowed the search to what I could find in the Hemeroteca to maintain consistency with the sample. It is also not possible to analyze every interpretation published in Brazil during the 1970s — archives are restricted or non-existent, alternative interpretations are possibly not written in the press, or the Hemeroteca search might not have recognized all the entries for the terms. For the quality of scientific research, it was necessary to delimitate the sample.

To list the texts systematically, I used a sheet with the following columns: “ID, Journal, Local, Edition number, Publication date, Page, Author, Text, Image.” To each entry, I gave a different ID number and then saved the text of the page with this ID number, which made it easier to archive all entries and facilitated a quick search for the respective text. It was composed of “FilmNumberNewspaperNumberEntryNumber” so, for example, the number 11905 would mean 1 - film *Mucker*, 19 - *Movimento* newspaper, 05 - fifth entry from the newspaper *Movimento*.

Working with the Hemeroteca database demands a few considerations. There is not always information about the correct newspaper page number, which is also not always published. Hence, it is occasionally missing in the reference. Also, the database is constantly updating. More newspapers are added, and more entries on each film can be found continually. I marked the timeframe in which I gathered the entries. When there are references to “false-positives,” I mean entries that were given as “aleluia

⁵ This analysis considers the exhibition period to be only the screening period that follows the immediate release of the movie.

gretchen,” “mucker,” or “as filhas do fogo” by the Hemeroteca search but were, in fact, other words or words written in texts unrelated to the films or their themes.

The sample includes local and large-circulation newspapers, as well as alternative media, such as *Opinião*, *Movimento*, and *O Pasquim*, which were spaces of resistance and criticism of the military dictatorship. The range of the sample for analysis also involves different regions, including *Correio Braziliense* from Brasília and *Diário de Pernambuco* from Recife. However, most are located in the southeast and south of Brazil. The first is the big cinematic center of the country, and the latter is where the films are situated, as well as a location with a high concentration of German immigrants. The present analysis does not consider each particular newspaper’s ideological views. I am interested in recurrences and dissonances throughout the texts within periodicals in the sample. I acknowledge that every newspaper and magazine will have ideological guidelines, but they were not identified for the research in this dissertation.

Moreover, it is impossible to determine how many people read a review and how many were influenced by it. Still, it is possible to determine recurrences and analyze the interpretations made. It was not relevant to count exactly how many times an interpretation, an expression, or a description was used in the text. Many texts were repeated daily in the movie theater showtimes columns or throughout different newspapers. My strategy is to approach each theme and carry out a comparative analysis of how these themes were handled in as many different texts as possible.

The interpretations exposed through the analysis do not inform public opinion or anything that suggests a homogeneous or standard interpretation. Throughout the dissertation, however, I use “press” and “press texts” as umbrella terms. It is not to infer homogeneity among the texts, but it offers information about the medium of publication and the common thread between them, with differences that will be clarified or explained.

The reception research I conduct here is more concerned with the environment of the spectatorship, which is here understood as an assembly of evidence of interpretations and framings — considering that framing, most observed in interviews

or film synopsis, is also an interpretation and evaluation of the film, regardless of its purpose (e.g., elucidation, publicity). It is less concerned with scrutinizing every single interpretation, for they alone do not necessarily inform historical reasons for interpretations. Without the comparison, the possibilities for the interpretations are too broad, and the results will be too abstract.

Lastly, I will not be carrying out analyses of the films. Instead, I want to focus on interpretations published in the 1970s and study how they relate to the contemporary context and available discourses. Therefore, my own interpretation in the 2020s has no place beside them, for it is also conditioned by my current context and is a single interpretation, in contrast to the many that I analyze from the 1970s. References to film elements will be made when relevant to the reception analysis, for example, when specifically commented on in the press or if and when something was curiously omitted.

1.3. Challenges and limitations

My first challenge is to make a dialectical analysis of the interpretations I found. For one, I am a historical subject with identities that will resonate in my perceptions. As Staiger points out, “the researcher who is doing historical materialist reception studies is as susceptible to the subjective contexts of interpretation as are those individuals being studied” (Staiger, 1992, p. 79). I am a Brazilian-born researcher who was, until recent years, unfamiliar with the German language and culture, studying the films more than 40 years after their release, without having lived in that period. At the same time, my present is haunted and threatened by the comeback of a dictatorship in Brazil alongside its unconstitutional practices.

From my chosen methodology, it is also challenging to establish a relationship between *reception* and *agency*. For starters, I do not have access to the precise number of viewers for the films or information about how many people read the reviews. Hence, I will not attempt to make assumptions about the extent to which the texts were read, their impact — or whether the reviewers watched the films. Many who wrote about the films in the press did not watch the films before writing their texts, for many covered

pre-production periods. However, these writings are relevant because they make inferences about the “German” elements in the films. What I can do, then, is to look at the agency within the reviews. The reactions and discussions triggered by the films and subsequently published interest me.

Furthermore, I cannot prove the reasons behind the interpretations. I can only explore the possibilities and point to the available discourses and reading strategies that condition them. It is important to identify recurrences and dissonances in the interpretations since they can account for causes that are not primarily because of personal experiences. Nevertheless, I do not have access to all the interpretations of the time since I only work with printed ones. Staiger recognizes the pitfalls of her method for dealing mostly with popular press reviews and the limitations that come with it:

Only indirectly has this study asserted claims about people who have traditionally had no access to public and printed records of communication. Such an unspoken mass deserves as much attention as the popular press—if not more. How to do this for historical readers in a responsible scholarly way, however, is a very real problem. (Staiger, 1992, p. 211)

Extending her argumentation to the Brazilian case, the weight of censorship also limits access to material about how the films were received at the time, not only because the publications were all censored but also because the texts we have available today could have been already self-censored due to political persecutions and torture. Moreover, according to Napolitano, the printed press was particularly affected, though not always directly by regime employees. Often the censorship would come from editors, who were trusted by the newspapers’ owners and received instructions from the government about what could be published (cf. Napolitano, 2009, p. 46). Marcelo Ridenti, a professor of sociology at the State University of Campinas, provides a few numbers for a glimpse of the censorship coverage:

Para se ter ideia da abrangência da censura, no ano de 1978 estavam registrados oficialmente 909.157 artistas e 1.073 casas de diversão. Foram proibidos, só naquele ano, 79 peças de teatro, 24 filmes, 462 letras musicais, 40 materiais de publicidade, 1.231 fotografias e cartazes. Apreenderam-se 226.641 exemplares de livros e 9.494 de revistas, entre outros resultados da produtividade do trabalho da Divisão de Censura de Diversões Públicas. (Ridenti, 2014, p. 333)

In addition, the murder of journalist Vladimir Herzog in 1975, presented as a suicide by the regime, intensified the unrest among newspaper owners and press professionals (cf. Napolitano, 2020, p. 251). Ultimately, what can be observed is that the

press was regulated by a web of censorship, fear, accusations, threats, and ultimately violent repression, also in unexpected places: in 1979 and 1980, newsagents that sold alternative newspapers suffered from depredations and bomb attacks performed by right-wing terrorists (cf. Napolitano, 2001, p. 122).

1.4. Literature review

At the time of undertaking this research, no publication was found that involved the three films in any comparative study. There are analyses of the individual films, they are mentioned in texts about Brazilian cinema and in biographies, but there is no reception analysis. Most of the publications that I found were about *Aleluia, Gretchen!*, including works by Rosane Kaminski (2008), Marion Brepohl de Magalhães (2001), and Dandara de Oliveira (2013). It is important to note that Kaminski does observe many film reviews in her doctoral thesis *Poética da angústia*, but she does not do so from the perspective of a reception analysis.

While a considerable body of scholarly research focuses on the Mucker Revolt in the 19th century, the Mucker film, released in the late 1970s, has yet to be given much attention. It is usually briefly referred to in film scholarship or mentioned as an artistic reference in works about the event, such as in ‘Ímpeto discursivo na construção da narrativa mucker’ (2015a) by Haíke Roselane Kleber da Silva.

As Filhas do Fogo has received some attention in film studies, it was, for example, analyzed briefly by Laura Loguercio Cánepa with emphasis on its parapsychology and horror features in her doctoral thesis *Medo de quê?* (2008) and conference paper ‘O imaginário da paranormalidade na ficção fantástica brasileira’ (2011). Furthermore, Daniel Serravalle de Sá analyzed the film through a Gothic framework in ‘The Daughters of Fire: Walter Hugo Khouri’s female gothic’ (2012). I myself analyzed the representation of women in the film in my unpublished *Iniciação*

Científica report *A melancolia do prazer: a representação da mulher em três filmes de Walter Hugo Khouri* (2014)⁶.

Despite the shortage of publications about the three films, much scholarship exists on German migration in Brazil. See for example the list *Bibliografia sobre imigração e colonização alemã no Rio Grande do Sul*⁷, which was compiled under the supervision of René Gertz and contains more than 5,000 entries. A wide range of themes was identified — including language, cultural identity, historical events, cultural productions, memory, and ethnic tourism. Many of these themes will be explored throughout this dissertation. I will draw on Giralda Seyferth, whose research focused on German immigration in south Brazil, including collective memory, culture, and identity. Seyferth is also remembered for inspiring the fight against xenophobia. Research done by Gertz and Marion Brepohl de Magalhães is also very relevant when it comes to German migration in Brazil. Despite their publications being older than 20 years, they remain an indispensable reference.

The seminal work by Frederick C. Luebke (1990) about the categories “German” and “Brazilian” and their construction over time provides comparisons between patterns of German migration between the United States and Brazil, and thereby images of Germans and Brazilians. Moreover, the special issue ‘Germans and Brazilians’ (2015) of *German History*, the German History Society journal published by Oxford University Press, also provided insights into the categories that supported this research. This dissertation will further develop the understanding of these categories by analyzing them in the context of film reception.

Regarding film reception, Staiger’s research is the most appropriate basis for my analysis despite the work being published approximately 30 years ago. Many recent reception methodologies are focused on social media content or based on direct personal contact with the sources of interpretation, such as interviewees or focus group

⁶ The other Walter Hugo Khouri films analyzed in this research were *O Palácio dos Anjos* (1970) and *As Deusas* (1972). The research was made possible by a CNPq grant.

⁷ Notice that the list refers to works on migration in only one Brazilian state, namely Rio Grande do Sul. The list was compiled by PIBIC/CNPq/PUCRS scholarship holders and last updated on 01 March 2022. The list is available at: <https://renegertz.com/17-outros-textos/textos/76-bibliografia-imigracao-colonizacao-alema-rs> (Last accessed: 23 May 2023).

participants. Such an approach is not appropriate for what I want to show because it cannot be applied as a source of interpretation of the moment of a film's release since it is mediated by a relatively distant memory. Annette Kuhn, for example, in *An everyday magic* (2002), draws on Staiger but adds ethnographic and film-based inquiries to build her methodology and investigate the practices of cinema audiences in England in the 1930s. Additionally, Kuhn works with the spectators' memory of the time instead of publications only. Since I am interested merely in the published interpretations and what particular film themes were evoked by and in the press at the time, Staiger's work remains the most applicable methodological framework for my analysis.

1.5. Upcoming chapters

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter explores representations and translations of German migration in southern Brazil. Based on a theoretical framework from established authors, it discusses the categories of "German" and "Brazilian," how they were constructed with time, as well as matters of transnational contacts, cultural identity, and cultural translations.

The following three chapters – chapters three to five – are dedicated to a reception study of *Aleluia*, *Gretchen!*, *Os Mucker*, and *As Filhas do Fogo*, respectively, following the chronological order of the film releases. Going through what was written and printed about each of the films,⁸ I investigate how they were interpreted and suggest which reading strategies were fueling the texts and the meanings of "German" and "Brazilian" that were assumed in the reception contexts. Many of these inferences have historical roots that were tracked down and reveal the repetition of old discourses.

While interpreting and translating the films for the spectators, the authors also play out interpretations and translations of the "German" elements to their "Brazilian" audience. Many texts act between cultures that are not at all isolated from each other but somehow suggest an alterity interplay. As it will be argued throughout this dissertation,

⁸ Throughout the dissertation, I will quote the texts in excerpts for better readability.

the “German” was usually interpreted as an “other” in relation to the Brazilian – not part of it. The chapters explore, then, how alterity is constructed and imagined.

Therefore, in the third chapter and first reception study, the violence of the “Other-German” is in the foreground of the interpretations of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* Since many texts explore the connections between German migration, Nazism, and authoritarianism in Brazil, the chapter seeks to uncover the historical reasons behind them and investigate why the film received so many contradictory interpretations, including accusations of being for and against Nazism.

In chapter four, the study of how *Os Mucker* was interpreted reveals different reading strategies. A relevant difference here is that the film represents an actual historical event, and it was released in the same year as a seminal scholarly work on the revolt. Many interpretations of this film were based on the historical Mucker rather than the fictional Mucker. Still, they informed interpretations of their rituals — habits, religion, social and work organization — that made them an exemplary “Other” in relation to Brazilians and other Germans.

Lastly, in chapter five, the reception study of *As Filhas do Fogo* is quite different from the other two since the press texts almost did not mention the “German” elements of the film. In this case, the “Other” is not necessarily “German.” Nonetheless, it informs a represented foreignness, which is also supported by horror/fantasy film aesthetics. Moreover, although there are authorship reading strategies in the other receptions as well, it was most predominant in *As Filhas do Fogo*, which might help explain why the “German” references and the political-social implications were overlooked.

In the sixth chapter, the conclusion, I explore a connection between the reception analyses of the three films while presenting the most relevant findings achieved by this research as they relate to the overarching research questions of my dissertation.

2. Translations and representations of German migration in southern Brazil

The three films narrate German migration in the south of Brazil, which includes the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul. One of this research's goals is to understand the multifold meanings of the word "German" in the reception of the films and their historical roots. Thus, the chapter aims to understand how "German" was culturally translated in Brazil, as well as its representations over time, by the people who identify themselves as "German" or "German-Brazilian" and by the ones who do not. The history and discussions presented here support the reception analysis and are just an overview. Hence, they should not be read as a complete version of German migration history in Brazil, as it would be impossible to cover it in one chapter. The chapter will first discuss the category "German" in Brazil and then follow a chronological order divided into major political and historical phases of Brazil's History. The considerations date back to 1824, the beginning of German migration to the south for colonization. It includes political events in Brazil that contributed to the formation of the concepts of "German," "Brazilian," and "German-Brazilian" in the collective imagination.

For the purposes of this research and readability, people who identify with German nationality, ancestry, and/or ethnicity will be referred to as "Germans." Therefore, "German" does not necessarily indicate a German nationality. Still, it is first an indication of affiliation to a social group that shares features in so-called "German cultures." However, this does not necessarily have the same meaning for all members. The denomination "German" also does not assume any homogeneity or exclude those holding Brazilian citizenship.

In scholarly work on this topic, the most common terms are "teuto-brasileiro," "German-Brazilian," or "Teuto-Brazilian" — these also account for place of birth, nationality, and acculturation. Other possible denominations exist, such as "Brazilian of German origin" or "German descendant." These terms do not necessarily carry identical meanings for different audiences or individuals who assume them. The decision on the denomination in this research is also related to an argument made by U.S.-based historian Jeffrey Lesser, who specializes in Brazilian Studies. He notes that in Brazil,

the hyphenated categories are not common to use — instead of naming oneself or being named “German-Brazilian,” the denomination “German” is more frequent — which makes the concept relate not to the self-carried migration but to something long inherited (cf. 2015, p. 29). Moreover, “Germans” is more inclusive, encompassing Germans living in Brazil without Brazilian citizenship and those not born in Brazil.

I will refer to cultural studies researcher Doris Bachmann-Medick for an elaboration on translating “German” in Brazil. According to her, culture can be seen as a translation process, and migration events are individual or collective moments of translation (cf. 2012b, p. 112; 2018, p. 276). Translation, however, is not considered here in terms of the transfer from one “original” language to another to create an “equivalence” of meaning. It follows the cultural turn in translation studies:

A ‘translational turn’ in those disciplines concerned with the study of culture presupposes the cultural turn in translation studies since the 1980s, a move that extended translation’s purview beyond the transfer of languages or texts, opening it to questions of cultural translation and of the frictions and complexities of cultural lifeworlds themselves (see Snell-Hornby, *Turns of Translation Studies* 164–69). In the process, the familiar categories of text-related translation, such as ‘original,’ ‘equivalence’ or ‘faithfulness,’ were increasingly supplemented by new key categories of cultural translation such as ‘cultural representation and transformation,’ ‘alterity,’ ‘displacement,’ ‘discontinuity,’ ‘cultural difference’ and ‘power.’ (Bachmann-Medick, 2012a, p. 27)

The transfer and mediation of culture that occur in the migrant movement are here understood as an event that exposes power relations, master narratives, stereotyping, alienation, and appropriations. Moreover, it constantly redefines identities and affiliations. Bachmann-Medick understands migrants as not only the ones who perform translations but also those that are translated for the host society. Nevertheless, the immigrant cannot be seen simply in opposition to the host society, for migration is not a linear, unidirectional movement between two places — it comprises multiple belongings, overlapping affiliations, and loyalties (cf. Bachmann-Medick, 2018, pp. 273-278). As will be seen throughout this chapter, Germans were translated in Brazil and performed their own translations of other social groups, often in a dialectical process to rediscover their own identities. Germans were targets of master narratives and, at different moments, envisioned as the “good colonizers” or “bad colonizers,” culminating in contradictory governmental policies. Some favored Germans, while others put them at a disadvantage. For at least 200 years translating German in Brazil

has been a process that has included losses and misunderstandings but also new meanings and relationships. The translation has created an “Other” in Brazilian society, who is still an indisputable part of it.

2.1. Considerations about the category “German” in Brazil

American historian of immigration and belonging H. Glenn Penny reminds us that the categories “German” and “Brazilian” cannot be seen as unitary. Their juxtaposition is misleading since hundreds of thousands of people have negotiated their identities by assuming both in many degrees and variations, consciously or not (cf. Penny, 2015, p. 347). However, the films, which will be discussed in chapters to come, and their press repercussions do not articulate these differences. Instead, there is a tendency to create identities and stereotypes based on what it means to be German, a German immigrant, or a descendant of those immigrants. The texts do not question the meanings of these terms and their socio-political implications, and they can also reflect how “German” and “Brazilian” were commonly handled.

The construction and negotiation of the categories “German” and “Brazilian” are also situated in a historical context influenced by governmental politics and other instances of power, which have their own understanding of these categories. The diverse meanings travel between politics, newspapers, academia, cultural artifacts, and by word of mouth between generations, social groups, and borders. These dialectical processes can reinforce or challenge master narratives of national culture and cultural identities, which can be examined through historical contexts. In *The Location of Culture*, originally published in 1994, Homi Bhabha questions the very understanding of national cultures, observing the violence carried through for the sake of homogeneity, and pleads for the consideration of hybridity:

The very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or ‘organic’ ethnic communities – *as the grounds of cultural comparativism* – are in a profound process of redefinition. The hideous extremity of Serbian nationalism proves that the very idea of a pure, ‘ethnically cleansed’ national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood. This side of the psychosis of patriotic fervor, I like to think, there is overwhelming evidence of a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities. (Bhabha, 2004, p. 7)

Historian Christina Lutter, whose research has focused partly on community building, also argues that cultures are not restricted to national borders or ethnolinguistic frameworks once they cannot be completely distinguished from one another (cf. 2014. p. 164). We should be aware of the fiction in the construction of these cultural identities. The categories “German” and “Brazilian” indicate a difference originating in distinguished national borders, but their developments are transnational.

Another historian specializing in Latin America, Frederik Schulze, also states that national and ethnic categories are imprecise, if at all viable, as they become even more blurry with migration and acculturation. Accordingly, ethnicity cannot be applied equally to all migrants (cf. 2015, pp. 405-406). René Gertz (cf. 1987, pp. 131-132) and Giralda Seyferth have warned about the danger of narrow analyses explaining historical processes through ethnicity, arguing that ethnicity is a constructed concept applied indiscriminately. The notions of ethnicity and identity should be comprehended without falling into the trap of “ethnic group” (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 22). “Germans” as a category is far from being a homogeneous group; nevertheless, it is still common to hear “Germans are” or “*because* Germans are.” As will be seen later in this chapter, the idea of an inherent bond connecting all “Germans,” who maintain the same habits and ways of thinking, was long used either as propaganda against the “German peril” or in favor of the *Deutschtum* (Germanness).

First, we should look at the Germans who went to Brazil. Different waves of “German” migration have occurred since the beginning of the 19th century. As usual for the period, the available statistics are mostly inaccurate and do not refer to migrants that returned or continued their journey to other places. However, researchers estimate 6,983 immigrants between 1818-1849 and then relatively constant inflows between 1850 and 1919 with a total of 235,000 immigrants (cf. Carneiro, 1950, Diegues Júnior, 1964, Willems, 1940, cited in Seyferth, 1994, pp. 12-13). During the 1920s and 1930s, the most significant migration numbers were recorded, 75,801 and 27,497,⁹ respectively (cf. Schäffer, 1994, p. 165).

⁹ The numbers are based on the “Anuário Estatísticos do IBGE”, and the German category could be possibly attributed to naturality, once it starts in 1872.

When referring to and writing about German migration, it is usually understood as the migrants who arrived in Brazil speaking German and were not bound to the unified Germany of 1871. However, in later calculations, the number can refer solely to German citizens. Schulze reminds us that because many migrated before Imperial Germany, which covers 1871-1918, they could not be described as German citizens. Afterward, the borders of the German state continued to vary, implying different people under its regime (cf. 2015, p. 408). Seyferth, for example, considers German-Brazilians the descendants of German or Austrian immigrants and those from other European regions who speak the German language (cf. 1990, p. 47).

Similarly, Emilio Willems in *A aculturação dos alemães no Brasil*¹⁰ includes immigrants from German-speaking territories — such as Baden, Böhmen, Braunschweig, Hamburg, Hannover, Hessen, Holstein, Hunsrück, Mecklenburg, Nassau, Niedersachsen, Oldenburg, Pfalz, Pommern, Preussen, Rheinland, Sachsen, Sachsen-Coburg, Schlesien, Schleswig-Holstein, Westfalen, and Württemberg — as well as Austrians, Swiss, and migrants from the European East, such as Russians and Poles, who also spoke a German dialect. Although usually grouped as abstract “Germans,” these migrants considered each other foreigners, as they were from different political territories (cf. Willems, 1980, pp. 38-39). Furthermore, the German language itself was also not unitary, nor is it today, and although they spoke German dialects, it did not mean that speakers understood each other. Linguist Joachim Born writes of the existence of the following language varieties spoken by German migrants: Bairisch, Böhmisch, Danziger Platt, Friesisch, Hunsrückisch, Jiddisch, Oldenburger Platt, Schwäbisch, Pfälzisch, Pommerisch, Tirolerisch, Westfälisches Platt, and Wolgadeutsch (cf. 1995, pp. 143-144).

According to historian Frederick Luebke, the Luso-Brazilians’ assumption that the Germans shared a single common language led them to think Germans were a unified group; they were unaware of their diversity (cf. 1990, p. 99). As demonstrated by Christina Lutter, assuming the equation of language with culture is a dangerous undertaking, which reduces culture to language, and the differences between languages

¹⁰ Originally published in 1946 and one of the first comprehensive anthropological studies of the German migrants in Brazil. Willems, born in Germany, was a key personality in assisting the establishment of Anthropology in the Brazilian academy.

are used as a criterion to ascertain differences between cultures (cf. 2014, p. 158). A failure of translation that misleads the account of diversity.

H. G. Penny further notices that migrant ethnic Germans were varied, for example, in their class position, political views, and confessional choices, and, therefore, the often imagined and advocated unitary *Deutschtum* (“Germanness”) did not really exist. Additionally, another level of division between the Germans occurred in relation to the historical periods in which they migrated, the degrees of integration, and between the settled Germans and the new migrants (cf. Penny, 2015, pp. 349-350).

Another historian, Marion Brepohl de Magalhães, has elaborated on some differences in language dialects encountered between the migrant generations. For example, the pioneers and Forty-Eighters (who supported the 1848 revolutions in Europe) considered the *Reichsdeutsche* (the German emigrants of the German *Kaiserreich*) as highbrow. Nationalists, attached to a state unknown to them, spoke *Hochdeutsch*, which was also challenging to the German dialect speakers. The first generations were against the new immigrant clerics intervening in their habits. On the other side, the Germans already living in Brazil were ignorant and much too assimilated for the *Reichsdeutsche*, and from the clerics’ point of view, they lacked religious discipline (cf. Magalhães, 1998, pp. 31-32). Naturally, these stereotypical views tend to generalize both groups and have to be taken with caution.

According to Schulze, the German-speaking migrants left Europe for a variety of reasons, including economic ones — such as peasants who searched for a better life and to escape hunger, or merchants on a quest for new business opportunities — and political ones — the case of anarchists and Jews, and later of Forty-Eighters (cf. 2015, p. 408). During the twentieth century, the hyperinflation in the Weimar Republic and the First and Second World Wars also contributed to the migration waves. Outside of Europe, German migrants also came from African colonies (cf. Willems, 1980, p. 63).

The migration of German Jews/German-speaking Jews was small (cf. Luebke, 1990, p. 97). Ivone Herz Berdichevski writes that German Jews were already present in the German immigrations of 1824 and later (cf. 2001, p. 39). The difficulty of approximate countability lies in the Brazilian government’s inefficiency in annotating

the immigration data from the Empire to the beginning of the 20th century. According to Jeffrey Lesser, until then, the immigrants were only registered as Catholic or non-Catholic, and for many of the Brazilian elite, non-Catholic meant Protestant (cf. 1995, pp. 9 and 12). Lesser supposes the Jewish population in 19th century Brazil to be approximately 3,000 people (cf. Lesser, 1995, p. 15), and there is confirmation that Jewish immigration can be traced back to the beginning of the Inquisition in Portugal in 1536 (cf. Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906).

According to Endrica Geraldo, who writes about the history of the Brazilian Republic, Jewish immigration and settling in southern Brazil was considered successful at the beginning of the 20th century. However, in the context of the Second World War, Brazilian politicians and intellectuals started to see them as “non-white.” In the following period, Jewish refugees were targeted by government immigration policies through stigmas such as “degenerated” and “undesirable” (cf. 2007, p. 4). There were government restrictions on Jews coming into Brazil, organized through secret circulars from 1937 onwards. Resolution 1.137 (June 7, 1937) was the first law restricting Jewish immigration in the country. Furthermore, antisemitism was present in the government in the 1930s and 1940s, especially at the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which hindered the rescue of Jews in Europe (cf. Cytrynowicz, 2002, pp. 396-398).

According to Lesser, German Jews were wary of migrating to Brazil. They only started doing so after the Nuremberg Laws hindered their emigration to preferred countries, such as the United States or Argentina. The reasons lay in a popular image of Brazil as a place of “revolution and dictatorship” that lacked educational infrastructure, making it a destination full of “trouble and misery” (Lesser, 1995, pp. 77-78). According to Lesser, between 1933 and 1941, 9,427 German Jewish immigrants entered Brazil, a relatively small number considering that 270,000 emigrated in total from Germany in the same years (cf. 1995, p. 79). The continuation of Jewish immigration despite the racist policies can be explained by their elastic interpretations or the fact that they were often ignored. Members of the government would arbitrarily decide on the issuance of visas, and many were willing to be bribed for their blind eye (cf. Lesser, 1995, pp. 68; 80-81).

The conclusions that can be drawn from this initial exposure are that Germans who migrated to Brazil by no means represented a unified category. There were many reasons for this: coming from different territories, having diverse dialects, economic backgrounds, confessions, and political views. Additionally, they faced different problems in Brazil. Still, they were understood to have an imaginary unity, and many of the difficulties and advantages are linked to political decisions and cultural translations that will be explored in the following sections.

2.2. The Brazilian Empire (1822-1889)

The historical considerations date back to the beginning of the Brazilian Empire (1822-1889) since many of the master narratives related to the German migrants and settlements have their historical origins in this period, when European immigration was sought-after, only restricted by age and criminality at first (cf. Seyferth, 2014, p. 134). Germans occupied the older settlements, while Italians and Poles arrived in the last quarter of the 19th century. Other nationalities, such as the French, Russians, and Swedes, still appear in some settlements but in smaller numbers (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 14). The choice of German-speaking migrants to go to Brazil is in large part thanks to Brazil's Empress Maria Leopoldina, who belonged to the House of Habsburg-Lorraine and believed in their cultural contributions to the Empire (cf. Lesser, 2015, p. 62).

The first German *colônia* ("settlement"), São Leopoldo, was founded in southern Brazil in 1824. It was located in what is now the state of Rio Grande do Sul. According to Seyferth, the Empire wanted to populate the area, which was at risk of being taken over by Argentina (cf. 2014, p. 128). Beyond the unsafe borders, René Gertz also mentions the interest in new agricultural settlements, which should support the existing livestock system in the south. Moreover, the ranchers needed a more populated region to safely transport their products to the rest of the country (cf. Gertz, 1987, pp. 21-22).

The Germans arriving in the first half of the 19th century were primarily agricultural workers who settled in family farms organized around villages, as they were used to in Europe, however in a state that did not offer much social mobility since

Brazil's economy was heavily based on the primary sector and slave labor (cf. Penny, 2015, p. 352). The settlements were small properties intended for polyculture engaging family workforce (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 15). Seyferth lists several of the difficulties faced by the immigrants, mainly related to the government's negligence, while still imagining Brazil as their new definite home:

The settlers who write of their experiences, generally to family members, emphasize the feeling of rupture with the homeland, sometimes mentioning boarding the ship in the country of origin, or landing in Brazil, the initial difficulties involved in clearing the forest, the precarious dwelling conditions in the lots, the high mortality rates, the diseases, the lack of doctors, the poor diet and other problems of the 'pioneer' life (cited even today as one of the diacritics of ethnicity). However they also declare their belief in future progress, a better life than back in their homeland, something that presumes immigration as a definitive process. (Seyferth, 2014, p. 154)

These initial problems were bad advertising for Brazil as an immigration destination, and the low immigration rates compared to the United States continued in the following decades. According to Luebke, from 1820 to 1929, Brazil received 4,490,903 immigrants compared to the 37,520,312 received by the U.S., and the German percentage was still lower. In this period, the U.S. received 5,881,324 German immigrants, 15.7% of total immigration, while Brazil received 204,721, 4.6% of total immigration (cf. Luebke, 1990, p. 95)¹¹. Beyond the negative press based on religious problems faced by the Protestants and the serfdom experience of German share-croppers in São Paulo coffee farms (cf. Luebke, 1990, p. 98), innumerable difficulties in Brazil made the United States more attractive as an immigration destination:

Some of the reasons are obvious: Brazil offered an unfamiliar climate with strange, tropical diseases; uncertainty of land titles; undeveloped transportation systems; and a virtually nonexistent school system. Although German emigrants had no experience with political democracy as practiced in the United States, most were favorably disposed toward it. Certainly they were not drawn to the elitist, imperial regime of Dom Pedro II, nor was the apparent instability of the later republican government perceived as much of an improvement. The United States was considered to be progressive and dynamic, a world leader in industrial and technological development; Brazil was often seen as backward and undeveloped. (Luebke, 1990, p. 97)

Advertising was an important medium of attracting German immigrants to Brazil, used by immigration agents and shipping companies. Débora Bendocchi Alves in *Das Brasilienbild der deutschen Auswanderungswerbung im 19. Jahrhundert* (2000)

¹¹ Luebke retrieves his data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census — *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (cf. 1975, p. 105) and from José Fernando Carneiro, *Imigração e colonização no Brasil* (cf. 1950, facing p. 60).

describes the ads, which tried to minimize the relevance of the problems German migrants faced in Brazil. The strategy was to divide the country into “good” and “bad,” southern Brazil and the rest of the country, demonstrating how the problems exposed in the press were not everywhere. In the south, the Germans were to find a developed region, healthy weather, offers of land and work, and the possibility of living only among each other, including control of the administration settlements. Local Brazilians were not mentioned. Further, the image disseminated by the advertisements was that Germans, located in the south, were hardworking, in contrast to the laziness of Black people and white Portuguese in the rest of the country, a racist image that remained and was also used in the construction of self-identity (cf. Alves, 2000, pp. 247-251). Thus, these misleading and racist depictions were, for many immigrants, the first translation of Brazil that they received, together with an image of how the German migrants themselves were better than the local population.

The ads were insufficient to compete with Europe’s many traveling and journalism reports. The decline of Brazil’s image culminated in 1859 with the Prussian prohibition of immigration companies advertising immigration to Brazil. With the unification of Germany in 1871, the ban was extended to its entire territory and lasted until 1896 (cf. Lesser, 1995, p. 12). However, the ban on advertising was not a ban on emigration, so many Germans emigrated to Brazil despite the odds.

The *Lei de Terras* (“Land Law”) number 601, from 1850, regulated the trade and distribution of unoccupied lands, prescribing their sale solely to private companies and to found settlements (cf. Seyferth, 2014, p. 129). The colonization areas delimited by the Empire included regions not unpopulated — they were already occupied by *posseiros* (farmers who occupy and work for their subsistence on land that does not legally belong to them) and indigenous populations, such as the Xokleng and Kaingang, who were considered “wild” by the settlers. They lived in a nature that should be unraveled and pioneered, according to official discourses and settlers’ narratives in a civilizing rhetoric (cf. Rinke, 2020, p. 448; Seyferth, 2012, pp. 15-16).

In fact, according to Seyferth, the civilizing discourse is suggested in legal texts, and the immigration laws were substantially colonization laws, with the terms “settler”

and “immigrant” used interchangeably (cf. 2014, pp. 120-121; 130). The colonies were designated for immigrants, and Brazilians were denied or limited from receiving settlements even after the founding of the Republic (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 15; 2014, p. 129). In this sense, being a German immigrant could have been considered an advantage in acquiring land. Moreover, the association of settler—immigrant is still present today, incorporated in the configuration of ethnic identities (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 16). Lesser, for example, observes that the term “*colonos*” described the hardworking and independent immigrants in southern Brazil (cf. 2015, p. 77). It is an instance of self-translation performed by the migrants, still found today in celebrations about the pioneer time, as noted by Seyferth (cf. 2012, p. 34), but it also resonates with the government’s translation of these migrants, who were highly regarded at the time.

The rhetoric of civilization appeared in Brazilian official discourse specifically in relation to the Germans. Seyferth recollects that in 1875, the Counsel Menezes e Souza of the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Public Works, believed that Germans would be most suited for immigration and settling due to their perseverance, work ethic, and versatility, transiting between the work of craftsman and farmer (cf. Seyferth, 2014, p. 130). According to historian Eugene S. Cassidy, a conception of “German work” was rooted in the Enlightenment and part of the *Deutschtum*, in which Germans perceive work as a morally fulfilling activity. Therefore, they would be “naturally” industrious and civilized. Consequently, during the 19th century, Germanophone newspapers in Brazil and Europe created an image of Germans settlers as superior to Portuguese-Brazilians for supposedly rejecting slavery or creating a narrative where Germans were benevolent to enslaved people,¹² which would ultimately be part of the civilizing rhetoric of Germans in Brazil (cf. Cassidy, 2015, pp. 370-372 and 383).

Cassidy notes that some German settlers did own slaves, although apparently in far smaller numbers than the great planter class (cf. 2015, p. 367). Fellow history scholar Maria Angélica Zubaran adds that slavery and manumissions already existed among Germanic medieval peoples (cf. 1994, p. 73), and as such German migrants in Brazil carried that history with them. According to Peter Blickle, the serfdom in the

¹² Cassidy demonstrates how the benevolence towards slaves is still under debate among historians, with Maria Angélica Zubaran and Marcos Justo Tramontini as examples of researchers questioning the supposed better treatment (cf. 2015, pp. 382-383).

territories of the Holy Roman Empire was abolished during the decades around 1800 (cf. 2006, p. 298), meaning it was not such a distanced practice, but it was also loathed after the recent human rights movement in Europe, peaking with the French Revolution, and the long struggles to abolish it, since, as Blickle claims, it was not an accepted natural living condition (cf. 2006, p. 17).

The official government discourse in favor of German migrants was not restrained to their supposed work values but also referred to their skin color. In Brazilian assimilationist nationalism, the preference for German settlers was connected to the racist desire to whiten the population (cf. Seyferth, 2014, pp. 128-131). However, according to Seyferth, the German migrants had to give up their culture for the Latin, Luso-Brazilian one. In this perspective, the migrant should live in contact with Brazilians and be culturally assimilated to no longer be considered a disturbing foreigner (cf. Seyferth, 2014, pp. 131-132 and 145). “German” is then translated as a civilizing culture, but, simultaneously, different enough that migrants were expected to abandon its many specific traits.

Luebke argues that for many, the culture, the Germanic language, and the religion were quite distant from the Luso-Brazilian majority. Furthermore, the settlement patterns promoted by the government led to a higher degree of isolation and a consequent necessity for the immigrants to form their own maintenance structures, churches, and schools. German immigrant literacy and private education systems were usually above the Brazilian levels, which led to a sense of cultural superiority. And despite many Germans living in poverty and isolation, Luso-Brazilians still perceived them as successful (cf. Luebke, 1990, pp. 101 and 104). Many associations (*Vereine*) and cultural practices emerged during this period, such as the Sociedade de Ginástica Porto Alegre (previously named Deutscher Turnverein), founded in 1867, and the many *Schützenvereine* (dedicated to the practice of shooting sports) with activities such as *Vogelschießen* (shooting at wooden birds placed on top of a pole) and *Kegeln* (nine-pin bowling) (cf. L. Voigt, 2018, p. 59).

According to Schulze, pastors, teachers, and diplomats from Germany began targeting schools, churches, and other institutions to preserve the *Deutschtum*. They

were sent by Prussian and German authorities and private societies interested in increasing German trade and political influence in Brazil, who saw churches and schools as opportunities to homogenize and strengthen the communities for their own interests (cf. Schulze, 2015, p. 408).

Considering the case of the Lutheran Church, sociologist Fernando Diehl in *Pastorear o rebanho na colônia: articulações de pastores luteranos alemães no processo de formação da etnicidade teuto-brasileira no sul do Brasil* (2021) observes that from the second half of the 19th century on, there was a movement of Lutheranism in favor of Germanness in Brazil. The movement was promoted by ministers and teachers and was financed by German state missionary societies (cf. pp. 22 and 31). For the Protestants Germans, religion was deeply intertwined with ethnicity from the beginning of colonization. It supported the feeling of ethnic belonging and a common origin in a new homeland (cf. p. 12). The ministers articulated a symbolic unification of the immigrants and their descendants, once spread in various ethnic groups, while fostering a new Germanness in the settlements (cf. p. 13). The use of the German language and the promotion of Germanness were even used to attract new churchgoers (cf. pp. 35 and 44). Diehl makes the important observation that before Germany's unification of 1871, it was only in Brazil that this diverse immigrant group started to assume a national, ethnic identity as Germans (cf. p. 23).

Gertz notes, however, that there were different perceptions of “Germanness” by the German elites and peasants. Although the latter also spoke German and held on to the traditions and habits of their ethnic backgrounds, they were not consciously doing so for the sake of the *Deutschtum*. The ideology supported first a power relationship among the Germans, with the elites distinguishing themselves on degrees of ethnicity (cf. Gertz, 1987, p. 109). Specific traits of German cultures were being translated into *Deutschtum*, which would then be translated to the rest of the community as the proper “German” culture.

“Germanness” could also be seen in other cultural instances in the migrants’ and descendants’ lives. For example, Seyferth mentions the literary works written in German from the 19th century until 1939 in Blumenau, located in Santa Catarina state.

These works assisted an emergent elite in developing a cultural identity that interpreted the *Deutschtum* in Brazil's settlement context — *Deutschbrasilianertum*. In an interethnic context, this process highlighted the ethnic specificities of the German-Brazilians in relation to Brazilian society and implied bigotry against Brazilians, named “*caboclos*” in the region. Nevertheless, Brazil was considered *Heimat*, as it articulates the territory and nature where the *Kultur* flourished (cf. Seyferth, 2004, pp. 165; 188-191).

Heimat is a German word with no equivalent translation to English or Portuguese but is related to “home.” The *Deutsches Wörterbuch* by the Brothers Grimm defines it as the place where someone is born or has a lasting, permanent stay. Martina Hülz, Olaf Kühne, and Florian Weber describe the history of the term, tracing its origins to the words “*heimôte/heimôti*” from *Althochdeutsch* (Old High German), which described a longing for the heaven as home. From the 12th century, it started to have a secular meaning as a real, defined living environment, a known place one trusts, including home and family (cf. 2019, p. 6). *Heimat* flourished during German Romanticism and developed into a highly emotionally charged term encompassing a place of memory, attachment, and belonging, which also shapes one's identity. The place is physical but might only exist as a romanticized past or wishful future. *Heimat* then acquires a very private and personal interpretation of the self, although the term was, and still is, often politicized.¹³ Understanding Brazil as a *Heimat* was then a vital self-acknowledgement of the migrants and descendants in constructing their identities as Germans and Brazilians.

Accordingly, Schulze reminds us that elites with a German migrant background identified as “German-Brazilian” and not just “German.” Their ethnicity was important to them, as was their citizenship in Brazil, and, therefore, they advocated for new social and political spaces and rights as citizens (cf. Schulze, 2015, p. 421). During the Empire, a considerable struggle derived from the fact that citizenship was only granted to Catholics, which consequently forbade non-Catholics to vote or be elected.

¹³ According to Karsten Berr, after the Nazism appropriation of *Heimat* in connection to the “*Blut-und-Boden*” (Blood and soil) ideology, the word received a negative connotation and was mostly avoided in the public sphere. Since the 1970s the word *Heimat* started to be connected to nature conservation, but more recently has been used by the political right wing in an excluding manner (cf. Berr, 2019, p. 28).

Moreover, civil registries were made by the Catholic Church, which excluded non-Catholics from official birth, marriage, and death certificates, as well as making it difficult for them to offer proof in legal disputes, such as inheritance cases (cf. Rodrigues, 2008, p. 26). Public cemeteries were also exclusive to Catholics until a government Resolution on 20 April 1870, which, in theory, granted burial spaces for non-Catholics, but in practice, there was much resistance (cf. Rodrigues, 2008, p. 24). The assimilation desired by the government failed because of its own regulations, which hindered the integration of Protestant Germans and other non-Catholic migrants into Brazilian society.

Despite the clear civil obstacles, Seyferth claims that since the middle of the 19th century, especially from the 1870s on, nationalists started to criticize the southern German settlers. While they were “white and civilized,” they also threatened the Brazilian nationality and territory because of their distance from Latin cultures and tendency to form “isolated” settlements. The assimilationist and xenophobic discourses escalated with time, culminating at the end of the century in accusations of “German peril” — a common belief at the time that Germany wanted to take over the world, in part a response to the Pan-Germanism propaganda (cf. Seyferth, 2014, pp. 131-156) but also a result of propagandist efforts by England and France, who were stronger colonial powers.

One of the key organizations concerning pan-Germanic propaganda was the Pan-German League (*Alldeutscher Verband*), which became more structured from the 1890s on, advocating for the *Grossdeutschland*, German imperial expansionism, and in favor of armed conflict (cf. Magalhães, 1998, p. 105). By 1900, 20,000 German-Brazilians were identified as Pan-Germanists by the *Zentralstelle für die Forschung des Deutschtums im Ausland*. This number would only rise until the First World War (cf. Magalhães, 1998, p. 107). The League, as well as the *Schulverein*, incorporated the Romanticism of the Napoleonic invasions into a discourse of endogamy, racial superiority, and Germany’s economic development while funding schools, churches, and newspapers (cf. Magalhães, 1998, p. 42). Luebke, however, argues that despite Germany’s aggressiveness in many parts of the world, such as in the South Pacific, Philippines, China, or Venezuela, there was an overreaction as to the

Pan-German League's real level of threat (cf. Luebke, 1990, p. 117). Nevertheless, this propaganda would influence how German would be seen and translated in Brazil, as the threat of the "German peril" would continue to exist in various forms.

By the end of the Empire, Germans in southern Brazil had established themselves in their new *Heimat* while developing several support institutions and cultural and social associations. Still, there were many cultural differences and tangible communication problems. They faced hurdles as non-citizens and non-Catholics, which led to an Othering culminating in many attempts by different governments during subsequent decades to assimilate Germans in Brazil. In turn, this led to escalated conflicts between Germans and non-German-Brazilians.

2.3. The First Brazilian Republic (1889-1930)

After the proclamation of the Brazilian Republic in 1889, an official measure was to grant Brazilian citizenship to all immigrants residing in Brazil¹⁴ (cf. Seyferth, 2014, p. 132). In 1890, the Republic secularized cemeteries and civil marriages. With the Civil Code enacted in 1917, the Catholic Church was finally removed from control over birth, marriage, and death certificates (cf. Rodrigues, 2008, p. 35). Seyferth also notes that the founding of cities and industrialization facilitated the integration of Germans into Brazilian society and the political participation of their elites, who were interested in being elected to political office (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 16).

For the government, however, the naturalization of immigrants was not accompanied by assimilation, and it was feared that citizenship was not enough to make someone "Brazilian" (cf. Seyferth, 2014, p. 132). Moreover, according to Seyferth, the strongest criticism was against "foreign" languages once Portuguese was taken as a national identity symbol. For Brazilian nationalism, the different cultures brought in with migration were a threat to the new nation-state (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 19). At the end of the century, the fear for national integrity led to a constraint over ethnic

¹⁴ According to Seyferth, an exception was immigrants, whom their respective municipality instructed not to receive citizenship, although she does not specify the reasons. It could possibly be related to criminal activities as understood by the government at the time (cf. 2014, p. 132).

concentrations in the same region and endorsement for mixed settlements of Brazilians and foreigners (cf. Magalhães, 1998, p. 36). “German” was then translated as a foreign culture, while a “Brazilian” culture was advocated.

On the other side, the government continued to view mass European migration towards Brazil at the turn of the century as a possibility to whiten the population and be considered part of the Western civilization (cf. Seyferth, 2014, p. 133). In this sense, the assimilationist rhetoric was bound to the racial question, which was dissimulated in the legislation and part of political and academic debates (cf. Seyferth, 2014, pp. 135 and 156).

Luebke writes that, although most Brazilians were not preoccupied with Germans and their assimilation, the Brazilian elite was fond of their German counterpart and eager for German contributions to the country, emphasizing their industriousness, order, stability, and whiteness. A vision that, as seen in the last subchapter, had been the norm for decades already. However, now Brazilians noticed how many Germans condescended towards them, thinking of Brazilians as ignorant and indolent and their culture inferior (cf. 1990, pp. 114-116). Further, the German elite was caught up in ethnocentric discourses and wanted recognition for their contributions to the new country — “the articulate, educated clergy, journalists, and businessmen who perpetuated immigrant culture because it served their economic interests and satisfied their psychological needs” (1990, p. 125) —. Still, they were not representative of the whole. Hence, in the opposite direction, Luebke also recognizes “rapid assimilators,” who “were eager to abandon the marks of immigrant status because they had become a source of social and economic deprivation” (1990, p. 126). Nonetheless, the majority of Germans did not think systematically about assimilation but adapted according to their needs (cf. Luebke, 1990, p. 126). It continued to be a highly diverse group, not only due to their social, economic, political, and cultural differences but because of how they articulated themselves in Brazilian society. The general translation of Germans, however, was taken based on their elites — the Germans were supposedly fierce advocates of Germanness, felt superior to other Brazilians, and did not want to assimilate or adapt to the “Brazilian” society.

Germans also became, with time, a large immigrant group. In 1914, Brazil had the most populated German settlement area, after Europe and North America, with 350,000-400,000 people with German ancestry, from first to later generations, primarily located in the south of the country (cf. Rinke, 2020, p. 450). Luebke argues that Germans were more slowly assimilated and had a culture more distant from the Luso-Brazilian than the other big immigration groups as Italians, Portuguese, and Spanish. Adding to this the system of churches, schools, and journals founded by Germans, it becomes apparent how they would have both a feeling of being an ethnic minority and a sense of cultural superiority (cf. 1990, p. 119). The differences are also heightened if we take into consideration the huge social inequality in the country and its consequences:

But the prevailing image was that the Germans were better housed and fed; that their system of private and parochial schools was often superior to what passed for public education in Brazil at that time; and that their homes and persons were cleaner and healthier. The Germans also seemed willing to work very hard, at least in contrast to the impoverished *caboclos* (persons of mixed Indian and Portuguese descent), among whom labor was intermittent and subject to frequent and long interruptions. (Luebke, 1990, p. 116)

In 1917, following years of nativist rhetoric, the declaration of war against Germany during the First World War caused German schools to be closed, and the language was prohibited in churches and schools (cf. Penny, 2015, p. 355). According to Magalhães, the immigrants were a particular target, revealing how they were always seen as foreign enemies (cf. 1998, p. 113). Even though Luebke argues that most Brazilians were not interested in the Germans and that the war was not to blame, the riots that followed the breakdown of diplomatic relations and the declaration of war seem completely out of proportion — hundreds of private residences, businesses, and institutions in cities with large German populations, such as Porto Alegre and São Paulo, were attacked. Many were destroyed by non-German civilians, though there was minimum human loss (cf. Luebke, 1990, pp. 118 and 123). The Germans' reaction, according to Magalhães, was varied, with many declaring their loyalty to Brazil, as a front or not, or hiding their sympathies for Germany. The ones that were already extreme about non-assimilation became even more so (cf. Magalhães, 1998, p. 99).

The end of the war allowed for the schools to be reopened, but the rhetoric about foreign ethnicities and their supposed isolation continued (cf. Penny, 2015, p. 355).

Schulze claims that at the same time, after 1919, discourses about a *Volksgemeinschaft* (“German ethnic community”) at global levels started developing both in Brazil and Germany. Still, German elites in Brazil generally modified or completely refused them, and the idea of creating a German space in Brazil, for their reality, was at first Brazilian (cf. 2015, p. 407). Nevertheless, their German ethnicity was still important. Magalhães argues that a response to the repressions they suffered as an ethnic group can be observed in new schools, churches, journals, and *Vereine* and their more systematic organization (cf. 1998, pp. 40-41). The high rates of German immigration after the war also decelerated organic assimilation processes (cf. Luebke, 1990, p. 96). Thus, after previously being majorly constrained, German ethnicity and its locations of expression were strengthened. By contrast, fears and Othering against Germans from non-German Brazilians intensified.

In a very interesting literary analysis, Magalhães observes the symptomatic representation of German characters in three Brazilian novels from the beginning of the 20th century until the pre-Second World War period: *Canaã* by Graça Aranha (1902), *Amar, verbo intransitivo* by Mário de Andrade (1927), and *Um lugar ao sol* by Érico Veríssimo (1936). The three works reproduce an image of the German-Brazilian migrants as a cohesive and unitary group, constantly elaborating on their foreign identity alterity in relation to “Brazilian”:

Ao designá-los como “alemães”, “teutos”, “germânicos”, tais autores não tencionavam apenas enunciar sua origem histórica, mas também sua condição de “outro” da cultura brasileira. Assim, a despeito de sua hostilidade ou afeição pelo Brasil, Milkau, Lentz, Elza e Annelise eram personagens descritos como indivíduos desenraizados, incapazes de se integrar ao seu novo ambiente social, distanciados emocionalmente dos acontecimentos que vivenciavam. Excessivamente apegados à sua pátria de origem, presentificavam seu passado por meio da leitura, do emprego do idioma alemão, da preservação de usos e costumes e da endogamia. (Magalhães, 1998, p. 76)

What can be drawn from Magalhães’ analysis is that these books articulate the common stereotypes and prejudices that would later be used to justify the forced “nationalization” of German immigrants and their descendants. The characters are translations of “Germans” by “non-Germans,” who see them as too attached to a foreign culture and country and, therefore, emotionally distanced from life in Brazil —

stereotypes that will follow Germans in the popular imagination and governmental policies for years to come.

2.4. The Vargas Era (1930-1945)

The *Era Vargas* (1930-1945) was another historical moment that deeply marked the understanding of “German” in Brazil. The most intensive period came after the coup, in which the *Estado Novo* (New State) regime was established through the 1937 Constitution, concentrating political power with the president of the Republic, namely Getúlio Vargas. Following this, the National Congress, legislative assemblies, and municipal councils were closed. The authoritarian regime used the police and military to repress the people (cf. CPDOC, no date/c).

The construction of national identity, xenophobic discourses, and politics were also on the New State agenda. According to Seyferth, during this period, laws on immigration were transformed into laws about foreigners, intensifying the difficulties of immigrating. The shift was related to a decrease in European immigration and an increase in Japanese immigration. The state, from a racist point of view, viewed this as a threat to the country. A higher number of stateless people and refugees were also arriving in Brazil. One of the powers invested in the Conselho de Imigração e Colonização, which is from 1938, was to forbid the settling of foreigners based on ethnic and social categories (cf. Seyferth, 2014, pp. 136-137). According to Geraldo, the Council centralized the services related to immigration and colonization and was directly subordinated to the president (cf. 2007, p. 111).

Furthermore, Geraldo notes that the government justified its xenophobic politics as a defense of the national worker and national security through arguments based on eugenics and racism, popular at the time (cf. 2007, p. 1). Geraldo also points out how the government had different categories of “undesirables”: individuals with physical illnesses or disabilities, those involved with political and social movements, and Japanese and Jewish immigrants. However, these groups were not considered equally

undesirable. They were not equally discriminated against and not on the same level of discrimination as the Black population (cf. Geraldo, 2007, pp. 5-7).

The forced assimilation, envisioned by the government for decades, took form during the New State as a “nationalization campaign.” It included persecution against manifestations of what was considered “foreign” and unassimilated. The official discourse used the term “*alienígena*” to describe the migrants and descendants whose cultures were incompatible with “Brazilianess” (cf. Seyferth, 1997, p. 95). The military actively participated both in the conception and implementation of the campaign, which mainly targeted the “*quistos étnicos*,” a xenophobic expression to denote immigration settlements, as they were seen as pathological (cf. Seyferth, 1997, pp. 95 and 126). Nevertheless, big cities were also under surveillance due to the visibility of ethnic organizations (cf. Seyferth, 1997, pp. 96-97). Neide Almeida Fiori, a pioneer of sociological research in Brazil, writes that vigilance was also possible through whistleblowers, who created an atmosphere of fear and accusations in the population (cf. 2001, p. 55) — a very different take on the myth that Brazil is a welcoming country to immigrants.

In international politics, curiously, from the Nazi takeover of power until 1938, progress was made in economic relations between Germany and Brazil, which was translated into a harmonic political relationship (cf. Gertz, 1987, pp. 62-63). Gertz has noted that the Brazilian government sought to be on good terms with the German groups in big cities, with Vargas himself making efforts to attend the celebrations in Rio de Janeiro (cf. 1987, p. 65). Another scholar, José Plínio Guimarães Fachel, also describes the intense commercial interest and exchange with Germany, which prevailed until 1939, when American efforts, including the “German peril” propaganda, led to a reversal, and the U.S. took Germany’s place as a trade partner (cf. 2002, pp. 44-53).

Seyferth lists several prohibitions and events that followed the nationalization campaign, although many of them were not exclusive to German migrants and descendants: prohibition of the public use of foreign languages, accompanied by public humiliation as punishment for using them; ethnic schools were forbidden to teach in foreign languages and forced to adopt the official curriculum, as well as to dismiss

teachers who were not native Brazilians; there were arbitrary arrests and intensive policing; sports associations were taken for military use; radios were seized, as were books and documents, which descendants had kept for generations. That is unless they had not been burned before discovery out of fear of arrest (cf. Seyferth, 1997, p. 97; 2012, pp. 20-21). The banning of the language and its sudden prohibition in schools was particularly harsh in rural areas, where many people were far from being fluent in Portuguese.¹⁵ The German Jews were also affected by these persecutions, as they spoke German and were considered Axis citizens by authorities (cf. Berdichevski, 2001, p. 53).

Fachel writes of further violence against the Germans, such as the imprisonment in concentration camps with forced labor and the necessity of carrying a safe conduct in Rio Grande do Sul to travel between the cities. Lutheran cemeteries were destroyed, and some Lutheran churches were burned down — one church was even transformed into a police station and a museum for Nazi items (cf. 2002, pp. 21, 94, 104, and 120). To the police, Germanness was the real enemy, as it was the origin of Nazism. Hence, it should be eradicated. The Brazilian police was actively responsible for violence against Germans through persecution, propaganda, robbery, imprisonments, torture, and assassination, or through a failure to protect them when the population acted on their own and destroyed commercial property and residential homes (cf. Fachel, 2002, pp. 22, 93, and 113).

The goal then was to demean ethnic ideologies and the feelings of ethnicity (cf. Seyferth, 1997, pp. 124-125). Seyferth also provides the example of the prohibition of German-Brazilian literature in 1939, when the campaign also banned foreign language publications — these literary works were deemed disturbing to the envisioned Brazilian nationalism once they built upon ethnic identities constructed in the cultural difference and supposed an interethnic society (cf. Seyferth, 2004, pp. 152-153).

Fachel further notes that the violence against the Germans during the Second World War was also a direct result of imperial conflicts and commercial wars between the U.S. and Germany. Commercial disputes were also found between the

¹⁵ The documentary *Walachai* (Rejane Zilles, 2013) includes testimonials of settlers, who remember the nationalization campaign and the difficulties with the Portuguese language enforcement.

Luso-Brazilians and the German-Brazilians, as the latter enjoyed success in agriculture, industry, and commerce, also due to good connections with Europe regarding import/export (cf. Fachel, 2002, pp. 85-88). These ethnic conflicts were then also economic ones. They could be traced back to the beginning of the colonization when the Luso-Brazilian farmers and traders were wary of the German settlers and an eventual commercial competition between them (cf. Fachel, 2002, p. 122).

The nationalization campaign promoted a misleading image of non-assimilation among Germans that persists until today, which does not consider that integration was already happening (cf. Penny, 2015, p. 349; Seyferth, 2012, p. 21). For example, in time, old German settlements received many Italians and Poles (cf. Seyferth, 1994, p. 13). Even if the discourse was correct for many Germans, there was much more exaggeration and disinformation. According to Luebke, the accusations of isolationism were usually based on incomprehension of the historical reasons that led to the maintenance of German culture:

Hence most educated Brazilians had little comprehension of the diversity of the German immigrant group, such as the differences that divided Catholics from Protestants or the disparate values and behaviors that distinguished the rural farmers from the urban workers and the economic and social elite. Moreover, they failed to understand how the physical environment, in conjunction with unique events in Brazilian history, promoted German isolationism. They were often mystified by the German spirit of separatism. (Luebke, 1990, p. 115)

Penny argues that the nationalization processes fostered the creation of many hyphenated categories to accommodate the “Brazilian” category among the diverse ethnic groups, one of them being *teuto-brasileiro*. However, these hyphenated identities and multiple loyalties still challenged the national histories (cf. 2015, pp. 361-362). The German-Brazilian discourse informed how to be Brazilian but also German, which did not necessarily mean loyalty to the German state (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 20). It has also been argued that nationality is independent of citizenship for the Germans, which differs from the Luso-Brazilian understanding that both are intrinsically linked. Therefore, there would be no comprehension of how one can be “German” but not be loyal to “Germany” (cf. Rambo, 1994, p. 43). The *Heimat* could be anywhere in the world as long as the *Deutschtum* is preserved, since the *jus solis* does not interfere with the *jus sanguinis* (cf. Rambo, 1994, pp. 45-48).

According to Ana Maria Dietrich, who has written about Nazism in Brazil, many Brazilians were expressing themselves against German nationalism in Brazil, as they were inspired by British and American propaganda about the “German peril” (cf. Dietrich, 2007, p. 195). Even when Brazil was still neutral in the Second World War (1939-1941), many Brazilians saw Germans as *quinta colunas* (cf. Dietrich, 2007, p. 181). “*Quinta Coluna*,” Fifth Column, is a term indicating treason in the context of the Second World War, and in Brazil, it refers to the Nazi activities taking place at the time. The term originated in the context of the Spanish Civil War¹⁶, but it became popular to refer to Axis agents in enemy countries who were responsible for sabotage, creating fear and confusion, and facilitating an invasion (cf. Loeffel, 2015, p. vii). Further, the Fifth Column narrative by the Allies was much exaggerated and mostly just a strategy to spread fear. In 1940, it was used in the Allied press to explain their defeat and the Nazi perversion (cf. Loeffel, 2015, pp. 2 and 10). According to Gertz, the actual extent of the “German peril” is hard to evaluate afterward. It raises the question of whether there was any real danger if no government action was taken to prevent it (cf. 1987, p. 68).

Arthur Blasio Rambo, whose research has focused on anthropology, argues that non-Germans misunderstanding how German-Brazilians separated nationality and citizenship was problematic during the Second World War. Although there were dangerous Nazi activities and supporters, the nationalization campaign did not only target them:

Ao aplicarem indiscriminadamente o referencial lusitano de brasilidade, jogaram na vala comum nazistas confessos, simpatizantes do nazismo, os indiferentes e aqueles alemães que rejeitavam o nacional-socialismo por razões religiosas, políticas e ideológicas. Todo aquele que falava alemão passava a ser suspeito de traição da causa nacional. Era estigmatizado como nazista, como quinta-coluna e ferreteado com desprezo de “alemão batata”, portanto, um cidadão desqualificado. Se os agentes da nacionalização se tivessem dado um mínimo de trabalho, teriam constatado que o monstro que combatiam não passava muito dos moinhos de vento de D. Quixote, tornado clássico por Cervantes. (Rambo, 1994, p. 51)

Rambo uses Cervantes’ “tilting at windmills” metaphor to argue that the nationalization campaign was madness, generalizing that ethnic Germans were Nazis and dangerous. The actual presence of the Nazi Party in Brazil and reports about a

¹⁶ The Fifth Column, according to historian Robert Loeffel, is a “modern version of the story of the Trojan Horse” (2015, p. vii) which appeared during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), when General Emilio Mola expressed that four columns of army forces were about to enter Madrid, and a fifth was already hid in the city (cf. 2015, p. 9).

potential “Nazi conspiracy” among German descendants were used to justify the campaign (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 21). Still, Nazism in Brazil is not to be overlooked. According to Ana Maria Dietrich, in her doctoral thesis *Nazismo Tropical? O Partido Nazista no Brasil* (2007), of the 83 countries with representatives of the Nazi Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei - NSDAP), Brazil was the one outside Germany with the most significant number of affiliates (cf. Dietrich, 2007, p. 119). Taís Campelo Lucas, in her doctoral thesis *Nazismo d'além mar: conflitos e esquecimento* (2011), writes that there were 2,903 affiliations from 1928 to 1937, which corresponded to 3,87% of the German citizens living in Brazil at the time, as estimated by the Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP (AO)¹⁷ in September 1937. It could be argued that this shows a high level of rejection of Nazism by the German communities (cf. Lucas, 2011, pp. 53-54 and 59).

According to Penny and Schulze, one reason was that the Nazi regime in Germany misunderstood the German communities in Brazil. Moreover, the German-Brazilians were generally opposed to the German state telling them how to behave and interpret the *Deutschtum*. They were German nationalists but also acknowledged Brazilian citizens (cf. Penny, 2015, p. 350; Schulze, 2015, p. 418). It is relevant as, no matter how strong the nationalization campaigns were, with the continued stigma of “Germans” as “foreigners” and “unassimilated,” their own understanding of their citizenship was quite different.

But at the same time, Dietrich reminds us that the German-Brazilians were not officially allowed to join the party.¹⁸ The Nazi party considered the Germans living abroad racially above the German-Brazilians, and the AO disapproved of other nationalities joining the party (cf. Dietrich, 2007, p. 163). In this sense, although the

¹⁷ Lucas retrieved this data from the document *Statistik der AO*, which is kept by the Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt. According to the same source, in a list of countries with an affiliation number over 1,000, after Brazil, the Netherlands had 1,925 members, Austria had 1,678, and Argentina had 1,500 members. The U.S. does not appear in this list — Lucas claims that there was no organized NSDAP group in the country, although there were pro-Nazi groups, such as the Amerika Deutscher Volksbund (cf. 2011, pp. 45-46).

¹⁸ According to Lucas, based on the AO statistics and the “Nazi Party Membership Records,” although there was an official prohibition, at least 69 Brazilians were members of the Brazilian chapter of the NSDAP (cf. 2011, p. 70).

percentage of affiliations seems low, one must also consider the network of sympathizers and supporters of the ideology in Brazil.

Gertz also points out that, despite the rejection of the Nazi party, the followers of the *Deutschtum* were not really against the ideology — on the contrary, they accepted its ethnic expressions (cf. Gertz, 1987, p. 105). Therefore, according to Gertz, the difference between the support for Nazism as a party and as an ideology is also relevant. Opposition to the party does not necessarily mean opposition to the doctrine. And although the political and police bibliography assumed at the time that almost the entire population of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina was Nazi, it is difficult to assess the actual percentage of Nazi sympathy and rejection. However, there was an absence of any significant manifestation against Nazism or the Third Reich among Germans in the South (cf. Gertz, 1987, pp. 87; 91-92).

Dietrich writes that after the party was banned in 1938 due to the nationalization campaign, it continued to operate underground until 1942, when Brazil entered the war and diplomatic relations with Germany were severed. Embassies and consulates were closed, the head of the party was deported, and many Germans were imprisoned (cf. Dietrich, 2007, p. 194). Immigration researcher Janaina Santos de Macedo argues that Germans, Italians, and Japanese were already being sent to prison in 1938, but after 1942 the number of people detained increased. They were also sent to concentration camps, internment camps. Additionally, cities with a concentration of these population groups were surrounded by the police. Moreover, many living by the coast were forced to move to the countryside, and many living in the countryside had to move to the coast (cf. Macedo, 2007, pp. 193-197).

Brazil's entry into the war intensified the nationalization campaign while migrants and descendants of Germans, Italians, and Japanese were targeted as possible traitors (cf. Seyferth, 1997, p. 97). Fiori notes that during this time, the language took on a political meaning, for if a person spoke German, they would be considered a Nazi, and if they spoke Italian, a fascist (cf. 2001, pp. 54-55). Ultimately, the period encompassing Vargas' regime and the Second World War set the tone for many of the stereotypes about Germans in Brazil in the following decades — Nazis, traitors, enemies,

foreigners, isolated, unintelligible, arrogant, and violent. The fact that there were indeed Nazi supporters among them should not have led to ethnic stigmatization and arbitrary persecution the way it did.

2.5. After the Second World War (1945-present)

According to Seyferth, following the end of the Second World War, the defeat of the Nazi regime, and the end of Vargas regime, there was a sort of silence about the nationalization campaign, originating in fear of a possible return of repression. Only in the last few decades has it started being associated with the immigration memory (cf. 2012, p. 21).

Furthermore, being “German” gained new negative connotations and this identity was often concealed. In “‘Por causa desta decepção me tornei brasileiro convicto’: nacional-socialismo, memória e migração de alemães para o Brasil após a II Guerra Mundial” (2010) Méri Frotscher interviewed Germans that were children and teenagers during the war and identifies feelings of resentment and shame associated with being German because of Nazi crimes (cf. p. 11). Similarly, historian and senior director for Latin America at Arizona State University, Glen S. Goodman, notes, drawing on Luebke’s ‘German-American Leadership Strategies Between the World Wars’ (1999), that “many ethnic Germans, as well as other members of Brazilian society, remained wary of open expressions of ethnic pride or identity” (2015, p. 427).

Moreover, German-Brazilians had to renegotiate their ethnic and cultural identities since the global discourse of *Deutschtum* was not acceptable after Nazism (cf. Penny, 2015, p. 365). According to André Fabiano Voigt in ‘O teuto-brasileiro: a história de um conceito’ (2008), during the post-war period, the term “*teuto-brasileiro*” was used to emphasize the particularities of a social group, but from the perspective that this group was culturally integrated in Brazil and highlighting its contributions to society (cf. A. F. Voigt, 2008, pp. 75-76).

The post-war period also comprised the repatriation of Germans and German-Brazilians, who left Brazil in the 1930s for Germany, lured by the improvement

of Germany's economy, Nazi propaganda, including the "*Heim ins Reich*," and the expectations towards the country's reorganization (cf. Frotscher, 2010, pp. 1-2). Frotscher observes that German-Brazilians were not considered Germans by the Allies but displaced persons. After the war, they were allowed to be repatriated to Brazil, as they had Brazilian citizenship based on the *jus solis* law (cf. Frotscher, 2010, p. 4). Between 1947 and 1949, 5,885 people migrated to Brazil; approximately half were Brazilian citizens, and the other half were their German family members (cf. Tavares, 1951, p. 75 cited in Frotscher, 2010, p. 5).

Data from the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) show that from 1940 to 1949, the total number of incoming German immigrants was 6,807. During 1950-1959, there was an increase to 16,643; between 1960 and 1969, Brazil received only 5,659 German immigrants. From 1970 onward, the IBGE does not specify the nationality of new immigrants (cf. Schäffer, 1994, p. 165). Diehl notes that after 1960 there were no more German migration waves to Brazil, as the numbers significantly decreased (cf. Diehl, 2021, p. 27).

The 1950s census of the IBGE also includes interesting data — 551,951 people spoke German at home; it was the second most spoken language in the country (cf. Schäffer, 1994, p. 172). It demonstrates the persistence of the language, despite all nationalization efforts, although it might have been moved into the private sphere. It was not until 1961 that German was allowed to be taught in schools as a foreign language (cf. Ladilova and Müller, 2021, p. 368).

In his master thesis, *O Espaço de Práticas do Folclore "Alemão" Autêntico no Brasil: Um Estudo de Sociologia da Cultura e das Elites* (2018), Lucas Voigt nevertheless observes that after the New State, ethnic German elites in southern Brazil, be it political, religious, cultural or intellectual, rearticulated themselves towards a new "Germanness" in defense of their cultural identity. Socorro à Europa Faminta (SEF) is often mentioned as significant to this development. It was a philanthropic organization founded in 1946 that united the German elites in Brazil in sending supplies to war victims in Germany and Austria. The SEF ended in 1949 with the cease of the need for humanitarian help in both countries. The German elites then used the networks of

sociability created or restored through this effort to promote the foundation of numerous institutions interested in the promotion and “preservation” of German culture. Among them were the Centros Culturais 25 de Julho, founded in the 1950s — clubs that promoted community, sport, and cultural activities — and their federation founded in 1951, the Federação dos Centros Culturais 25 de Julho, which delivered books, school material, and songbooks to the Centros Culturais. Moreover, Voigt mentions the Lutheran Church reorganization and the foundation of the Federação Sinodal in 1949. From 1947 ethnic Germans were reinserted into politics, and the emblematic 25 July celebrations recommenced (cf. L. Voigt, 2018, pp. 47-96) — the day in 1824 when the first migrants arrived in southern Brazil.¹⁹

Traces of German migration and ethnicity started to gradually reappear in everyday life. According to Joachim Born, in the 1960s, German and Italian languages were heard again in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina (cf. 2004, p. 52). Born lists several instances where the German language was used in public spaces, including through advertising strategies, such as in the gastronomy (e.g., *Apfelstrudel*, *Brezel*, *Eisbein*, *Kassler*), in business names (e.g., Haus der Geschenke, Haus des Wortes, Kleiner Garten, Kuchenhaus), and on festivals (e.g., Frühlingsfest, Kuchenfest, Schlachtfest, Schützenfest, Tirolerfest). German names can also be found in the designation of villages, neighborhoods, groves, crossroads, and hilltops (e.g., Desvio Blauth, Esquina Hetzel, Frankethal, Beco do Schneider). While streets, residential areas, and city names retained their official name after the nationalization campaign (e.g., Berghanerschneis became Ivoti, Neu-Württemberg was renamed Panambi, and Harmonie, Harmonia), the locals still speak of the original names (cf. Born, 2004, pp. 53-58).

With time, German ethnicity was re-established in the public space and is today widely accepted in relation to its “colonial” history, to good quality manufacturing, and in many ways appropriated for tourism and marketing purposes. At the same time, it was an important tool for self-identity affirmation. Accordingly, Willian Radünz, in his

¹⁹ Particularly in the city of São Leopoldo, the first German settlement in southern Brazil, Roswithia Weber notices a symbolic act in re-establishing the 25 July celebrations. In 1934, a holiday was decreed to commemorate German migration but then suppressed from 1937 to 1942. Then, the festivities were resumed, but with a narrative about the city’s progress, excluding the German association (cf. 2006, p. 55).

Master dissertation “*Por que não unir o útil ao agradável?*” (2018), analyzes the case of the Festa do Colono in a southern city. This case is emblematic in how it commercializes local products based on their “German” qualities — either of German traditions or made by German descendants. “German” products become synonymous with local traditions. They are part of an ethnic pride discourse and are a way of protecting this local culture from disappearing. Radünz claims that elements of linguistic and identity repertoire are commodified and invoked to confirm the “German” products’ authenticity — for example, the company named “Bauernhof” sells typical German cookies handmade by local German descendants (cf. Radünz, 2018, pp. 87-88).

The discourses of “recovery” and “preservation” regarding German culture, articulated through the problematic *Deutschtum*, acquired new meaning after the erasure promoted by the New State. Museums, public festivities, and ethnic tourism reinforce what belongs to this imaginary and what should be forgotten. What is typical, authentic — the impression of continuity that Eric Hobsbawm (cf. 2008) and Benedict Anderson (cf. 2006) write about and that contributes to the construction of traditions and nationalism. “German” cultures are translated in a place of curiosity and “exoticism” yet approved by the rest of society. An often idealized, romanticized version of the past reshapes the understanding of the members’ cultural identities. A dialectical relationship between the represented and the non-represented, in which the former translate their own family experiences into an imagined collective past and culture. They negotiate their identities, what can be shown and how, and what is different and unique from the latter. Narratives are constructed around “German migration in Brazil,” and decisions, conscious or not, are made about what should be included and forgotten in a constant process of selectivity and perspectivity.

The Oktoberfest in Blumenau, created in 1984, is a representative case. Its conception by local entrepreneurs aimed to stimulate the tourism business and to cheer up the citizens since the city had suffered devastating floods (cf. Flores and Wolff, 1994, p. 214). While analyzing the event, Flores and Wolff noticed how it was presented by the media and authorities as a revival of German history and culture in Brazil, with different moments of celebration and memory, as a place of identity, in which the time of the German colonies are a reminiscence of a common ancestry. The Oktoberfest in

Blumenau reinforces specific moments of the German-Brazilian place, with parade floats entitled “Família Colonial” or “Os Imigrantes.” Although envisioned for tourists, the event is experienced as an inherited tradition (cf. Flores and Wolff, 1994, pp. 210-214).

The Oktoberfest also challenges some of the cultural mobility reflections put forward by Stephen Greenblatt. The author draws our attention to the fact that cultures are usually apprehended as local, hiding their very own mobility, which lends the feeling of rootedness, and the mobility is then seen as a threat to the cultures’ existence (cf. Greenblatt, 2009b, pp. 252-253). Interestingly, the “German” culture, as understood in these celebrations, is the very product of mobility and migration and is still apprehended as local. The mobility is not hidden, but it is the impulse to create the “German-Brazilian” experience.

After the Vargas Era, according to Seyferth, “Germanness” was used in migrant and descendants’ discourses to indicate a cultural connection to a common origin. The ethnic identities of Germans, migrants, and descendants are articulated in diverse ways, such as food habits, sociability, *Wohnkultur*, architectural styles, recreational and cultural associations, and language, which is the most evident representation of the ethnic borders. Those who do not master the language embrace ancestry as the main criterion of ethnic identification. The group cohesion and the feeling of community also originate from ethnic identities constructed based on the shared colonization process and derived difficulties that their ancestors overcame in Brazil, in contrast to the ones that do not share this experience. Moreover, identity construction also occurs in the alterity relation to the stereotypical “Brazilian” (cf. Seyferth, 1994, pp. 23-24; 2012, p. 18).

The “Brazilian” is also an abstract concept, although continuously attempted to be imagined, sometimes even through violence. While many non-Germans translated and represented “Germanness” dialectically, many Germans started to identify themselves as an imagined community with shared experiences and traits, although not

necessarily perceiving this community as a “nation,” as defined by Anderson (cf. 2006, pp. 5-6).²⁰

The representations and translations of “German” culture in southern Brazil are highly complex, for it still carries the stigma of violence related to decades of anti-German propaganda and the horrors of two World Wars. Moreover, it was once desired by governmental instances, but then considered to be a foreign enemy. Despite moments of persecution, “German” in Brazil is still “white,” thereby having privileges in a deeply racist society. Lastly, the “German” category still enjoys mostly positive connotations. According to Gertz, there is recognition for the economic and cultural contributions of German migrants and descendants (cf. 1994, p. 29).

Furthermore, Gertz argues, the imaginary of the “German peril” remained, although in a different form, as did much of the wartime stigma, especially associated with the German-Brazilians in southern Brazil. Traces of the “peril” can be found in the press since the 1970s, where racism, antisemitism, and neo-Nazism were typically attributed to German-Brazilians. Among some of the common false assumptions is that there is a connection between Germans in Germany and the German-Brazilians, as if they were the same social group. Other assumptions are that neo-Nazis are predominantly or exclusively German-Brazilians, or that today’s separatism and antisemitism continue from the Nazi party in the 1930s (cf. Gertz, 2008, pp. 67-72).

Interestingly, many stereotypes of the German “Other” continue to appear in the literature decades after the war. Monica Hallberg analyzed nine novels written from the 1930s onward in which interactions of Germans and non-Germans in southern Brazil are represented. These were the trilogy *O tempo e o vento* (1949-1961) by Erico Veríssimo, *Um rio imita o Reno* (1938) by Vianna Moog, *A ferro e fogo I: tempo de solidão* (1972) and *A ferro e fogo II: tempo de guerra* (1975) by Josue Guimarães, and *As parceiras* (1980) and *A asa esquerda do anjo* (1981) by Lya Luft, as well as *Videiras de cristal* (1990), by Luiz Antonio de Assis Brasil. Hallberg identified approximately 400 German characters who occupy varied social positions but are not really renewed

²⁰ In Anderson’s words: “In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 2006, pp. 5-6).

across the decades — “Die Nebenrollen werden zu Siegfrieds stilisiert, die Hauptdarsteller erweisen sich als exzentrische Außenseiter” (Hallberg, 1996, p. 131). The comparison with Siegfried, a hero legend in Germanic and Norse folklore, can be understood here as a reference to the image of Germans represented with abnormal strength, possibly flirting with war and nationalism. Hallberg observes further continuation in how the Germans are characterized:

In den Details — einem Kleidungsstück, einer Eß- oder Trinkgewohnheit, einem Fremdwort, einem Zitat, einer Melodie — steckt oft eine aus der Distanz erfolgte Analyse, gleichsam eine Luftaufnahme, der deutschen Nation. Hinter den Familiennamen der deutschsprachigen Protagonisten bergen sich Lebensgeschichten, die immer wieder an den nicht nur geographisch, sondern auch kulturell weiten Weg der Auswanderer, die ihren Platz in der jungen brasilianischen Gesellschaft suchen, erinnern.

Insgesamt schwärmen die Deutschen für Ordnung, planmäßige Muster, für Rituale. Sie suchen ihren «Code» in Brasilien. Sie suchen ein Leben, das zu ihnen paßt und für welches das entfernte Vaterland oft Vorbild und Maxime bleibt. Die gutbürgerlichen deutschen Auswandererfamilien erscheinen selbstgenügsam und undurchdringlich, irgendwie autonom. (Hallberg, 1996, p. 132)

Hallberg’s conclusions indicate how the German “Other” constantly negotiates his identity and role in Brazil. The traces of German culture in daily life are not only part of the characters’ individual identities but also representations and translations of German nationality in Brazil. What is remarkable is the impression of the Germans being impenetrable, independent and maintaining their affiliation with Germany. It resonates with the stereotypes created during the first half of the 20th century but also alludes to the historical processes that led to self-sufficient communities and the maintenance of the German language. The representation of the German “Other” remained after the war, although not as overtly hostile as before.

Namely, this chapter shows the development of alterity in the translational processes of “German” in Brazil. “German” and “Brazilians” are categories that have often included the same people but have also often divided people. The German “Other” and the Brazilian “Other” exposes the anxieties of difference and power relations. As James Clifford writes, “‘Cultural’ difference is no longer a stable, exotic otherness; self-other relations are matters of power and rhetoric rather than of essence” (Clifford, 1988, p. 14). The delimitations of who is “Brazilian” and who is not, and who is “German” and who is not, work in an excluding discourse. Even though the construction of the “Other” was constantly updated, it can still be traced back to the

colonization during the Empire and was deeply marked by the nationalization campaign. The German migrants became a disputed symbol of national and foreign representation — at the same time, they represent the exemplary foreign “Other” and the desired or feared immigrant. They are also a fundamental part of Brazilian History and cultural identities.

To conclude these explorations of “German” in Brazil, it is important to highlight that they do not intend to victimize or relativize the symbolic or physical violence experienced by other social and ethnic groups. Either wished for or condemned, German culture in Brazil is still a result of migration and transculturation that did not start at the moment of arrival. Deconstructing a supposed original culture that was brought and a collective homogeneity should also enhance the critical look at the consequences of forming identities and their alterity. Thus, focalizing German migration in Brazil is challenging, with other research paths remaining. German migration will be explored and discussed further in the following three chapters directly connected to the reception analyses.

3. *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (1976) — interpreting the violence of the Other within

3.1. Film and press sample overview

Aleluia, Gretchen! (Sylvio Back, 1976) can be considered the first Brazilian fiction feature film about German immigration and is a polemic one. Although the reception at the time of its release diverged on whether it supported Nazism, *Aleluia, Gretchen!* is recognized today as a clear criticism of the ideology, Brazilian Integralism, and the military dictatorship. Among the authors who have discussed the film, Dandara de Oliveira observes the veiled criticism of the military dictatorship through the representation of Nazi and New State violence and the persistence of their authoritarian ideologies (cf. 2013, p. 125). Marion Brepohl de Magalhães further emphasizes how *Aleluia, Gretchen!* challenges the positive image of German immigrants, exposing another perspective on their supposedly “good manners” and contributions to progress in Brazil (cf. 2001, p. 34).

In the 1970s, reviews and other press material associated the film with narratives of German migration in Brazil, with Brazilian History — especially the Vargas Era and recent historical events, such as the discovery of Nazi fugitives in Brazil — and analyzed formal elements of the film. The ultimate meaning of the film was disputed at the time, including the understanding of what it meant to be “German” in Brazil. In the Hemeroteca Brasileira search, the term “aleluia gretchen” appeared 473 times between 1970-1979 in 23 different periodicals.²¹ The texts included: reviews; festivals coverage, mainly from the Festival de Gramado, Festival de Brasília do Cinema Brasileiro, and Berlinale; interviews with Sylvio Back and with other film crew members; film showtimes in local movie theaters or on television, accompanied by a film synopsis; making-of coverage; and articles written by journalists that mentioned *Aleluia, Gretchen!* After a brief film overview, this chapter is divided into the main themes addressed in the sample: Sylvio Back, German migration in Brazil, Nazism and

²¹ The periodicals are: *A Luta Democrática* (RJ); *A Tribuna* (SP); *Correio Braziliense* (DF); *Correio de Notícias* (PR); *Diário da Noite* (SP); *Diário da tarde* (PR); *Diário de Natal* (RN); *Diário de Pernambuco* (PE); *Diário do Paraná* (PR); *Jornal da República* (SP); *Jornal de Caxias* (RS); *Jornal do Brasil* (RJ); *Jornal do Commercio* (AM); *Jornal do Commercio* (RJ); *Jornal dos Sports* (RJ); *Manchete* (RJ); *Movimento* (RJ); *O Cruzeiro* (RJ); *O Fluminense* (RJ); *O Pasquim* (RJ); *Opinião* (RJ); *Revista de Cultura Brasileira* (Madrid - Spain); *Tribuna da Imprensa* (RJ). The texts were gathered from the Hemeroteca between 03 May 2021 and 19 June 2021.

Brazilian Integralism, allegorical readings, and, in conclusion, the discussion about the controversies around the film.

Because of, or despite, the polemics, the film enjoyed an impressive release year. Many texts mentioned the high viewing figures. In Curitiba, the film is supposed to have run for five weeks in theaters (cf. *A Luta Democrática*, 25 February 1977, p. 6), and during its premiere in Blumenau, the box office numbers beat those of *pornochanchadas* (cf. Feijó Junior, 1976c). In Rio de Janeiro, the film is supposed to have been a box office and critics' favorite (cf. *Diário do Paraná*, 27 April 1977, p. 1). *Aleluia, Gretchen!* additionally won several prizes in diverse categories, such as best director (Prêmio Air France de Cinema 1977, Golfinho de Ouro 1977), best screenwriting (Prêmio Associação Paulista de Críticos de Arte 1977), and best cinematography (Prêmio Governador do Estado 1977, Festival de Gramado 1977). Newspapers at the time also mentioned the film being shown at the 12th Chicago International Film Festival in 1976, at a film festival in Mannheim in 1976, and at FILMEX (Los Angeles International Film Exposition) in 1977 (cf. Feijó Junior, 1976b).

Back intensively promoted the film, giving many interviews, and even released what we would today call a transmedia production, the photo novel "Florida Hotel" (Back, 1976). The film posters were polemical and intriguing with the sentences "Ninguém vê este filme sem morrer um pouco" (*Jornal do Brasil*, 31 March 1977, p. Caderno B - 8) and "Você está neste filme" (*Jornal do Brasil*, 11 April 1977, p. Caderno B - 8). Published film frames often included characters doing the Nazi salute, a child in Nazi uniform carrying a gun, and a torture scene. There were also photos of the famous cast, which included many established actresses and actors already popular through television and film work, such as Sérgio Hingst, Miriam Pires, Kate Hansen, Lilian Lemmertz, Selma Egrei, and Carlos Vereza. Paraná local artists, such as Lala Schneider and José Maria Santos, were also involved in the film. The shooting occurred in Curitiba, in the state of Paraná, and in Blumenau, in the state of Santa Catarina, both in southern Brazil.

The film relies on modern aesthetics²² and surrealistic traits to depict the German family Kranz (the German word for “wreath”) from 1937, the time of their arrival in an indefinite place in southern Brazil, to the present time in 1976. The title in gothic letters introduces the film to the sound of a rock arrangement of Richard Wagner’s *Ride of the Valkyries* by the Brazilian rock band O Terço. A portrait in front of the Hotel Flórida reveals the characters: Frau Lotte and Professor Ross, their children Heike, Gudrun, and the youngster Josef, the housekeeper Frau Minka, and her son Wilhelm. They had all arrived from Germany when the family bought the hotel for their livelihood and housing. In the picture, we also see Repo, the hotel employee, Oskar, a German already settled in Brazil, who arranged the hotel according to the family’s instructions, and his children Werner and Inge. While the family explores the hotel, they meet long-time resident Dr. Aurélio.

From the beginning and throughout the film, the family reveals different positions regarding their migration and Nazism. Lotte was in favor of the Nazi regime and actively supported it, while Professor Ross openly criticized it — the reason why they had to flee. The traumatized and angry Heike, who is pregnant with Gretchen, was married to the SS officer Hans — he forced her to have sex with his colleagues for the purpose of breeding an Aryan child — and refused to stay in Germany, against her mother’s wishes. Gretchen dies while she is still a baby, and the different expectations that Lotte and Ross had for her are revealed — for one, she would be the continuation of Nazism in Brazil; for the other, she would have saved them all from their crimes and signified the hope for a better life.

Gudrun tries to adapt to the new country, eventually marrying the Brazilian traveling salesman (*mascate*) Eurico, but still shows sympathy to the Nazi regime. Josef despises Brazil and goes back to fight for Germany, ultimately dying there. Oskar and Werner also support Nazism, while Inge is against it, being influenced by Ross. Dr. Aurélio is a Brazilian Integralist, often approaching the sigma symbol with the swastika.

²² Considering “modern” in the context of Modern Cinema, the film presents typical modern formal elements, such as the fragmented narrative, often structured around disconnected everyday moments of the family, non-classical camera framing and editing, as well as several monologues and characters that jeopardize the audience’s identification with them.

The narrative shows different and seemingly fragmented moments of the family's life in Brazil. Some of the scenes commented on in the press are a Hitler Youth encounter, which includes young men making exercises, playing football, and swimming naked (00:18:49-00:23:25), children dressed as Nazi soldiers shooting with toy guns at other children (00:43:48-00:44:37), or the time when Eurico first arrives at the hotel and notices the anagram of Adolf Hitler hidden in the hotel name (00:40:21-00:41:40). In another scene, locals protest with lit torches against Nazism in front of the hotel, trying to scare the family away while Dr. Aurélio buries his Integralist belongings out of fear (00:44:38-00:48:08). A scene often commented on is the one in which Repo dresses up as Santa and covers his black skin in talc, while a Hitler portrait hangs on the back wall (00:49:55-00:52:27). In another sequence, the community priest gives a speech in church against Nazism and how it is corrupting the German settlements in Brazil, a scene intercalated with Oskar being taken away by the police for his activity as a fifth columnist (01:10:37-01:14:57).

During the post-war times, a group of fugitive ex-SS officers arrives at the hotel—one of them rapes Heike, who is still psychologically vulnerable and does not understand what is happening. Eurico, manipulated into paying for the ex-SS officers' escape, wants them to leave, as he and the local population start to suspect who they really are. Consequently, the group kidnaps Eurico in the middle of the night with Gudrun's approval and tortures him. This scene and the one with the Hitler Youth were censored and not shown in the movie theaters. The cuts were not unnoticed by the press. However, commentators did not explicitly blame the censorship:

Está em cartaz no cine Rio, em São Paulo e no cine Arouche, o filme "Aleluia Gretchen". Mas alguma coisa está acontecendo de errado: quem sai desses dois cinemas reclama de que boa parte do filme está cortada. E quem teve a paciência de contar no relógio e de fazer os cálculos, garantiu que quase meia hora de filme estão faltando na projeção. O motivo? (*Correio de Notícias*, 12 June 1977, p. 15)

In the film's final scene, diegetically situated in 1976, the characters, without having physically aged, are happily reunited for a picnic during carnival to celebrate Frau Lotte's birthday. They drink beer, play football, and dance the waltz. The music starts with typical folk German music, then Repo arrives with a group of samba

musicians, and finally, the music switches to the *Ride of the Valkyries*, which was also at the start of the film, while everyone except Ross and Inge celebrates.²³

3.2. Authorship readings: Sylvio Back searching for a Brazilian national identity

Aleluia, Gretchen! launched Sylvio Back as one of the most important and award-winning Brazilian filmmakers of the 1970s. In a review published in *Diário do Paraná*, the director is considered an “authentic cinema man” next to Sergei Eisenstein, Orson Welles, John Ford, Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Alain Resnais, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Luchino Visconti:

Pelo que já havia realizado até hoje, Sylvio Back podia ser considerado, com toda a justiça, um dos mais importantes cineastas brasileiros de todos os tempos. Com o seu ALELUIA, GRETCHEN, ele passa a assumir, com todos os méritos, a ponta da fila, numa promessa tangível de novas realizações marcantes e de novas conquistas maiúsculas. (Simões, 1976, p. Anexo - 1)

However, the extent to which Back continued participating in Brazilian cinema is debatable. For example, none of his films appear in the notable Abraccine (Associação Brasileira de Críticos de Cinema) list of the 100 best Brazilian films of all time (cf. *Abraccine*, 2015). In her doctoral thesis, *Poética da angústia* (2008), about Sylvio Back’s cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, Rosane Kaminski discusses this point and concludes that it seems to originate in the eclecticism that marks his works and how they were interpreted. Additionally, his work does not fit the traditional approaches to Brazilian cinema at that time, such as Cinema Novo and Marginal (cf. Kaminski, 2008, p. 10). His films are characterized by strong political criticism and challenge the conventional understandings of national cinema.

Sylvio Back was born in 1937, in Blumenau, in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. His parents, a German mother, and a Hungarian father, immigrated to the country in 1935 (cf. Back, 2006, p. 147). This basic biographical data was constantly included in the press material about *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (cf. *Diário do Paraná*, 24 August 1976, p. Anexo 3). Although some of the texts refer to Back as being

²³ As explained in the methodology chapter 1.2., the focus of this dissertation is reception analysis, and film analyses will not be carried out.

“paranaense” (cf. *Diário da tarde*, 23 October 1976, p. 2), most of them allude to Blumenau as his birthplace, a city known for having received German immigrants:

Nascido em Blumenau, Silvio Back não nega que o filme terá muito de sua própria vivência, numa região onde a colonização alemã se fez intensamente. Além disso, se apoiará em vasta literatura informativa sobre a aculturação dos imigrantes. (Alencar, 1975)

Many newspapers also repeated Back’s own testimonial about his German migrant background in relation to the themes in his film, thus deeply connecting the director’s private, familiar history with the one from the film:

Todo o argumento-roteiro foi construído a partir de fatos reais confundidos com lembranças e à mitologia que a própria descendência alemã ainda cultua. Dados biográficos familiares irropejam aqui e ali, transmitindo ao público uma sensação de intimidade, de diário sem páginas amareladas [...]. (*Diário da tarde*, 11 October 1976, p. 6)

Sylvio Back’s career started as a journalist and film reviewer, then he worked as a writer, producer, documentarist, and director of advertising and feature films. His fiction films mainly cover themes dealing with Brazilian history, culture, and society. Today, the work can be seen as an investigation of what it means to be Brazilian and his own search for a Brazilian identity as a second-generation migrant. In his own words, “Culturalmente, sou um aprendiz de brasileiro” (*Opinião*, 01 April 1977, p. 20).

It is a typical authorship reading strategy to heavily draw on Back’s German background to comment on the film, such as we see with the reception of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* By using auteurism as a reading strategy, scholars, critics, and journalists try to understand a film as part of the collection of the director’s work. The *auteur* (author) idea was mostly popularized in the 1950s by French critics writing for the magazine *Cahiers du cinéma*, such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, who later became filmmakers themselves (cf. Bernardet and Reis, 2018, pp. 15-16). The film directed by an author would carry his own perspective on life, his film style, and a hidden message that would continually appear throughout his filmography.

Staiger understands auteurism as a historical reading strategy that can inform how a film is interpreted (cf. 1992, p. 95). The interpretation is then heavily in debt of how the film is connected to its director on personal, ideological, and aesthetic levels. The strategy can be found in texts that refer to the director’s previous works or that comment on a style found in his films. I also consider it when the texts include

interviews or quotes from the directors if they can explain their intentions. The *Aleluia, Gretchen!* press sample reveals the director's input in the context of the film publicity but can also be found incorporated in reviews. The argument that Back films his own ethnic background, how it is entangled with a Brazilian identity, and which parts of it has survived in Brazil is often repeated:

A questão do filme, que decepçiona aqueles que gostariam de ver nele a história da imigração alemã, é investigar o que sobrou do que os alemães trouxeram ao Brasil. [...] O filme discute mais as sobrevivências ideológicas dos alemães do que seu lado folclórico, utilitário. (*Opinião*, 01 April 1977, p. 20)

Incorporar a saga dos imigrantes alemães na revelação do homem brasileiro, eis o desafio a que me propus em termos cinematográficos. É uma idéia antiga, fruto de minha origem étnica, e amadurecida ante a necessidade de recuperar um patrimônio cultural já em fase de diluição. (*Diário da tarde*, 11 October 1976, p. 6)

Aleluia, Gretchen! is then understood as a migrant narrative that investigates German ideologies that would be part of the “Brazilian person” as envisioned by Back — the “Brazilian” is then also shaped by their immigration. In an autobiographical essay, Back reveals his own thoughts about the connections between film and personal life, giving a glimpse of his adaptation story as a second-generation migrant:

Da infância me lembro que, invadida a Polônia, imigrantes cabaços (meu pessoal saiu corrido da Alemanha nazista) eram proibidos de morar no litoral. Fomos rechaçados de Florianópolis. Do meu pai, o que sei dele é que numa viagem de trem armou um escarcéu por não suportar bazófiás em alto e bom som de um grupo devidamente fantasiado de integralista: idos de 1937. Em Curitiba, a seqüência para sobreviver. De hotelheiro passamos a donos de restaurante. Recordo o DOPS, subindo/descendo escadas, abrindo cômodos, pesquisando possíveis paredes falsas, com possíveis rádio transmissor escondido (as denúncias não morrem nunca) e, muito zelosos, ante o pavor de mamãe e da vó Omi, levaram dezenas de encadernações e toda a série de Karl May (os desenhos de Wilhelm Busch eu escondera, ah! ah! ah!). A subversão terminava no velho oeste à moda prussiana. Por isso, não é à toa que o centro do universo físico e dramático de “Aleluia, Gretchen” seja um hotel: faz-se melhor aquilo que se conhece (atenção, não é nenhuma receita). No tempo da guerra fui para uma escola pública: não sabia falar nem “bom dia” em português. A professora me levou à conta de retardado mental. Mandava a guirizada abrir os livros, e eu, atoleimado (guarda-pó bem engomadinho, vermelho à raiz do cabelo e a cara toda enferrujada - nessa época eu ainda não passava limão nem titica de galinha pra tirar as sardas...), ali, duro - ei, alemãozinho, tá surdo? (Spencer, 1977c)

Back's personal history emphasizes how his childhood was marked by the challenges of his German migrant background in Brazil, and there are similarities between his family history and the *Aleluia, Gretchen!* script. For instance, his parents also owned a hotel, and the DOPS²⁴ also raided their home. It is, furthermore, noticeable how Back's childhood was deeply affected by the historical events during the New

²⁴ Departamento de Ordem Política e Social (DOPS) was the political police. Included in its powers were repression, surveillance, and torture.

State, which started precisely in 1937 — the year not only marks the beginning of the film’s diegetic narrative, but it is also Back’s birth year. Some of the events that followed were outlined in Chapter 2.4 above. That is, the forced relocation from the coast, Florianópolis, to the countryside, Curitiba; the surveillance and arbitrary seizure of personal belongings by the police; the everyday preconception against Germans.

Curiously, what does not appear in the texts from the newspapers’ sample is that his father was Jewish, which might have given more meaning to the interpretation of the film. In the 2006 published film script, there is a press release from 1976 containing the information that Back’s father was a Hungarian Jew (cf. Back, 2006, p. 145). Further, an edited version of another text, ‘Hóspede de si mesmo,’ published originally in 1977, appeared in the above text from Spencer (cf. 1977c): “Do meu pai, *judeu-húngaro*, o que sei dele é que numa viagem de trem armou um escarcéu por não suportar bazófias em alto e bom som de um grupo devidamente ‘fantasiado’ de integralista: idos de 1937” (Back, 2006, p. 148, my emphasis). The words “judeu-húngaro” do not appear in Spencer’s text. It would be speculation to elaborate on the grounds for omitting the Jewish background. However, the information was available at the time and was not hidden by Back, suggesting that the journalists in this research sample may have overlooked it or deliberately omitted it.

There are at least three indications in *Aleluia, Gretchen!* of Eurico being Jewish. First, in the dialogues when Lotte complains about Eurico, and Repo answers in a derogatory tone: “Eu sempre desconfiei. Pra mim, seu Eurico tem sangue judeu” (01:28:15-01:28:21), and second, during Eurico’s torture, when the ex-SS officers say “Judeu porco” and “Judeu gostoso esse” (01:39:00-01:42:09). These characters’ identification of Eurico as a Jew aims to discredit him and to offend, independently of whether Eurico is indeed Jew or not. A third indicator is Eurico’s work as a *mascate*. It was a profession held by many Jews and Middle Eastern immigrants in Brazil. Lesser writes that 35% of Jewish immigrants in 1920s Brazil worked as a *clientelchick* (the Yiddish-Brazilian word for “traveling salesman”) since the job did not demand much start-up capital (cf. Lesser, 2015, pp. 174 and 183).

Back's testimonials were reproduced throughout the newspapers in the research sample — the press commentary on *Aleluia, Gretchen!* was heavily focused and dependent on Back's authorship. He personally emphasized these connections, extending them to the production design. He stated that “A minha intimidade com o assunto favoreceu-me sobremaneira” (Araújo, 1976). Ultimately, his migration narrative enriched the meaning of the film and led to him being seen as a convincing authority on the subject:

Filho de alemã e húngaro imigrantes, Back reúne outras credenciais para enfrentar o desafio: experiência de crítica especializada, curta metragem e uma auspiciosa estréia na longa-metragem, *Lance Maior* em 1968. *A Guerra dos Pelados*, seu segundo longo, decepcionou, apesar da evidente seriedade do projeto. (Azeredo, 1977)

Aleluia, Gretchen! was released after *Lance Maior* (1968) and *A Guerra dos Pelados* (1970) as part of his “South Trilogy,” which the press often commented on. The newspapers repeated the idea, promoted by Back, that the three films share themes of the “civilização sulina,” “problemática humana e histórica do Sul” (Spencer, 1978b), and immigration:

Natural da região sul, desde “Lance Maior” — uma espécie de crônica mesclada a uma visão da alienação dos jovens de província — e confluindo para “A Guerra dos Pelados” — o avesso ou o lado escuro da História do Brasil, sempre permaneci às rebarbas do problema básico da civilização meridional: os imigrantes. Com “Aleluia, Gretchen” resgatei essa lacuna, e surgiu uma trilogia que não fora premeditada, mas que ao longo dos percalços e imponderabilidade do cinema brasileiro, acabou existindo. (*Diário da tarde*, 11 October 1976, p. 6)

Through *Aleluia, Gretchen!* Back became known in connection to cinema made in southern Brazil and depicting south Brazilian historical processes. Most importantly, Back positioned himself and was positioned as part of the culture he represents, therefore having the authority to translate the “German” signs and narratives the film depicts. The reviewers usually do not question his interpretation of this culture. Instead, they use the film to elaborate on their perspectives of “German” in Brazil, as seen in the next subchapter.

3.3. Migration, Germany, Brazil — describing the plot

Press texts elaborate differently about *Aleluia, Gretchen!*'s central topic. For example, the film is sometimes described as a story about German migration, Nazism in

Brazil, or how German migrants engage with Nazism in Brazil. Nevertheless, the connection between Germany and Brazil was constantly emphasized. It was how the film was sold, and it was important for its comprehension. The story would be different with a family from another country.

To start our discussion, I would like to present a text, an extended film synopsis. It is possibly a press release since it appeared several times in the press, including in shortened and edited forms. It was so often reappropriated that its value lies in the perceptions it perpetuates and hints about what the spectators should look at — and *how* they should look at it:

“Aleluia, Gretchen” é a saga de uma família de imigrantes alemães que, fugindo ao nazismo, vem se radicar numa cidade qualquer do sul do Brasil, por volta de 1937. Ao longo de 40 anos, e narrada em tom de diário, a estória procura acompanhar as venturas e desventuras dos Kranz no seu sofrido itinerário de adaptação ao novo meio humano e social.

Às vésperas e durante a II Grande Guerra, membros da família se envolvem com a Quinta Coluna e o Integralismo, culminando sua ação com violenta represálias, mas que não os faz abdicar de suas idéias.

Na década de 50, graças a ligações perigosas com o rescaldo da guerra, os Kranz são visitados por ex-oficiais da SS em trânsito para a Argentina. A insólita intromissão faz reviver acontecimentos aparentemente sepultados com a derrota do nazismo.

A trama se estende aos dias de hoje, reunindo em torno de um longo e típico piquenique alemão, os Kranz, agregados, e sobreviventes. Ao final da festa, quase todos eles são repentinamente tomados por uma eufórica nostalgia ao som de Wagner em ritmo de rock, contrapondo-se a uma batucada carnavalesca.

É a primeira vez que a imigração alemã é tema de um filme de ficção no cinema brasileiro. (Spencer, 1976b)

The central aspect also appearing in the rest of the research sample is how the film is focused on a German immigrant family that escapes Nazism and struggles to adapt in Brazil. They do not really change their “ideas,” which means a failure in adaptation. Although having apparently fled Nazism, the family is involved with the Fifth Column, Integralism, and eventually hosts ex-SS officers, demonstrating how Nazism is still alive in the family. Curiously, the synopsis even exposes how the film ends, hinting that the final scene should not be a surprise and that the spectator’s interest lies in how the film depicts the events mentioned. This final scene is also described in the most detail, pointing to a “typical German picnic” during carnival, in which a rock arrangement of a Wagner opera blends with samba as a background for a “euphoric nostalgia” for all the characters — the Kranz family, the ones that were in collusion with

them, and the ones that survived their violence. It is as if there is indeed a suggestion of adaptation in the end. Lastly, the film is described as the first one from Brazil to handle German immigration.

As this research is focused on film reception, I will not discuss how this synopsis relates to the film narrative, but rather how it informs an interpretation of the film and how many other texts in the press interpret and elaborate on the same events. To start with, there are many descriptions of the film that understand it as a particular story of a family migration: “Relato da vida de uma família de imigrantes alemães no Sul do país a partir de 30” (*Correio de Notícias*, 27 October 1979); “contando as dificuldades de uma família alemã que se radica numa cidade do sul do Brasil” (*Correio Braziliense*, 19 May 1979, p. 1); “narra a saga de uma família de imigrantes alemães nas paisagens sulinas, há 45 anos, e só termina nos dias de hoje” (Feijó Junior, 1975). The problem arises when the film is taken as a narrative about German immigration in general in Brazil.

The last sentence of the synopsis also suggests that the film is about German immigration in Brazil. The position of the film as a pioneering tale on the theme in the country also indicates this direction: “primeiro filme de ficção do cinema nacional que usou como tema a imigração alemã no Brasil” (*Diário da tarde*, 17 May 1976, p. 4). Accordingly, many descriptions of the film, before and after its release describe it problematically as a film about “German migration in Brazil”: “focaliza a saga alemã no Sul do Brasil” (Craveiro, 1975); “A saga da imigração alemã” (Alencar, 1975); “tem um tema social vasto, explorando o fato sociológico gerado pela migração alemã para o Sul do Brasil” (*Correio Braziliense*, 22 July 1976, p. 5); “gira em torno da imigração alemã no Sul do país” (F. A. dos Santos, 1977a); “Um dos mais ambiciosos, trabalhados e custosos filmes brasileiros, esta epopeia da imigração alemã” (*Diário da Noite*, 15 September 1979, p. 17); and “uma abordagem livre da imigração alemã, seus envolvimento políticos e a repercussão de sua ideologia nos dias que vivemos” (Spencer, 1977b), a description by Back himself.

The claims about the film being about German migration in Brazil tend to be reductionist. This interpretation assumes that the Kranz story is the standard for

migration from Germany and disregards, for example, migration in other historical periods, migrants with different socioeconomic conditions, or migrants arriving in different Brazilian regions. It also disregards the particularities of the different areas of emigration and the various causes. Further, it tends to equate German immigration with Nazism in Brazil. Hence, in other examples, the film handles the “issues” of German migration in Brazil: “Obra que merece especial atenção. Pela primeira vez, o cinema brasileiro aborda problemas da imigração alemã no Sul do Brasil, abrangendo um período de 1937 até nossos dias” (Spencer, 1977e); “Este é o primeiro filme brasileiro que discute os problemas da imigração, principalmente a germânica” (Araújo, 1976). The film is then understood as a criticism of German immigration for exposing and discussing its problems.

The elaborations on the Kranz family were also very curious, since the texts are not unanimous about the roles of victim and perpetrator in the family. It can have been aroused from the perception that the family first flees Nazism but perpetuates it in Brazil. Therefore, there was the possibility of describing the family solely as a victim of Nazism and Integralism: “A saga de uma família alemã durante a guerra, em 1937, fugindo ao nazismo, e as perseguições que lhe movem o Integralismo, a 5.^a Coluna e os próprios agentes da SS de passagem pelo Brasil” (*O Fluminense*, 31 March 1977, p. 21). By contrast, there was also a clear description of the Kranz’ being the perpetrators: “Filme que abre a um exame de consciência de uma família vivendo em solo brasileiro o sonho ideológico que embalou a Europa e tingiu de sangue meio mundo durante a Segunda Guerra” (*Diário de Pernambuco*, 03 November 1977, p. B-8). However, many texts identified that the perceptions about Nazism were not unanimous within the family and how these perceptions divided them:

Para sobreviver os imigrantes montam o Flórida Hotel (um anagrama de Adolfo Hitler) e o contato com integralistas e outros alemães já radicados entre nós serve para tornar mais profunda a divisão da família, em parte ao lado do professor, que se opõe ao nazismo, em parte ao lado de Frau Lotte, que lamentava a oposição do marido às idéias de Hitler. (Avellar, 1977b)

A vinda de uma família de imigrantes da Alemanha para o sul do Brasil na década de 30, que no decorrer de sua trajetória vivencia as contradições trazidas da Alemanha nazista; os conflitos de valores dos membros dessa família, assim como seus reflexos na nova realidade, formam o espaço dramático do filme [...]. (Carrilho and Machado, 1977)

The story was also described from the point of view of Professor Ross, who often takes on the role of the victim, sometimes extended to the entire family. Sometimes he is also portrayed as a victim of his own family's Nazism:

Sérgio Hingst é um professor que foge da Alemanha para se refugiar em Santa Catarina. Durante anos, é obrigado a conviver com o nazismo cultivado por sua própria família e com as aventuras integralistas caboclas. (*Jornal da República*, 15 September 1979, p. 13)

Um professor alemão foge do nazismo em 1937 e encontra uma Santa Catarina profundamente infiltrada por simpatizantes do fűhrer [sic] e de Plínio Salgado. (*Jornal da República*, 24 November 1979, p. 13)

Em 1937, um professor alemão refugiado do nazismo, se refugia-se com sua mulher e duas filhas em Santa Catarina, onde, entretanto, encontra o nazismo muito infiltrado. Durante quarenta anos problemas políticos que afetam o Brasil e o mundo refletem-se diretamente sobre a vida da família de colonos. (*Diário da Noite*, 15 September 1979, p. 17)

To assume that Ross is the protagonist is also to assume that the story is against Nazism, as he positions himself against the ideology throughout the film. In these examples, unlike the previous ones that focused on the whole family, Nazism existed before the Kranz family arrived in Brazil and was not brought by them.

The German migration was often understood alongside representations of Nazism, how the family represented the Nazism infiltration in Brazil or how they experienced it in Brazil, such as in this review 'A guerra e o nazismo em família' (*Jornal do Brasil*, 04 May 1976, p. Caderno B - 1). Interestingly, there was a veiled connection between Nazism and the Kranz' and how the family's journey towards adaptation somehow emulates Nazism's infiltration in Brazil:

Aleluia, Gretchen, de Sílvia Back, coloca o nazismo na perspectiva de uma família alemã que imigra para o sul do Brasil nos anos 30, passando aí a sofrer igualmente o processo de integração cultural e econômica na nova terra, sem ficar alheia ao momento político brasileiro de então. (T. Santos, 1976)

Curiously, some reviews expand from the film narrative, repeating conspiracy theories about Nazism that have been popular in Brazil since the Second World War and are reminiscent of the New State's nationalization campaign, as seen in Chapter 2.4., when the real threat of Nazism in Brazil was mostly exaggerated:

Conta a estória de um grupo de integrantes alemães que instala-se no Sul do Brasil e prentede, depois, formar uma colônia de base ideológica nazista. (Feijó Junior, 1976a)

Aleluia, Gretchen parte de uma das idéias mais curiosas geradas no cinema brasileiro: focalizar a imigração alemã, o envolvimento de imigrantes com a Quinta Coluna durante a Segunda Guerra

Mundial, e no pós-guerra, a ação de ex-oficiais das chamadas tropas de elite SS à procura de uma acolhedora estufa na América do Sul. (Azeredo, 1977)

Theories around a Nazi comeback or its secret continuation underground were prevalent after the war. Marcos Meinerz, in ‘O imaginário da formação do IV Reich na América Latina’ (2011), explains that the escape of well-known Nazis from the Nuremberg trials, such as Adolf Eichmann and Josef Mengele, who took refuge in South America, inspired a series of conspiracy narratives about the formation of the IV Reich — a Nazi Reich’s successor, also based on Nazi ideology — on the continent. Journalism and works of fiction translated the psychological context of uncertainty and fear after the war into stories about the possibility of Nazism restructuring itself (cf. p. 151). However, René Gertz demonstrates how the chances of a Nazi invasion in Brazil or Nazi military plans for southern Brazil lack sufficient proof, and there was not even a clear Nazi strategy for the region²⁵ (cf. 1987, p. 75). It is, though, of utmost interest how the film reception exposes the persistence of these fears based on conspiracy theories and how the film narrative itself is remodeled to fit these perceptions of a potential “Reich” in Brazil:

O filme [...] versa sobre uma família de imigrantes alemães numa cidade do sul brasileiro num período entre os anos 30 até os dias de hoje. Fugida do nazismo, esta família vem para o Brasil, porém se envolvendo misteriosamente com partidos como o Integralismo. Há por outro lado certo colaboracionismo no sentido de fazer do Brasil um outro Reich. (*Diário da tarde*, 26 October 1979, p. 6)

Indeed, during the picnic scene (01:42:51-01:50:45), Professor Ross says, “Que bela Hitlerlandia, não, Inge?” and Merz, one of the ex-SS officers, screams, “Viva o IV Reich!” However, as will be seen in the following chapters, most reviews interpret the reference to the IV Reich as a criticism of the military dictatorship and the permanence of authoritarian ideologies and not as a possibility of the Nazis taking over Brazil.²⁶

Also, the repeated idea that the Kranz do not adapt to Brazil, or have great difficulty with it, and are deeply attached to their culture is possibly reminiscent of the

²⁵ Gertz also comments that the presence of the Nazi party alone cannot validate the suspicions, as it had a rather organic development, in which the Nazis appointed anyone that offered themselves as party representatives (cf. 1987, p. 80).

²⁶ *Hitler Terceiro Mundo* (José Agrippino de Paula, 1968) is another example of a Brazilian film criticizing the military dictatorship through an allegorical narration of the Nazis taking over São Paulo.

stereotypes related to Germans in Brazil, which were heightened during the New State and took root at the beginning of the German migration in Brazil (see chapter 2):

A estória toda transcorre até os dias de hoje, mostrando de que forma ocorreu a adaptação, ou não, dos imigrantes estrangeiros aos costumes brasileiros, à nossa terra, sociedade, religiões, mitos e fantasias do povo brasileiro. (*Diário do Paraná*, 06 March 1976)

A família não é contra Hitler, apenas seu chefe, professor Ross Kranz, que abusou da palavra e como consequência é obrigado a sair da Alemanha. O filme procura mostrar que durante todos esses anos os membros da família vivem como se ainda lá estivessem. Pouco assimilam dos costumes brasileiros. Ideologicamente, nada. (Karam, 1976)

The integration into “Brazilian” culture and society is mostly seen as troubled and incomplete. The alterity in the representation of the German family in relation to “Brazilians” is subtly present. There is an assumption that Brazilian habits and ideologies are completely separate from German ones, in a sense, not recognizing the processes of acculturation related to German migration. Interestingly, there is also the perception of the Kranz family “feeling at home” due to identifying themselves with the Fifth Column and Integralism, approximating them from “Brazilian” experiences:

Os alemães imigrantes sentiram dificuldades para se adaptarem na terra brasileira, mas ao mesmo tempo encontraram um ambiente familiar nos seus primeiros dias de Brasil. Alguns membros da família imigrante se envolveram com a Quinta Coluna e com o Integralismo, o que foi o começo da terrível saga. [...] De 1937 até os dias de hoje a família Kranz viveu terrivelmente apegada as suas tradições e aos seus costumes, religiosos, sociais, políticos e morais. (*Diário da tarde*, 23 October 1976, p. 2)

The texts mention these “traditions” and “habits” but do not elaborate on which traditions and habits are implied, although they usually suggest that they are related to Nazism. The reviews, in general, did not dwell on analyzing the representations of habits and cultural products. However, they do recognize German elements in the film, for example, in this caption of a breakfast scene still “Os hábitos e costumes alemães” (*Diário do Paraná*, 06 March 1976). However, there is no specification of what exactly is German and what is Brazilian. For example, the “typical German picnic” was frequently mentioned, although it is not described why the picnic was German. It was, however, contrasted, for example, with the film being a Brazilian production — “Um piquenique alemão num filme brasileiro” (Araújo, 1976) — and with the Brazilian music:

A cena final reúne todos os personagens num típico piquenique alemão nos dias de hoje, humilhados e humilhadores são tomados por uma eufórica nostalgia com a música de Wagner

que aos poucos é abafada por uma batucada bem brasileira. (*Correio Braziliense*, 20 May 1977, p. Segundo Caderno - 2)

The much-commented rock arrangement of *Ride of the Valkyries* can be considered an exception as it clearly identifies a German signifier. In many texts, the originality of the arrangement of the German opera with rock is praised: “É a primeira vez que se ouve falar de um Wagner transformado em rock progressivo” (Spencer, 1976c). Wagner is also directly connected to the representation of Nazism in the film, although the reference is not elaborated on:

Em *Aleluia, Gretchen*, o diretor Sílvio Back reconstitui — através do discurso contundente de alguns personagens ou das imagens reveladoras de José Medeiros — a trama da infiltração nazista no Sul do país, em conluio com o integralismo e a quinta-coluna ali radicada, que cultivava os velhos temas da mitologia wagneriana e — ao som da *Cavalcada das Valquírias* e de marchas militares — se solidariza com o projeto brutal do expansionismo alemão, sob Adolf Hitler. (Alves, 1977)

It is unclear if the Brazilian reviewers were aware of the complexity of Wagner’s intertextual reference, although it is relatively well-known that there is a Wagner association with Nazism. For one, because of Wagner’s declared antisemitism — his essay *Das Judentum in der Musik* (1850) was published while Wagner wrote the *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, to which the *Valkyries* belong, as noted by cultural and music historian Michael Steinberg (cf. 2018, p. 7). He also mentions the unofficial ban on public performances of Wagner’s music in Israel, not only due to his antisemitism but also for his sometimes “dubious” association with Nazism and the Holocaust — by “dubious” Steinberg is referring to the false position that Wagner was alive during the Holocaust (cf. 2018, p. 134). Nevertheless, Hanan Bruen argues that Wagner became “a symbol for Nazi ideology” (1993, p. 101), stating that those against the public performance of Wagner in Israel mention how closely the Nazi ideology is linked with Wagner’s work. For example, his music was played during Nazi state affairs and in concentration camps (cf. 1993, p. 100).

German signifiers were also identified in the cinematography and production design, which are said to be based on the migrants’ life in Brazil and include props and costumes imported from Germany, giving the impression of authenticity and verisimilitude:

A própria fotografia, de José Medeiros, funda-se na reelaboração de um clima pertinente às épocas em que se desenvolve o filme. Mesmo as cores procuram sintonia com uma temperatura

sulina e com as heranças pictóricas do[s] imigrantes alemães em seus interiores, roupas [e] ambientes. (*Diário da tarde*, 11 October 1976, p. 6)

Os cuidados com a infra-estrutura do filme foram além: o produtor Plínio Garcia Sanches importou da Alemanha uniformes para as cenas com os antigos oficiais da SS (tropas de choque de Hitler), assim como utilizou elementos autênticos para reproduzir efeitos de clima e emoção, transportados, por exemplo, para a sequência sobre as atividades da Juventude Hitlerista no Brasil, em 1937. (Alves, 1977)

The costume designer Luís Afonso Burigo also commented on his work:

Fui a Joinville conversar com os imigrantes sobre a roupa que usavam quando chegaram. Vi filmes para perceber o movimento da roupa. Foram oito meses de pesquisa, escolha e confecção. (*Correio de Notícias*, 29 January 1978, p. 13)

Ultimately, these were isolated examples, and still, there is no elaboration on the particularities of the German migrants, who were hardly detached from Nazism, reinforcing the connection “German migration” with “Nazism,” especially when describing the film as a narrative about German immigration in Brazil. “Brazilian ideologies” or “values” were also not specified but presented in opposition to those of the Kranz family, curiously not mentioning the century-old German-speaking immigration and the difficulties of juxtaposing “Germans” and “Brazilians” as isolated categories. Nevertheless, there is an approximation between Germans and Brazilians in the press — a supposed resemblance between Nazism and Brazilian Integralism was interpreted from the film, as seen in the following section.

3.4. Nazism and Brazilian Integralism — bridges between fascist ideologies and historical times

The majority of the press sample refers to the film in terms of how it handles the theme “Nazism” in Brazil. As discussed in Chapter 2.4., the Nazi party and its ideology were present and welcomed in the country, though the extent of the acceptance is hard to estimate today. Many texts described *Aleluia, Gretchen!* as being about German immigration, as seen in the last subchapter. In addition, several texts described it as a film about Nazism in Brazil, mostly in the south: “O cinema nacional produz sua primeira fita sobre a atuação dos nazistas no Sul do Brasil durante os anos da II Guerra Mundial” (Alves, 1977); “sobre a infiltração nazista nos dias da Segunda Grande Guerra” (Neto, 1977); “apresentando o nazismo no Brasil” (Craveiro, 1977); “Um filme

sobre os nazistas” (*A Luta Democrática*, 25 February 1977, p. 6); “mostra a influência nazista no sul do Brasil” (*O Fluminense*, 02 June 1979); “é um afresco da influência nazista nos Estados do Sul do Brasil” (*Jornal do Brasil*, 01 June 1979, p. Serviço - 7); “*Aleluia, Gretchen*, um sério estudo sobre a influência do nazismo nas colônias européias do sul do país” (*Jornal de Caxias*, 19 November 1977, p. 33). It was suggested that the Nazi activities and its consequences could still be seen in 1970s:

Sílvio Back é o cineasta sulino com melhores condições de fazer um trabalho conseqüente, como é realmente *Aleluia, Gretchen*, a saga de uma família alemã no Estado de Santa Catarina. Por extensão, o filme trata da influência do nazismo e do integralismo na vida brasileira dos anos 30 até hoje. (*Jornal de Caxias*, 19 November 1977, p. 33)

In addition, film frames, posters, photographs, and even drawings tend to foreground Nazism as the main theme of the film. One of the most repeated images is a boy with a Nazi uniform carrying a gun, mostly at an angle that points it at the viewer, aggressively pulling him into the story. In front of a swastika, the boy is also at the center of the film poster. In the background are images of Heike being raped and the scene of Eurico’s torture — these two motives also appear frequently as film frames in the research sample. Moreover, the poster carries the title “*Aleluia, Gretchen*” in a German Gothic script in *Fraktur* style, a possible reminder of Nazi Germany.

The association of Nazism with youth was also found in commonly printed film frames showing the Hitler Youth doing the Nazi salute in a local landscape occupied by Nazi flags. It was sometimes accompanied by captions explaining the theme: “*Os membros da Juventude Hitlerista eram submetidos a rígida disciplina militar. Nas cidades do Sul do Brasil, aprendiam a amar Hitler e manejar metralhadoras e outras armas*” (Alves, 1977); “*Com a cruz gamada ao fundo, jovens juram fidelidade ao Führer*” (Alves, 1977); “*Reunião da Juventude Nazista no Brasil*” (*Diário da tarde*, 17 May 1976, p. 4). There was no deep exploration of the Nazi Youth’s role in Brazil, but a particular pictorial interest and a conscious description of the filmic representation as a real historical event. According to Dietrich in ‘Narrativas orais da Juventude Hitlerista e Neonazista no Brasil’ (2011), the Brazilian chapter of the youth group had 550 members and existed from 1928 until 1938. The importance of this organization was linked to the attention the youth received within the Nazi ideology and in its government measures, such as the changes in the school curriculum. The training and indoctrination sought to

strategically consolidate the regime worldwide (cf. pp. 1-3). It is hard to estimate how well the press writers were aware of these facts, though they still pointed to the historical role of young people, as in this caption: “Os adeptos de Führrer [*sic*] iniciavam as crianças no culto da violência pura” (*Opinião*, 01 April 1977, p. 21).

Other common film frames were Dr. Aurélio and Josef making the Nazi salute. Another motive related to Nazism was frames of the Kranz Christmas dinner with Nazi flags hanging on the walls with captions such as: “*Filmagem da ceia de Natal* de 1942, onde Miriam Pires (Frau Lotte, de pé, na cabeceira da mesa) faz um discurso em que exalta a atitude do filho que se alistou na Wehrmacht, o exercito de Hitler” (Alves, 1977); “O nazismo [*sic*] à mesa, o forno crematório é subjacente” (*Correio de Notícias*, 30 October 1979). Several film stills are also of Heike, Rose Marie, and Gudrun. These characters are portrayed by the established stars Kate Hansen, Lilian Lemmertz, and Selma Egrei, respectively, who were known for their television, film and theater work in a variety of genres. It is possibly a strategy to catch the audience’s attention to include these shots in promotional material for the film.

The theme of Nazism often appears in the sample in relation to the Brazilian national context. So, as the Kranz family’s narrative is described regarding how they adapt to Brazil, Nazism is also described in regard to how it took hold in the country:

Vejam correndo porque, acima dos seus eventuais deslizes filmicos, conta um pouco de nossa História recente e presente. Seu tema principal é a chegada do nazismo ao Brasil e sua adaptação ao clima tropical. Com o tempo, como se sabe, o nazismo passou a dispensar até ventilador. (Augusto, 1977a)

In particular, two moments of the film “adapted” Nazi references. One of them is the anagram intended by Back in the hotel name — “Hotel Flórida (um anagrama de Adolfo Hitler)” (Avellar, 1977c) — also with Adolf instead of Adolfo — “Hotel Flórida (anagrama de Adolf Hitler)” (Augusto, 1977b), the incomplete version. The other is the spelling of the word “*Führrer*” in the film, written in capital letters on a flag hung on the wall — “wir lieben unseren fúherer [*sic*].”²⁷ The Portuguese version of the name Adolf and the wrong spelling was not commented on in the sample. In the following review,

²⁷ While discussing the film at a German university, the audience laughed and pointed out the (incomplete) anagram of “Flórida Hotel” — Adolfo Hitler instead of Adolf Hitler —, and the spelling of “*Führrer*.” For this audience, the German language they were seeing was not authentic and the film was not taken so seriously.

for example, Nazism is the focal point of analysis, and the sentence “wir lieben unseren führer” is written correctly in *Hochdeutsch*. The authenticity of *Aleluia, Gretchen!*, or its message, was not questioned, and the film interpretation was not affected by grammar. The film was still taken seriously insofar as its narrative corroborated historical events:

Wir lieben unseren Führer — nós amamos o nosso Führer —, estava escrito nas paredes. E, em meio à pregação nazista, a advertência da Igreja, erguendo sua voz democrática em defesa dos direitos humanos desrespeitados pelo totalitarismo. Ouvimos, então, o pastor protestante Tannenbuer condenar, do púlpito, os totalitários: “O nazismo nada tem a nos ensinar, nem o seu criminoso porta-voz, que está levando a Alemanha a um fim doloroso.” Ao terminar sua prédica, Tannenbuer (Joel de Oliveira) conclama os fiéis a não aceitarem a propaganda mistificadora dos nazistas. (Alves, 1977)

The reference to the Church’s counterpoint to Nazism and its advocacy for human rights is particularly interesting here. It can be seen as a reference to the role of the Catholic Church in Brazil during the military dictatorship. Notably, in 1973 after the murder of the student Alexandre Vanucchi Leme, the Church openly assumed the opposition role against the regime. Church groups were at first supportive of the regime; however, the dictatorship’s disrespect for human rights, the imprisonment and torture of priests and friars, and the murder of Father Henrique Pereira Neto gradually contributed to the opposition, shown by supporting the victims and reporting the violence (cf. Napolitano, 2020, p. 244; cf. Memórias da ditadura, no date/a). Democracy as a counterpoint to Nazism was also illuminated through Eurico:

Rose Marie (Lilian Lemmertz) era uma ativa propagandista do nazismo e participava sadicamente das sessões de tortura contra os democratas, como Eurico (Carlos Vereza), submetido a choques elétricos. (Alves, 1977)

Although Eurico’s political views are not explicit in the film, as he is a victim, he is seen as a democrat. Here it is worth remembering the “us-versus-them” structure in films centering on Nazism that takes the form of democracy-versus-fascism (cf. Hake, 2012, p. 11). This structure is also seen in the reviews — positioning the writers against Nazism and the unfolding of the ideology in Brazil. During the military dictatorship in Brazil, this takes on another level of meaning since the writers who identify democracy as the power against Nazism also position themselves against their own political context.

The film's narrative was interpreted according to available discourses about Nazism. A typical reading strategy examined how the film represented Nazi concepts and politics. The interpretation blurs the boundaries of what is real and what belongs to the narrative:

Ela é o símbolo da ideologia nazista, totalitária. Lourinha, de olhos azuis, Gretchen — nascida na “chocadeira” ariana — é o protótipo da política de expansionismo territorial, do Lebensraum, da ocupação do espaço da escravidão dos povos vizinhos, que vigia na Alemanha de Hitler, de 1933 a 1945. Contra tudo isto, nossos “pracinhas” derramaram o sangue brasileiro na Itália. Gretchen é suposta filha do SS Hans. Mas, como mandava o figurino da época, Heike — como boa ariana — foi fecundada por tantos outros membros das tropas de elite nazistas, a ponto de a paternidade biológica de Gretchen se confundir com a do regime. Afinal, a política populacional da época era pronatalista. Pronatalismo — de um lado, para preencher o “espaço vital” alemão; de outro lado, para forçar a expansão das fronteiras do Reich, que um dia atingiria a África e além-mar iria em direção ao Brasil, não fossem os Aliados. (Levy, 1977)

The reception often interprets a certain fluidity between the aesthetic representation and historical events. The view that the script is grounded in historical facts as a strategy to lend verisimilitude to the narrative is repeated in the sample:

Para armar o argumento de “Aleluia, Gretchen”, escrito por Sílvio Back em colaboração com Manoel Carlos Karam e Oscar Milton Volpini, o diretor recorreu a narrativas e lembranças de imigrantes alemães, relatórios publicados pelas Secretarias de Segurança do Extremo Sul sobre a atividade nazista e, em particular, a elementos biográficos familiares. A investigação detem-se no noticiário que dizia viverem clandestinamente no Brasil ex-oficiais nazistas. (Spencer, 1978a)

In *Nazis on the Run* (2011), based on his professorial thesis, historian Gerald Steinacher tells of Franz Paul Stangl, who was the commandant of Treblinka's extermination camp and worked later as a mechanic for Volkswagen in São Paulo. In 1967, he was the first Nazi criminal that Brazil extradited to Germany after pressures from Austria, Germany, Poland, and the United States (cf. pp. 113 and 251). Steinacher states that concentration camp commandants have seemingly escaped together. This was also the case of Stangl's subordinate and deputy camp commandant of Sobibór, Gustav Franz Wagner, who remained hidden for a while in Brazil and escaped trial, as the Brazilian Supreme Court stated in 1979 that his offense had expired due to the statute of limitation (cf. p. 253). One of the reviews in the sample interestingly relates the narrative of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* closely with Wagner, blurring the boundaries between fiction and history:

Tal foto - a existência de carrascos do nazismo, inclusive em nosso meio, tentando organizar o IV Reich - torna o filme atual. No filme as referências são fictícias, mas agora, mais do que nunca, se confundem com o real, uma vez que recentemente houve um encontro de adeptos nazistas numa pequena cidade mineira, cuja descoberta possibilitou a prisão de um procurado

carrasco de guerra - Wagner - que se encontra preso em Brasília, enquanto vários países, principalmente Israel, brigam pela extradição e pelos direitos (julgamento) sobre o criminoso. (*Diário do Paraná*, 17 October 1978, p. 2º Caderno - 4)

Wagner was mentioned in two other texts in the sample, one denouncing the way Brazil handled the case — “por mais que tenha havido corpo mole até a hora da prisão de um criminoso de guerra, Franz Gustav Wagner” (Mello, 1978) — and the other indicating that his arrest led to journalists’ interest in Nazism — “prisão de Franz Wagner que deu margem a numerosas reportagens e documentos sobre o nazismo, campos de extermínio e antijudaísmo” (*Correio de Notícias*, 30 October 1979).

The support of historical examples in the reviews is an important strategy for many reviewers to determine the value of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* as a good or bad film. If the historical representation of the film, as interpreted by the reviewer, corresponds to their own perspective of the historical events, then it is a good film (and if it is not, then it is a bad film.) Moreover, the reviews build on the historical events represented to offer further criticism, not openly against the military dictatorship, but hinting at the persistence of the authoritarian ideologies:

Em *Aleluia, Gretchen*, o diretor Sílvio Back reconstitui — através do discurso contundente de alguns personagens ou das imagens reveladoras de José Medeiros — a trama da infiltração nazista no Sul do país, em conluio com o integralismo e a quinta-coluna ali radicada, que cultiva os velhos temas da mitologia wagneriana e — ao som da *Cavalcada das Valquírias* e de marchas militares — se solidariza com o projeto brutal do expansionismo alemão, sob Adolf Hitler. Os retratos do Führer estão lado a lado com os de Plínio Salgado, seu mais notório discípulo latino-americano — ao menos na época. (Alves, 1977)

The reviews often approached the suggestion of collaboration between Nazism and Brazilian Integralism with different outlooks. Brazilian Integralism refers to the Ação Integralista Brasileira (AIB), a political organization founded in 1932 by Plínio Salgado and influenced by Italian Fascism and Nazism. In 1936 it was estimated to have 600,000 to a million members (cf. CPDOC, no date/a). The movement is usually seen in the sample as similar to Nazism or related to Nazism, but mainly as another criminal activity illustrated in the film.

It is important to remember that in the 1970s, there was a revival of interest in the AIB with many works being published, for example, *1938 — Terrorismo em campo verde* (1971) by Hélio Silva, *Integralismo* (1971) by Hégio Trindade, *A ideologia curupira. Análise do discurso integralista* (1977) by Gilberto Vasconcellos, and *O*

integralismo de Plínio Salgado. Forma de regressividade no capitalismo hiper-tardio (1977) by José Chasin (cf. Gertz, 1987, p. 8). Historian Ângela de Castro Gomes, in ‘Política: história, ciência, cultura etc’ (1996), observes that during the decade a significant number of historians and political scientists investigated the origins of the military dictatorship in order to understand the trajectory of authoritarianism in Brazil that led to this tragic outcome (cf. pp. 10-11). The reception of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* is clearly indebted to this enthusiasm, as many reviews explore the consequences of Nazism and Integralism in Brazil.

The press often considered Integralism as a national version of Nazism: “No filme de Silvio Back, o integralismo aparece como primo irmão, numa versão tupiniquim, do nazismo” (*Correio de Notícias*, 30 October 1979) — “tupiniquim” is here a metonymy, commonly used in Brazil as a word for “Brazilian,”²⁸ but it referred first to the homonym indigenous population, who still lives in Brazil. Sylvio Back also plays with the understanding of Integralism in Brazil naming it a “cabocla” version of Nazism: “‘Aleluia, Gretchen’ é o primeiro filme de ficção realizado no Brasil que discute diretamente o nazismo e sua versão cabocla, configurada na Quinta Coluna e no Integralismo” (Spencer, 1977c). Another review uses a similar expression — “aventuras integralistas caboclas” (*Jornal da República*, 15 September 1979, p. 13). The roots of the meaning of “caboclo” based on mixing and cross-culturality are used in this case as a figure of speech to understand how Nazi activities took shape in Brazil. The term can also be found in literature about migration in Brazil, referring to a Brazilian person in comparison to an immigrant or a person with a recent migrant background.

The juxtaposition of Integralism and Nazism was observed in the sample through different film elements, for example, in how the music score is an approximation of the Wagner opera and the Integralist hymn:

Intercalando a Cavalcada das Valquírias, pinçada da famosa tetralogia de Richard Wagner, e o hino oficial do integralismo (letra de Plínio Salgado), a produção consegue assegurar ao filme, em níveis heterogêneos, a trilha sonora adequada, recriando o clima de ufanismo nazista na época. Na matriz e nas filiais. (Alves, 1977)

²⁸ The metonymy is sometimes used pejoratively in a highly problematic way, to emphasize a sense of “backwardness,” “lack of civilization,” or “lack of integrity” when referring to Brazil.

Most clearly, though, it was the identification of the integralist Dr. Aurélio as the bridge between Nazism and Brazilian Integralism — the character believes that both are the same. He was often interpreted comically and not taken seriously. It is contrasted with the more serious perspective of the Nazi characters.

Um bom brasileiro (segundo definição e outro imigrante alemão, Herr Oskar), um integralista, um verdadeiro patriota (segundo ele mesmo), o Dr Aurélio é o elemento de ligação entre os imigrantes e a paisagem brasileira. É o personagem encarregado de fazer o paralelo entre “o líder de verdade que vocês têm lá na Alemanha” e o “tampinha, o caudilho de meia tigela que de repente se volta contra o regime que, secretamente ele admira”. (Avellar, 1977a)

The character Dr. Aurélio was also interpreted as representing the 1938 uproar of the integralists against the government and also the position assumed by many of them:

No filme, o Dr. Aurélio refere-se ao episódio numa de suas pantalonadas. Para sequências depois, amedrontado com um cerco ao hotel por antifascistas, fazer o que muitos integralistas fizeram no frígir dos ovos: esconde a farda e arquiva a arrogância. (Augusto, 1977b)

To comprehend Dr. Aurélio as an example of many Integralists reveals an understanding of the historical events related to his storyline, in this case, the Integralists' assault in 1938 of the Palácio Guanabara.²⁹ In another review, a brief indication of the phenomenological reception demonstrates the reaction of laughter towards Dr. Aurélio's cowardness, which is partly dependent on the comprehension of the Guanabara event and the Integralist elements in the film — the portrait of Plínio Salgado, the flag with its emblem (the Greek letter sigma), the green shirts, and the hymn *Avante Brasil*:

Na pré-estréia do filme, nos primeiros dias de março, na Cinemateca do Museu de Arte Moderna, no Rio de Janeiro, o público (recorde em apresentações desse gênero) aplaudiu a emoção de Repo, vestido de Papai Noel, na noite de Natal, assim como se revoltou com as cenas de tortura e com a pregação do ideário nazista nos anos 30 e 40 — talvez por sentir que ela ainda é atual em determinadas regiões do globo. E não deixou de rir com os lances do apostolado do militante integralista, depois acuado diante da cólera popular que rebenta nas ruas: o Dr. Aurélio é visto, então, sob os acordes do hino integralista, a enterrar a camisa-verde, o sigma e o retrato de Plínio Salgado. (Alves, 1977)

²⁹ Gilberto Calil in “Os integralistas frente ao Estado Novo: euforia, decepção e subordinação” (2010) writes how the Integralists actively supported Vargas in the months before the state coup in 1937. They celebrated it while expecting to take part in the new regime, which did not happen — the movement and its press were forbidden, members were persecuted, and others supported the dictatorship. In May 1938, a conspiracy took place in the Palácio Guanabara, which was used at the time as Getúlio Vargas' residence and where many Integralists attempted an armed assault. Many of those who were supposed to have fought did not show up, which is probably the main reason why it failed (cf. p. 74).

However, the stylized approach to Dr. Aurélio was also put into question as it could uninvite the critical analysis:

O integralista Aurélio (hóspede do hotel do casal Kranz) é também um personagem não resolvido. O fanatismo e a violência que ele encarna enquanto cópia nacional do nazi-fascismo, aparece explicitamente quando ele contracenava com Wilhelm (filho dos Kranz): Aurélio tenta convencer o rapaz das “glórias” do integralismo de Plínio Salgado. Mas o esquematismo caricato com que isso é jogado em cena, anula a possibilidade de compreensão [sic] crítica da versão nacional do fascismo. (Carrilho and Machado, 1977)

The assumption that the character is a “national copy of nazifascism” replicates a widespread false assumption that Integralism was Nazism in disguise (cf. Gertz, 1987, p. 114). There are indeed many similarities between the two ideologies, as identified by historian Natalia Cruz in her doctoral thesis *O Integralismo e a questão racial* (2004), such as extreme nationalism, authoritarianism, intolerance, and racism. Moreover, both ideologies are against liberal democracy, communism, and Judaism (cf. p. 44). Cruz lists various moments of collaboration between them: Integralist periodicals published texts defending Hitler’s Germany and invited Germans to join the association; propaganda and doctrine material were exchanged to disseminate Nazism in Brazil and Integralism in Germany; Integralists collaborated in the press under Germany’s influence in Brazil; and Integralists and Nazis were meeting in Integralists associations (cf. pp. 52-58).

According to Dietrich, the Germans and German-Brazilians joined the AIB, which was a breach of the guidelines imposed by the AO, according to which the Nazis should not intervene in the internal politics of the *Gastland* and should not disseminate the ideology among non-Germans. The author also claims that the ideological miscegenation between Nazism and Integralism was a massive indicator of Nazism tropicalization in Brazil (cf. 2007, pp. 147-148). Nevertheless, Dietrich considers the AIB affiliations a reaction to the fact that German-Brazilians were not allowed to join the Nazi party (cf. 2007, p. 206).

Historian João Fábio Bertonha, in ‘Entre Mussolini e Plínio Salgado’ (2001), observes how Integralism was supported by German and Italian communities (cf. p. 92). Taking a closer look at the latter, he notes how Italian descendants were influenced by Mussolini’s propaganda and its right-wing ideology. Integration difficulties in Brazil led them to support Integralism to affirm their new Brazilian identity. However, a certain

fluidity of the militants between Fascism and Integralism also occurred (cf. p. 95). Integralism seems to have attracted supporters interested in another right-wing option in Brazil.

As Gertz points out, German membership in Integralism was completely discouraged by the Nazi elites and Germanists, who opposed the assimilation proposed by the movement (cf. 1987, p. 131). Against the odds, when German settlements started to welcome the AIB, there was a change in its discourse, now sympathetic to a degree of Germanness but without really reconciling the *Deutschtum* and Brazilian nationalism (cf. Gertz, 1987, p. 184).

According to Cruz, the major differences between Nazism and Integralism lie in ethnicity and nationalism, which would make the ideologies incompatible. For example, while Integralists feared Nazi imperialism, Nazis did not agree with the nationalizing of ethnic minorities, which would assimilate the Germans in Brazil (cf. 2004, p. 67). Moreover, according to Cruz, Integralism hid behind a Christian communion where racial miscegenation characterized Brazilian society. However, it defended a whitening of the population through ethnic mixing and was intolerant towards ethnic groups and their specific cultures and identities (cf. 2004, p. 99).

Further, according to Dietrich, the Nazi party's racism in Brazil focused on Black people and people of color. Antisemitism still existed in discourses and newspapers but did not generate many conflicts with the Jewish community. Nevertheless, the author still mentions that the party supported boycotts against Jewish establishments, condemned the socializing with Jews, and even sent reports to the Third Reich about the Jews that had migrated from Germany (cf. 2007, pp. 153-154 and 181). In this sense, some reviews criticized the approximation between Integralism and Nazism as they disregarded the particularities that Integralism assumed in Brazil:

O integralista Aurélio (José Maria Santos) diz um absurdo no filme: Wilhelm pergunta-lhe: “Não seja bobo, Wilhelm... E qual a diferença?” Por mais que houvesse afinidade entre o integralismo e o nazismo, que o integralismo se inspirasse no nazismo, que houvesse formulações semelhantes ou idênticas, historicamente a camisa alemã e a brasileira não são a mesma coisa. Que elas sejam a mesma coisa, é a compreensível aspiração do integralista: nada mais. Mas de certo modo, o filme encampa esta formulação de Aurélio ao desvincular as idéias de seu contexto ideológico. (Bernadet, 1977)

Nonetheless, the analysis of the representation of Integralism was also used to understand the present political moment. In the following review, the film is interpreted as a tale exposing how Integralism was still active in Brazil, albeit in disguise. The review relates the film to Plínio Salgado's novel *O estrangeiro* (1926). Further, the author finds examples from recent history to support his argument:

Há [sic] quem diga o integralismo não morreu, apenas mudou de nome e camisa. Outra não é a moral da história do polêmico filme de Sílvio Back, *Aleluia, Gretchen*, em cartaz no Rio há uma semana.

Camisa nova, sobrevivência. A ação do filme cobre quatro décadas. Na sequência final, os personagens continuam como eram quando tudo começou, no final dos anos 30. "Quando as idéias não envelhecem, o corpo resiste", observa o fanático integralista Dr. Aurélio. Que o diga o professor Miguel Reale, recentemente alçado ao Conselho Federal de Cultura, ao lado de, entre outros, o Dr. Gustavo Corção. Até morrer, não faz muito tempo, Plínio Salgado, o líder dos integralistas, foi um dos parlamentares mais prestigiados da Arena. Velho companheiro de tertúlias políticas do nosso fúhrer, o não menos prestigiado Alfredo Buzaid chegou ao posto de ministro da Justiça, no governo Médici. (Augusto, 1977b)

As the review unfolds, the author narrates historical events that started in the year of *Aleluia, Gretchen!*'s diegetic beginning and connected to Integralists and the military dictatorship. The historical comparison is used as a reading strategy to understand the moral of the film based on the maintenance of the characters' physical appearance throughout the decades. The characters do not change, and the authoritarianism and actors from Vargas' regime continue to appear through the military dictatorship:

Em 1937, ano em que, em *Aleluia, Gretchen*, a família Kranz chegou ao Brasil para se estabelecer no Hotel Flórida (anagrama de Adolf Hitler), Getúlio Vargas procurava acumular forças que compensassem o apoio das oligarquias, então em debandada. Foi quando se aproximou dos integralistas, não apenas através de Filinto Müller e Francisco Campos. Desde 1936, Campos retocava a totalitária Constituição, afinal imposta pelo Estado Novo. Plínio Salgado a leu em primeira mão e aprovou. Foi Campos quem elaborou o Ato Institucional que, a partir de 9 de abril de 1964, conferiu ao Executivo do Brasil poderes extraordinários para legislar sem a presença do Congresso. (Augusto, 1977b)

The reviews that discuss Integralism from the film's perspective tend to understand it as a critical comparison that ultimately reveals the maintenance of authoritarian ideologies in Brazil throughout the decades or criticize the representation of Integralism as being too cartoonish and not adequately attentive to the specificities that fascist ideologies acquired in Brazil. The expectations of film viewers are ultimately different: some will look for recurrences in history, and others will look for particular aspects in a specific historical context.

Moreover, the reviews that pursue the analysis of Nazism and Integralism in the film show concern about the historical aspects represented and their verisimilitude. They read *Aleluia, Gretchen!* as a historical film and tend to search for related historical events or processes. A parallel, not exclusionary, reading strategy is to read the film as an allegory — the reviews state that the film refers to historical processes, but allegorically, and leave it to the spectator to decipher these connections.

3.5. Allegorical readings

A common reading strategy by the film reviewers was to understand the film, or parts of it, as an allegory. The idea behind it is that the film talks about one thing but means something else that is not explicit. Sylvio Back, as the *auteur*, also gave a tip on how the film should be read: “segundo Back: o filme oscila entre a alegoria e experiências reais” (Alves, 1977). This reading strategy was particularly fashionable at the time, as explained by Ismail Xavier in ‘A alegoria histórica’ (2005), who claims that since the beginning of the 1970s, the allegory returned to the film research domain backed by the popularity of Walter Benjamin in the field, providing a new dimension to understand the cultural crisis in modernity (cf. p. 339). Xavier also points to the role of allegory as a weapon to avoid censorship and withstand authoritarian rules (cf. p. 355). This point should not be underestimated in the case of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* In this context, Dário Sousa Nascimento Neto developed the concept of “*mecanismos de desvio*” used by many filmmakers, who recognized in the historical film an opportunity for criticism during the military dictatorship:

abrange as estratégias de transvio, dissimulação, desobediência e insubmissão empreendidas pelos cineastas no balé arriscado com a aproximação dos interesses do Estado. A tese empreendida diz respeito a atuação desses cineastas que encamparam a temática histórica como veículo de liberdade de expressão, ao mesmo tempo em que engendraram sua visão particular do que viria a ser a História do Brasil. Ora aproveitando-se de documentos oficiais para impedir uma visão parcial do que era retratado, ora se valendo das conjunturas temporais, como se deu com a exaltação cívica no Sesquicentenário, ora utilizando a História como metáfora/alegoria da realidade coetânea daqueles anos de chumbo. (Nascimento Neto, 2021, p. 55)

The author also notes that this strategy did not always work, citing the case of Back’s previous film, *A Guerra dos Pelados* (1970). The film was censored due to its perceived potential for instigating uprisings in favor of land reform (cf. 2021, p. 13).

The censors cut a couple of scenes from *Aleluia, Gretchen!*, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, but it did not hinder the allegorical readings nor the critical discourse towards the regime.

The press often presented film interpretations from a perspective that discussed specific events in Brazilian history and in the present time. In many reviews, such as the one entitled ‘O rosto sempre igual da violência,’ interpretations identify the purpose of the film to be “observar o que foi aquele mundo e o que ainda existe dele entre nós” (Avellar, 1977a). It was also noted that the historical processes continue to be repeated in Brazil:

“A história se repete, se imita, não lhe parece”, diz um personagem de *Aleluia Gretchen*, neste momento porta-voz do autor. É sobre esta frase que o filme todo está construído; é seu pedestal, ou o fio tênue que segura a sua coerência. Ou então, esta outra: “Continua fecundo o ventre donde saiu esta gente.” (Bernardet, 1977)

Many allegorical interpretations centered on the Nazi theme, such as in the film description “Nazistas em alegoria” (Azeredo, 1977). The following text, with the title ‘Aleluia, Gretchen,’ describes several neo-Nazi activities in Brazil, suggesting a link between the film and these events:

Depois ainda dizem que o governo não tem mais prestígio. A repórter Emilia Silveira, do Caderno B, descobriu em Itatiaia um grupo de neo-nazistas entusiastas do atual regime brasileiro. Um deles, Adolf Krall, que até se identificou como informante do DOPS, abriu o jogo: “Simpatizo e respeito Hitler. Ele foi o homem que deu trabalho a seis milhões de desempregados. Combateu seis milhões de comunistas. Hitler, no seu tempo, foi quem pensou no povo. Também sou simpatizante do atual governo brasileiro. Custe o que custar eles têm que ficar.” (Augusto, 1978)

The article criticizes the military dictatorship by positing that those who support it are neo-Nazis. The reference to *Aleluia, Gretchen!* in the title indicates that the author has read the film as an allegory of the political context at the time. It is underlined in the article that the events described are a confirmation of the film’s argument — the permanence of Nazi and other authoritarian ideologies in the government and the country.

Similarly, the article ‘Urticária nazista atinge o Brasil?’ lists several examples of events linked to Nazism in Brazil, such as walls marked by swastikas in the city of Curitiba in Paraná, a Nazi resurgence in São Paulo, and a Nazi meeting in Itatiaia. The article stated that “‘Aleluia Gretchen’ provocou o ressurgimento do debate” (*Correio de*

Notícias, 30 October 1979), as it triggered discussions about Nazism still happening in Brazil. The important issues addressed by the film were also praised in “‘Aleluia, Gretchen,’ ‘Anauês,’ aleluias, anistias” for bringing back into conversation hidden issues in Brazilian history, such as torture during the military dictatorship (still not openly discussed at the time) or the Nazi activities, and their connections to contemporary events:

Não se falava muito de tortura em 1976. *Aleluia Gretchen* fala e mostra. Acusado de caótico, desnecessariamente hermético, Sílvio Back tem o mérito de mostrar pela primeira vez o contúbio do nazismo, da Quinta Coluna e do integralismo no Sul do Brasil.

Com todos os defeitos de narrativa, entre eles extensos e cansativos monólogos, e o mal aproveitamento da alegoria principal (Gretchen, filha de um SS, a primeira ariana nascida brasileira, morre cedo), o filme se sustenta pela polêmica. Hoje, o terror de direita contra jornais e escolas, exatamente nos Estados de colonização alemã, liquida com metáforas e atesta a permanência de uma das teses do filme: o tempo é parado, os personagens têm sempre os mesmos rostos, não envelhecem. (Mello, 1978)

The interpretation that the film speaks about dangerous events that were quietly out of sight is repeated in a quote from Orlando Fassoni’s review, published originally in the newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo* and accompanied by a statement of the positive reception by the critics in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo:

Além da força com que vasculha o passado, na tentativa de oferecer subsídios para a compreensão do presente, “Aleluia Gretchen”, esse caleidoscópio de contradições, tem a seu favor o fato de ser um dos raros trabalhos preocupados com a revisão de fatos onde poucos têm a coragem de meter o nariz. Há até quem ache que Back ao falar sinuosamente da infiltração nazi-fascista no Sul, foi mexer num vespeiro. Vespeiro ou não, o filme nos faz sentir, nessa época intensamente da infiltração nazi-fascista no Sul, foi época intensamente pobre e vazia para o cinema de idéias, que ainda existem autores preocupados em levantar questões que, sepultadas pelo tempo, prosseguem inspirando temores. (*Correio de Notícias*, 04 June 1977, p. 12)

Although there was an insistent appeal to widen the discussions around Nazism, the theme was still closely associated with German migration in southern Brazil:

Através da família Kranz, o cineasta coloca as cartas na mesa sem medo, esclarecendo com imagens e longos diálogos, o panorama da imigração alemã no decorrer de 40 anos. Sílvio Back é filho de imigrantes húngaro e alemão. Nasceu em Blumenau (Santa Catarina) e criou-se no Paraná. Ele deve ter sentido de perto o problema. Dai porque o seu filme é antes de tudo uma denúncia. Uma denúncia contundente, inclusive às próprias origens. Os diálogos são elucidadores se analisados nas entrelinhas. (Spencer, 1977d)

Noticeable in this review is the observation of formal elements in the film, namely the dialogues, as evidence of hidden meanings and exposing the accusative tone of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* Similarly, according to another review, the dialogues and

monologues suggest the allegory — the artificiality of the actors' performances carries the film between the allegorical and naturalist discourses:

E exatamente assim, como se fosse feito com páginas arrancadas de diários, o filme abre espaço para que cada um de seus personagens possa falar longamente, num monólogo, ao mesmo tempo dirigido a um outro personagem e ao espectador, longas confissões pessoais sublinhadas por um arranjo das Cavalcadas das Valquírias, de Richard Wagner, em ritmo de *rock*.

A melhor de todas estas páginas não amarelecidas do diário de imigrantes alemães é aquela em que o integralista descreve o assalto ao Palácio do Catete e depois aquela outra em que o professor discute com os amigos as diferenças entre a Alemanha e o Brasil, e ainda todo o trecho que mostra o treinamento de um equivalente da juventude hitlerista entre nós, certamente os momentos em que melhor se realiza a linguagem entre o natural e a alegoria, proposta pelo realizador. (Avellar, 1977b)

Other formal marks that induce the allegorical reading of the film were also identified in a previous text by the same author — the characters do not age, the narrative is fragmented, there is a lack of feeling of space, important events to the comprehension of the narrative are not shown, but only suggested in the dialogues (cf. Avellar, 1977a). Film theorist and critic Jean Claude Bernardet identifies additional formal elements suggesting the allegory, such as the non-naturalist staging, the characters breaking the fourth wall and positioning themselves in relation to the camera, the performance focused on enunciating the dialogues rather than using other corporal expressions, and the Germans characters conventionally speaking in Portuguese. Bernardet further lists specific scenes that are filled with allegorical and symbolic meaning:

o crioulo Repo colocando talco; o papai Noel olhando a ceia dos alemães; a câmara passando atrás da bandeira nazista quando da festa de despedida de Josef; os meninos maquiados de azul com suas metralhadoras de brinquedo; o corte de Repo embranquecido pelo talco para a suástica e Frau Lotte discursando, etc. Nem sempre essas imagens são sutis, mas elas funcionam porque adquirem o caráter de símbolos. (Bernardet, 1977)

While discussing whether a text intrinsically carries formal elements that incite allegorical reading, Xavier concludes that, although any text could be read allegorically, the more enigmatic the text, with its fragmentation and incompleteness, the more it will encourage the allegorical reading (cf. 2005, p. 353). The spectator then tries to fill in the gaps, to make sense of the puzzle. These reviews show that distinct formal elements can reinforce this fragmentation and support an allegorical reading. However, the same fragmentation could also be considered meaningless instead of inviting a new reading:

Tal qual Pasolini, que insere em seus filmes certas cenas aparentemente sem relação com as demais, Back também faz uso de alegorias em “Aleluia, Gretchen”. Em filmes de Pasolini essas cenas são complementos importantes na construção das idéias. No filme de Back, o recurso não soute um efeito ao menos razoável, sendo por demais ingênuas e sem nexos — talvez na aparente tentativa de que o filme pudesse ser catalogado como “difícil”. (Karam, 1976)

The use of the allegory itself was also criticized and perceived as ahistorical. The stylized scenes do not work as historical criticism; rather, they detach the characters from their historical context:

A detenção na superfície da realidade; a nivelção de contradições; a redução das peculiaridades dos personagens a clichês esteriotipados [*sic*]; a mecânica contraposição de imagens; redução do diálogo a mero acessório, etc, redundam no fracasso de crítica ou no caráter apologético do existente que vem predominando nas últimas produções cinematográficas as nacionais. Isto faz com que tanto as produções de “bom nível” como as mais vulgares se mostrem filhas do mesmo princípio, que é a recusa da crítica histórica em favor da alegorização. (Carrilho and Machado, 1977)

Thus, the viability of the historical film to speak about the present was questioned. Here, Bernardet understands the strategy of similarity to be superficial once it denies specific historical processes both from the past and present:

Por mais que esta atitude revele boas (ou más) intenções no sentido de chamar a atenção dos espectadores sobre aspectos do presente, ela leva a abdicar dos processos históricos específicos tanto do presente como do passado. Assim, ela estabelece aproximações e analogias bastante superficiais e pode se tornar até mais desinformativa que informativa. Penso ao contrário que é muito mais informativo e polêmico para o presente evitar tais relacionamentos superficiais e procurar a especificidade dos processos históricos da época tratada. (Bernardet, 1977)

These examples demonstrate how the same reading strategies do not automatically mean that reviewers reach the same conclusions about the quality of the film in terms of value (good/bad) or about its meaning. Reviewers have their own interpretations of the historical processes and will not necessarily agree on whether the film is truthful or not, hence whether the film is good or bad. The final scene, in particular, was often identified as an allegory, though it provoked different readings. For example, one review interpreted the picnic as the ultimate integration of “German” and “Brazilian” without a critical elaboration:

O final é alegórico. Uma total integração num típico piquenique alemão. Todos os presentes envergam trajes modernos: Dr. Aurélio, Inge, Ross, Wilhelm, Rose Marie, Werner, Eurico, Gudrun, Heike e o pastor Tannenbauer, além de Kaput, Bruckner e Mertz (de uniforme SS). O tema musical “A Cavalcada das Valquírias”, de Wagner e depois sons de uma batucada que se impõem ao festivo ambiente. A banda alemã silenciou, e o batuque tomou conta do piquenique. Futebol. Total integração. (Spencer, 1977d)

The integration was also criticized in another reading, which disagrees with the supposed idea for the scene — a signalization of forgiveness for the crimes — hence understanding it as immanent to the text and not as the reviewer's interpretation:

No final, torturados e torturadores confraternizam-se em um piquenique, jogando pelada e sambando ao som de uma batucada carnavalesca. É a hora da náusea autobiográfica de Sílvio Back. Por mais que a História do Brasil possa ser escrita em termos de categoria da *conciliação*, como quer o historiador José Honório Rodrigues; por mais que tenha havido corpo mole até a hora da prisão de um criminoso de guerra, Franz Gustav Wagner; por mais que um sociologismo vulgar rotule samba e carnaval como binômio alienante, nada autoriza que seja essa a versão do que poderia ser chamado *Anistia, Gretchen*. (Mello, 1978)

Another interpretation of the scene was that it presented the controversial idea that certain popular cultures supported the right wing:

Vista em conjunto a cena parece sugerir que certas formas de cultura popular, conscientemente ou não, pouco importa, se tornaram cúmplices das idéias de direita, ajudaram a manter jovem o corpo político violento, ajudaram a história a se imitar, a se repetir. (Avellar, 1977a)

Ultimately, understanding the scene allegorically and as a provocation invites the reader to debate. In general, these reviews indicate a film with an open narrative that invites second readings yet not always acknowledging the possible multiple interpretations, innocently believing that the meaning is immanent to the text. This was particularly problematic in *Aleluia, Gretchen!*'s case since there was a heated debate about the film's meaning and what it represents. Spectators often had very intense reactions, making different determinate interpretations, which will be dealt with in the next section.

3.6. Controversies in the reception — a damned film

O filme não fará críticas a coisa alguma. Antes, pretende divertir o público com suas próprias idiossincrasias, seu comportamento, seu modo de pensar, seus tabus. Ninguém sairá ferido do filme, não tomará consciência de nada, e sairá alegre do cinema. Todo o tom de tratamento de *Aleluia Gretchen* será o de tragicomédia. (Alencar, 1975)

Unlike the calm reception foreseen by Sylvio Back in the above quote published by Alencar one year before *Aleluia, Gretchen!*'s release, the film generated heated discussion, diverse interpretations, and turbulent reception at festivals. Whether the film approach changed since Back's remark, or whether he always meant it ironically, is unclear. The fact is, the film was known for its polemics: “a inquietante experiência de

Sílvio Back *Aleluia Gretchen*” (Farias, 1976); “mal-bem falado filme” (*Diário do Paraná*, 23 January 1977, p. Mulher Moderna - 8); “O golfinho de ouro, quem diria, foi dado a um filme maldito” (Alencar, 1978); “A película está fadada ao sucesso, tanto em São Paulo como no Rio. A razão foi, é claro, o Festival de Gramados, e os boicotes que a fita, andou levando” (Franciosi, 1977); “‘Aleluia Gretchen’, de Sílvio Back, vem provocando os mais entusiasmados comentários” (Spencer, 1976c).

Many spectators interpreted the film as a sober criticism of Nazism or the military dictatorship, but this was not always the case. In an interview with *Opinião*, Back summarizes the controversial interpretations — the film was anti-Germanic, antisemitic, supportive of Nazism, Fascist, and reactionary, and the representations of the Fifth Column and Integralist activities were an invention (cf. 01 April 1977, pp. 20-21). Ultimately, the apparent contradictory interpretations of the same film reveal a context of reception in which the struggles for identity, representation, and historical and political meanings are still in dispute. The wounds of (past) crimes continue to be wide open, inviting different readings of the film for victims and perpetrators who might have wanted to forget. Underlying the responses is also the question of what German migrants and their descendants in the south want to associate with their migration history in Brazil.

A particular case reveals that the disputes over the meanings of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* were not only about the portrayal of Germans, Nazism, or Fascism and its ideological position towards them but also about Repo, who was interpreted as a representative of Black people in Brazil:³⁰

Esse esquematismo [caricato] chega ao extremo da expressão grotesca na cena em que Repo, o negro criado da família Kranz, aparece vestido de Papai-Noel a esfregar freneticamente talco na pele. Trata-se da forma “sutil” encontrada por Sílvio Back de “costurar” no filme o processo de manipulação do negro brasileiro. (Carrilho and Machado, 1977)

In a letter from a reader published in *Jornal do Brasil*, the film is interpreted as deeply racist towards Black people:

³⁰ Looking at Repo’s reception, Magalhães observes that the leftists in the 1970s were outraged with his representation, alongside that of Frau Minka as a working-class woman without revolutionary consciousness (cf. Magalhães, 2001, p. 36).

Aleluia, Gretchen, filme brasileiro em estréia, é um insulto racista. Silvio Back, o realizador, consegue em sua intelecto-pornô o que o colonialismo, o racismo e o analfabetismo não conseguiram em momento nenhum da História: anular a consciência do negro.

O realizador, em seu desabafo aristocrata, realça, com muita mágoa, a subserviência do negro aos padrões alemães, terminando por cumpliciar, em alto relevo, nazistas e sambistas, num hipotético IV Reich. Da ficção ao surrealismo, o realizador expressa todo o seu desprezo pelo negro, cerne do nosso povo trabalhador. (Castro, 1977)

Reading the film as racist brings into the conversation the boundaries of representations that intend to make a criticism and end up repeating the violent discourse it intended to criticize. This is very problematic around the general reception of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* since the Nazi representation is particularly disputed as a criticism or “nostalgia.” The divergent interpretations are mostly exposed in the press in the context of the film’s screening at two Brazilian film festivals, which will be analyzed next.

3.6.1. Brasília and Gramado film festivals: a Nazi film?

The event that marked the start of *Aleluia, Gretchen!*’s reception journey was the IX Festival de Brasília do Cinema Brasileiro in 1976, where the big winner was *Xica da Silva* (Cacá Diegues, 1976). Back’s film did not receive any prizes, which newspapers at the time blamed on filmmaker Alberto Cavalcanti, who was the jury president:

Embora “Xica da Silva”, obra que reuniu o maior número de distinções -melhor filme, melhor diretor, melhor atriz -tenha sido o mais aplaudido, chegou a receber algumas vaias quando ficou claro que “Aleluia Gretchen” não receberia um prêmio sequer. Furioso o cineasta Alberto Cavalcanti, Presidente do júri, apontando como o principal responsável de “Aleluia...” passar em branco pela premiação, olhava para o lado da platéia de onde vinham as reclamações. Cavalcanti, 80 anos, havia prometido solenemente a seus companheiros que provocaria um escândalo caso “Aleluia...” recebesse algum prêmio. “Trata-se de uma nostalgia do nazifascismo” alegou. Foi este um dos filmes mais controvertidos do Festival, no debate posterior à exibição gerou apaixonadas polêmicas. (*Correio Braziliense*, 31 July 1977, p. Segundo Caderno - 11)

Cavalcanti is a well-known film personality worldwide. He started in the silent film era, participated in French Impressionist Cinema, then revolutionized the documentary genre with John Grierson in the United Kingdom. Cavalcanti later worked at Ealing Studios during the Second World War, where he started by directing the propaganda film *Yellow Caesar* (1941) against Mussolini, and eventually worked in Brazil as a general producer at Vera Cruz (cf. Paranaguá, 2012, pp. 138-139). To Cavalcanti, *Aleluia, Gretchen!* was a Nazi-fascist “nostalgia.” This word, emblematic in his interpretation, appeared in the research sample to describe the picnic scene, possibly

in the official press release, as shown in chapter 3.2.: “Ao final da festa, quase todos eles são repentinamente tomados por uma eufórica nostalgia ao som de Wagner em ritmo de rock, contrapondo-se a uma batucada carnavalesca” (Spencer, 1976b). Cavalcanti interpreted nostalgia emanating from the film and its message, which is a justifiable view given the many characters longing for Germany and defending Nazism. Furthermore, in the final scene, when both themes are already situated in the past, the characters reunite and celebrate using “typically German” signs such as the picnic and the beer, and the SS uniforms are used as carnival costumes. According to the film synopsis, this is the location of nostalgia — but while many spectators understood this nostalgia as a criticism, Cavalcanti and others that saw the film as a defense of Nazism possibly understood it as a longing for the ideology and Third Reich.

Andrew Higson, Professor of Film and Television at the University of York, in ‘Nostalgia is not what it used to be: heritage films, nostalgia websites and contemporary consumers’ (2014), briefly explores the different meanings of the concept of “nostalgia” throughout the last centuries. He observes how it cannot be resumed by a feeling but that it is a discursive construct that informs a connection with a past, a home, or a community (cf. p. 120). The modern version is related to memory, although it can be an imagined memory. Thus, nostalgia is associated with a past, with its settings, people, and values, accompanied by a longing to return. In this sense, the present is a time and place that lacks something from an idealized and whole past (Higson, 2014, pp. 123-124). Drawing on Fred Davis (cf. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, 1979, p. 82), Higson also identifies formal elements that, by convention, inform the spectator of nostalgia: echo and reverberation in the sound and soft focus or over-exposed flashbacks in the cinematography (cf. p. 129). Although these elements do not appear in the film, Cavalcanti still thought the message was a longing for Nazism and not a criticism. Nevertheless, one has to consider Cavalcanti’s work on anti-Nazi film propaganda in Europe and his different expectations about an anti-Nazi film.

The controversies can also be understood through the expectations created by other works that intend to criticize Nazism — they are heavily based on melodramatic narrative structures that clearly define good and evil. They started to appear during the war as propaganda for the Allies and continued to set the pace for these productions.

Aleluia, Gretchen!, on the other hand, has a fragmented aesthetic, refraining from melodrama, and ends up showing perpetrators and sympathizers happily enjoying the carnival. The picnic scene often left the reviewers baffled about the contradictory meanings. However, one of the film morals intended by Back was to show how the thought patterns persisted over time, so the criminals are not punished and are apparently integrated into society. The criticism should come from the audience, as the film shows not what ideally should have happened but what, at least at the symbolic level, happened.

Film and cultural historian Sabine Hake argues in *Screen Nazis* (2012) that when the film focuses on the Nazis, and there are no tangible non-Nazi heroes, the spectator still recreates the absent antagonistic structures (cf. p. 16). In *Aleluia, Gretchen!* this was not always the case. Back created a narrative that blurred the lines of “us-versus-them.” The audience is part of the uncomfortable “them” epitomized in the film slogan “Você está neste filme” (*Jornal do Brasil*, 11 April 1977, p. Caderno B - 8).

In general, the sample suggests that Cavalcanti’s opinion was insufficient to undermine the reception of the film. Instead, it contributed to the polemics and possibly to the fame of the film and the understanding that it is “damned.” Ultimately, it was not Cavalcanti’s interpretation that stood the test of time:

Sílvia Back fez um *Aleluia, Gretchen* perturbador. Dizem que o filme só não ganhou o grande prêmio, porque o histórico Alberto Cavalcanti achou o filme fascista. A crítica de Sílvia ao integralismo e à formação de uma comunidade nazista no país só seria compreendida em outros festivais e com sua entrada no circuito comercial. (Araújo, 1979)

Representative of this turn was “O Cinema Antifascista,” focused on films with anti-fascist themes and organized in August 1978 by the Cinemateca do Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro with *Aleluia, Gretchen!* on the program (cf. *Jornal do Brasil*, 20 August 1978). The film, however, continued to get a controversial reception even after Brasília. The next hurdle was the V Festival de Cinema de Gramado in 1977, where José Maria Santos won best supporting actor and José Medeiros best cinematography. Festival coverage and commentary expose how the audience interpreted the film as both for and against Nazism:

A apresentação do longa-metragem *Aleluia, Gretchen*, de Sílvia Back, na primeira noite do V Festival de Cinema Brasileiro de Gramado, segunda-feira, movimentou, na manhã de ontem,

num debate entre o cineasta, artistas do filme, críticos e público em geral, que questionaram se o diretor paranaense fez ou não a defesa do nazismo, pregando a vinda do IV Reich.

Classificando seu filme como “transparente e linear”, Silvio Back afirmou que “ele comporta vários níveis de leitura, mas se alguém viu a defesa do nazismo esse alguém está sonhando”. (*Jornal do Brasil*, 19 January 1977, p. 1º Caderno - 26)

The director’s point of view about *Aleluia, Gretchen!* as “transparent” is clearly far from what was happening at the time. Back’s outrage that spectators interpreted the film opposite to what he intended reveals that his intention was not to play with ambivalence, meaning that the film, in theory, should not be read as a defense of Nazism. But, of course, what a director wants and sets out to accomplish can be very different from what the audience perceives. Nonetheless, the idea that the film does not denounce harshly enough appears in the sample as a reason why it was interpreted in favor of Nazism:

Esse filme, que recebeu numerosos prêmios, deu margem a muita polêmica ainda mais pelo fato de o seu diretor ter mostrado afinidades entre o “sigma” dos integralistas com a suástica dos nazistas. Há também quem tenha achado que o filme não atingiu propósitos de denúncia e desmascaramento, o que levou alguns críticos ao exagero de afirmarem ter existido até uma aura de simpatia pelo nazismo, o que embora um contra-senso dá bem a medida de como tais discussões saem da reflexão racional. (*Correio de Notícias*, 30 October 1979)

Interestingly, several texts looked at the reception among German spectators in the south to expand on the divided opinions about the film, but also demonstrating interest in the spectators’ reactions that theoretically connect to the film themes. In one of the shooting locations, the film was also not welcomed: “Parece que o filme de Back, ‘Aleluia Gretchen’, não teve boa repercussão em Blumenau, [*sic*] Ele desconhece o motivo” (*Diário do Paraná*, 31 October 1976, p. Mulher moderna - 8). Interestingly, the exhibition planned to focus on southern Brazil due to the high numbers of German migrations in the region (cf. *Diário da tarde*, 17 May 1976, p. 4; *Jornal do Brasil*, 25 October 1976). Back gives his opinion on this:

Os alemães cultos (alguns chegaram a ler o roteiro) gostam muito do filme. A colônia alemã, especialmente de Curitiba (mais de 35 mil pessoas viram o filme), de um modo geral, não gostou do filme, sem dar muitos detalhes. Mas foi assistir. Aham alguns que não vale a pena mexer nesse assunto, hoje, quarenta anos depois. (*Opinião*, 01 April 1977, p. 21)

Considering the hypothesis of Back, *Aleluia, Gretchen!* was distressing to the German immigrants, who were uncomfortable with the represented themes. Another hypothesis, then, is that the German communities did not appreciate the film due to the general association of German migration and Nazism in Brazil. It was marketed as a

film “about German migration in Brazil,” and then all that was commented on was Nazism. Nevertheless, the assertions about *Aleluia, Gretchen!*’s reception in Curitiba, Blumenau, and German communities indicate differences in the reception according to geographic location and ethnic background. Ultimately, they reveal several newspapers’ attempts to locate the zones of controversy and see if the themes reverberated in the communities they supposedly represented.

Another text mentions the Italian communities in the South as also very critical towards the film: “recebendo fortes críticas das colônias alemães e italianas no Sul do país” (Neto, 1977). As the film does not represent Italian immigrants or descendants, one hypothesis for this reception is that Italian settlements resented the representation of Integralism. Unfortunately, the evidence of the film’s reception in Italian communities is extremely vague and lacks further evidence in the sample. It also seems simplistic to justify the reception of the film through Italian or German communities by ethnicity. It is a pitfall to generalize the relation of Italian migrants and descendants with Fascism and German migrants and descendants with Nazism.

Among the German audience in the south, there was also supposedly a difference of opinion between the elderly and the young — “causou polêmica quando apresentado em Curitiba. Principalmente entre as pessoas mais idosas da colônia alemã” (Craveiro, 1977), “O filme dividiu a colônia alemã de Curitiba: os mais velhos ficaram irritados e os jovens aprovaram” (Spencer, 1977a). This was observed in the Gramado Festival as well:

Pela primeira vez um filme levanta uma das facetas obscuras da nossa história (integralismo ou quinta-colunismo). É também um filme sobre a intolerância. Pela primeira vez um filme brasileiro toca num assunto perturbador (organização do nazismo no Sul do país) e que muitos (remanescentes talvez) preferiam que não fosse tocado. Por exemplo no Festival de Gramado, janeiro de 1977, onde a comunidade alemã é ainda muito forte, presa a seus costumes, quando o filme estava sendo projetado muitos anciões deixaram a sala. Não por não gostar do filme, mas por querer ver determinadas cenas que por razões óbvias não estavam interessados em que elas fossem reconstituídas. A juventude, ao contrário, o aplaudiu. (F. A. dos Santos, 1978)

The author suggests that older people who left the film exhibition did not want to see the cinematification of the organizing of Nazism in southern Brazil. The review justified this reception by asserting common assumptions prevalent during the New State and explored in Chapter 2.4. Another reason could be that many might have been

part of it earlier. Unlike the elderly generation, the youth enjoyed the film, according to Back:

A colônia alemã se dividiu, desencadeando uma polêmica em torno do filme. Os mais idosos ficaram irritados, pois não queriam lembrar determinados episódios. Eu sei que mexi num vespeiro, a Quinta Coluna, o romance entre integralistas e nazistas. Mas o público jovem gostou demais, o que foi uma grande surpresa para mim. (*A Luta Democrática*, 25 February 1977, p. 6)

Sylvio Back also talks about the reception experience of a young woman who realized after the film that there had been fascism in her family (cf. *Opinião*, 01 April 1977, p. 21). These texts suggest that the younger audience was thrilled with the film, as it recognized and criticized the lines of thought that remained in many families after the war. What can also be considered here to understand the response of older people to the film is not only the assumption that many in the past could have had sympathies for Nazism but also that they were possibly affected by the nationalization campaign and the arbitrary persecutions during the New State, which supposed an equation between “German” and “Nazism,” and did not want to see this relation again. Nevertheless, the texts often suggest that the rejection is due to the film’s criticism of Nazism or “German” values:

“Aleluia Gretchen” é candidato também a provocar muita polêmica em Gramado, uma cidade cuja população é constituída basicamente de alemães e de sólida tradição, presos, pelo menos culturalmente, a determinados valores germânico-ideológicos que o filme procura mostrar sob um ângulo não muito reverente.

Tanto é que uma parcela da platéia, constituída de alemães mais idosos, abandonou o cinema aos primeiros minutos da exibição da fita. Indignação? Eis uma questão que poderia muito bem ser debatida nos encontros entre o público e os realizadores, marcados durante o Festival. No entanto, a platéia recebeu o filme de Silvio com calorosos aplausos. (F. A. dos Santos, 1977b)

The author suggests that the older audience left the screening because they were outraged with the film, although the reason is open to discussion. Again, the press commented on the reception of a geographical and ethnic group. It is somewhat biased, stating that Gramado is basically inhabited by Germans, which is a false assumption since the city also has a strong Italian and Portuguese migrant background.³¹ Still, such assumptions consciously drive the reader’s attention to a connection between the film theme with German migration.

³¹ For further discussion about Gramado and its association with German immigration, see Chapter 5.5.

It is possible to explore the reasons for such diverse interpretations based on clues from other reviews. Some texts, for example, identify formal elements that leave interpretations open, such as the film editing, which was considered responsible for the disconnect between the scenes and made the links between events unclear. Therefore, there was not a clear comprehension of a denunciation of the Kranz:

A primeira característica relevante em *Aleluia Gretchen* [sic] é a *ausência de uma unidade dramática* que estabeleça uma unidade casual entre a totalidade das sequências do filme. Os cortes abruptos, onde aparecem as milícias infantis ou a juventude hitlerista, ao contrário de enriquecer as relações contraditórias entre direcionamento histórico e destinos individuais, na sua unidade (que é dialética por excelência), aparecem como enxertos não vingados do processo da narrativa, daí sua artificialidade. A sucessão de quadros não articulados excluem qualquer possibilidade de configurar um processo de contradições. (Carrilho and Machado, 1977)

An impression of triviality in a particular scene was also identified in another review:

E, uma cena que fala de nazismo, integralismo e getulismo, que tinha tudo para ser interessante e tornar-se um dos pontos altos do filme, aprofundando-o e mostrando o clima político da época, perde-se devido à futilidade com que é tratada. (Karam, 1976)

The scene (00:53:33-01:04:14) was filmed as a casual conversation between Dr. Aurélio, Oskar, and Ross, without a musical score that clearly marked the author's intentions or an external character that condemned the speeches. Although perhaps it was intended to show how fascist ideas were ordinarily traveling at the time, the reviewer considered the topic mishandled. The reviewer writes further: "O filme já começa mal. Os diálogos iniciais soam falsos, forjados para situar o espectador na história" (Karam, 1976). Instead of being thought of as allegorical, the artificiality of the dialogue was considered fake.

Joanne Pettitt, lecturer in comparative literature at the University of Kent and member of the executive board of the European Association for Holocaust Studies, in *Perpetrators in Holocaust Narratives: Encountering the Nazi Beast* (2017) examines examples in the literature of Holocaust narratives through the perpetrators' point of view. Pettitt identifies a wave of this type of fiction in the 1970s, mostly centered around Hitler (cf. p. 1). The author identifies several formal and thematic elements contributing to a reader response that criticizes the atrocities and the perpetrators, constantly jeopardizing a possible identification and empathy with them, and favoring a reflective interaction. *Aleluia, Gretchen!* shares many of the strategies in these novels.

For example, the frequent use of metafiction throws the readers/spectators out of their immersion and forces them to renegotiate their thoughts and feelings toward what they see (cf. pp. 53 and 69). As seen, the reviews identify the break of the fourth wall and the artificiality and theatricality of the characters.

Further, Pettitt observes this type of fiction's complexity, giving perpetrators a voice to justify the unjustifiable. However, their explanations are constantly undermined, and the texts work towards demystifying the abstract "evil" associated with Nazism. The texts position the perpetrators as human beings, holding them accountable for their actions (cf. pp. 3-4 and 30). While Pettitt also identifies how this literature explores the "why" and the "how" (cf. p. 15), in *Aleluia, Gretchen!* the perpetrators refrain from any demonstration of regret or guilt and do not attempt to justify themselves from an individual perspective.

Meanwhile, the characters are dubious and hard to identify with. Even Professor Ross, who is against Nazism, does not fight it and is represented as a coward and conformist. The one that comes closest to generating sympathy is Heike. However, the reviewers, as shown, do not really have sympathy for her. Rather, they see her narrative as a metaphor for Nazism's cruelties and imperialism. She is merely an allegory and still considered "one of them." It is food for thought that in the reviews, the resistance to Nazism is Eurico and Professor Ross. Heike resisted staying in Germany to raise Gretchen there, Frau Lotte's wish. In the Christmas dinner scene (00:52:28-00:58:33), Heike, Eurico, and Professor Ross do not join Frau Lotte's Nazi toast to Joseph and Werner, now Nazi soldiers (Inge does not join after seeing that Ross disapproves of it).

Hake also notices that in the cinematic representations, non-Nazis are trustworthy characters, filled with love and compassion, and the Nazis, in general, are the absolute enemy, the personification of evil. Therefore, they are accompanied by aesthetics that favors the repulse, the grotesque (cf. 2012, pp. 11-16):

In the diegesis, the Nazis' primary role is to personify the monopoly of violence and the power over life and death associated with the totalitarian state, to perform the suspension of the rule of law and its replacement by total surveillance, and to embody the elimination of all boundaries separating private from public life. Confirming their status as absolute enemies, they remain identified with a complete lack of emotion — to be precise, the power to affect (i.e., someone or something) but not to be affected. All their attention is focused on the expansion and

preservation of power; all their desires are channeled into its rituals and hierarchies. (Hake, 2012, p. 21)

Pettitt identifies a strategy of elaborating on the perversion and corruption of sex, religion, and cultural references by the perpetrators. It was used to demonstrate how Nazism also disrupted them and that they are incompatible with the readers' own values (cf. 2017, pp. 33 and 50). Regarding *Aleluia, Gretchen!*, sex is the one that stands out most due to the crimes committed against Heike, which is depicted even on the film poster. According to Pettitt, sex and power are correlated in the perpetrator literature, and rape is a deviant behavior corresponding to political abnormality (cf. Pettitt, 2017, pp. 40-41).

Aleluia, Gretchen! has enough formal elements that, in theory, should hinder the identification with the Nazi characters. However, different expectations for the film and its representations contributed to the diverse interpretations. What can be seen is that the press was interested in pointing out these divergences and often looked for them among the German spectators in Brazil.

3.6.2. In and out of Berlinale

The 26° Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) in 1976 resulted in many newspaper articles about *Aleluia, Gretchen!*, where the conversation was about the film being accepted to the festival and then its unexplained exclusion. At first, many texts reported, sometimes along positive notes, about the film being chosen by Embrafilme to represent Brazil in Berlin:

Um seleto grupo de convidados especiais e jornalistas — lá estavam os melhores especialistas em cinema da cidade — assistiu com entusiasmo, ontem, no Cine Lido, uma exibição “privê” do filme “Aleluia, Gretchen”, de Silvio Back, que vai representar o Brasil no próximo Festival Cinematográfico de Berlim. A opinião de todos foi unânime ao comentar a alta qualidade profissional do filme, apontado por alguns, ao fim da sessão, como um dos melhores exemplares do cinema brasileiro nos últimos anos. (*Diário do Paraná*, 16 May 1976, p. 2)

Newspapers in May 1976 reported that *A Bagaceira* (Paulo Thiago, 1976) was invited by the Festival to compete alongside *Aleluia, Gretchen!* and that *Fogo Morto* (Marcos Freire, 1976) was invited to the “Forum” section of the Festival (cf. *Jornal do Brasil*, 04 May 1976, p. Caderno B - 1; *A Luta Democrática*, 07 May 1976, p. 3; Spencer, 1976a). And then something went wrong — on 27 June 1976, *Diário do Paraná* wrote ‘Aleluia Gretchen vetado em Berlim’ (cf. p. 1° Caderno - 12). According

to the article, the Festival promoters boycotted the film, and Back was informed that *Fogo Morto* would be the new candidate for the Golden Bear. Back went to Embrafilme in Rio de Janeiro to receive an explanation and was told that *Iracema* (Jorge Bodanzky and Orlando Senna, 1974) substituted *Fogo Morto* and was now the Brazilian film in the competition. Back gave two hypotheses for *Aleluia, Gretchen!*'s dismissal, although he remained unconvinced by them: Alfred Bauer,³² who oversaw the Berlinale from its beginning in 1951 until 1976, had said in Cannes that the film's exhibition in Berlin would be dangerous due to the Nazism discussion surrounding it. The other assumption was that the producers of *Fogo Morto* had schemed the change.

Two days later, *Jornal do Brasil* published the article 'Confusão em Berlim' (29 June 1976, p. Caderno B - 3). The situation was even more confusing: while *Aleluia, Gretchen!* was officially chosen by Embrafilme to represent Brazil, the Festival direction invited concurrently and individually *Fogo Morto* and *A Bagaceira* into the competition. Adding to the plot, Orlando Senna confirmed that he had personally received an invitation from Bauer for *Iracema* to represent Brazil in the competition — as the only Brazilian film.

The official reason for *Aleluia, Gretchen!*'s rejection remained unknown, but other texts signaled that it was political: "O filme foi selecionado para o Festival de Cinema de Berlim e lá chegando foi afastado da competição por problemas políticos, o filme agredia e a comissão simplesmente afastou o filme de Silvio Back sem dar a menor explicação" (Araújo, 1976). Another article mentioned that the film "foi recusado por motivos aparentemente políticos" (Feijó Junior, 1976b). Ultimately, *Aleluia, Gretchen!* still got the ticket to Berlin, but to be solely presented in the film

³² In 2020, the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History delivered a preliminary study edited by PD Dr. Tobias Hof about Alfred Bauer. Berlinale commissioned it after allegations concerning Bauer's significant role in the Reichsfilmintendanz (Reich Film Office) during the Nazi years. Hof writes in the summary of the study that Bauer was aware of his role in the Office as well as its importance towards the stabilization and legitimation of the regime, although later, during denazification, he promoted himself as an active regime opposer (cf. 2021, pp. 2-3). In 2022, the Leibniz Institute published a summary of the study written by Dr. Wolf-Rüdiger Knoll and Dr. Andreas Malycha — it concludes that the Berlinale was developed and established by key actors, which indeed included former supporters of the Nazi regime, but also its long-time opposers, and representatives of American and British occupying powers. Furthermore, Bauer was found to be heavily involved and have great power in the decision-making about the film selection. However, it is still unclear which aesthetic elements he considered (cf. 2022, pp. 16-17). These revelations can be taken into consideration to understand the Berlinale controversies, although connections between Bauer and *Aleluia, Gretchen!* are still scarce and further research is required.

market. It is interesting, however, that the texts imply a supposed rejection of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* in Berlin because of its content, fueling even more the idea of a damned film.

3.7. Partial conclusion

This chapter examined the reception of the film *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (1976), in which the violence of the “Other-German” is in the foreground of the interpretations. The Kranz family was interpreted as building their otherness through the violent ideology they brought with them from Germany. At the same time, it echoes Brazilian Integralism and the military dictatorship, revealing an “Other-Brazilian.”

Old associations regarding “German” in Brazil remained current at the film’s release. In *Aleluia, Gretchen!*’s reception, the German migration and culture were equated with Nazism, mainly because the film was promoted as “about German migration in Brazil.” Nevertheless, many reviews and much commentary were about Nazism, which alludes to the period of the Second World War in Brazil, during which “German” was practically equivalent to Nazism. There was no elaboration on other times of migration or non-Nazi German migrants. Moreover, the commentary about the rejection of Brazil, the difficulty of adaptation, and distance from “Brazilian” culture are master narratives remnant of the “German peril” anxiety and the non-assimilation accusations dating back to the 19th century, which underline the alterity to “Brazilian.”

It was observed how the film was often complimented for revealing a still unseen and dramatized “Other-Brazil” — one with “German” migration history. Authorship proved, then, to be a relevant reading strategy once Sylvio Back’s experience as a second-generation German migrant gave him an unofficial authority on the theme, and his interpretation of “German” was usually not criticized. Further, historical comparison and allegorical readings were used as strategies to investigate the meaning of the film and to discuss the persistence of authoritarian ideologies in Brazil, the presence of the Nazi Party and its support in the country, the AIB, and how they were represented in the film, as well as to criticize the military dictatorship.

It was imperative to analyze the film's whole range of press material, not only press reviews. Festival and exhibition coverage provided more insight into the reception of *Aleluia, Gretchen!*, especially regarding the interpretations of the film being pro-Nazi or criticism of the ideology. *Aleluia, Gretchen!* has enough formal elements that theoretically should hinder identification with the Nazi characters. However, the different expectations about the film and how it represented the German migration and Nazis contributed to the diverse interpretations.

4. *Os Mucker* (1978) — describing the rituals of the Other

4.1. Film and press sample overview

Os Mucker (Jorge Bodanzky and Wolf Gauer, 1978)³³ fictionally portrays the tragedy in southern Brazil in the 1870s, the time of the *Segundo Reinado*. It involved the social-religious movement³⁴ called Mucker (an elaborated discussion of the term follows in Chapter 4.3.1.), which gathered German migrants and descendants and was centered around Jacobina, who supposedly incorporated divine manifestations. The film was a co-production with Germany, where it received the title *Jakobine*, and was distributed in Brazil by Embrafilme.³⁵ Some of the film highlights are the integration of Mucker descendants and the local population in the production and the dialogues in the Hunsrückisch dialect.

The film focuses on the escalation of the conflict that culminated in the massacre of the Mucker, showing the attempts of the authorities and neighbors to stop and defame the movement, and the attempts of the Mucker to protect themselves. The film also illuminates the Muckers' habits and practices until the final violent conflicts. The film is based on the historical events, as highlighted by the opening scene:

Cinquenta anos depois da chegada dos primeiros emigrantes - em torno de 1874 - passaram-se determinados fatos que, neste filme, serão apresentados pelos próprios descendentes, na região dos acontecimentos históricos e na língua deles, conservada até hoje. (*Os Mucker*, 1978, 00:01:08-00:01:30)

Several scenes show religious sessions in which the end of the world and other biblical interpretations are preached to devoted listeners. After the conflict with the authorities culminates in fire and slaughter, Jacobina and other Mucker members who were camped out elsewhere commit suicide.

At the time, various interpretations of the film were published in the press. Some were concerned with historical revisionism and others articulated interpretations only

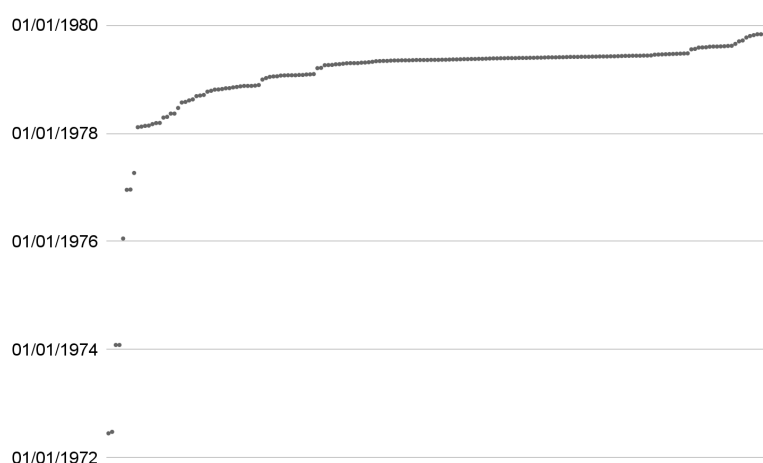
³³ A shorter and developing version of this chapter was presented at the X Encontro Anual da AIM in May 2021 and published at the *Atas do X Encontro Anual da AIM* (2022) with the title 'Entre filme, textos e contextos: um estudo de recepção sobre *Os Mucker* (Jorge Bodanzky e Wolf Gauer, 1978).'

³⁴ The term denomination was attributed by Dickie, who supports herself in Lanternari (1962 and 1974) and Barabas (1984), since the term is not as narrow as "messianism" and offers more possibilities to understand the complexities of the group (cf. Dickie, 1996, p. 1).

³⁵ Data was gathered from the IMDb website and the database from the Cinemateca Brasileira (Accessed: 08 February 2020).

about the historical Mucker, not their cinematic representation. One particular interpretation by Glauber Rocha, who believed that the film was extremely right-wing, is analyzed here for its divergence from the rest of the press sample. The film's content and narration of marginalized stories competed with other external factors during the reception. Even though the film does not directly address political contexts, the press reception made diverse connections with the military dictatorship and the messianic episode of Canudos. It also revealed the expectations about German migrants in Brazil. In short, the chapter includes an analysis of authorship reading strategies, a brief historical exploration of the Mucker followed by how they were described and interpreted in the press, the perceived "German" references, revisionist considerations inspired by the film, and lastly, Glauber Rocha's interpretation.

The search for "mucker" in the Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira database yielded 185 results in 25 periodicals between 1970 and 1979.³⁶ According to the graphic below, the amount of "mucker" entries became visibly more frequent after 1978, during the time of the film's release:



Graphic 1: The number of entries related to Mucker spread over time in the period 1970-1979

³⁶ The periodicals are: *A Luta Democrática* (RJ); *Ciência e Cultura* (SP); *Correio Braziliense* (DF); *Correio de Notícias* (PR); *Diário da Manhã* (MG); *Diário da Noite* (SP); *Diário da Tarde* (PR); *Diário de Pernambuco* (PE); *Diário do Paraná* (PR); *Jornal de Caxias* (RS); *Jornal do Brasil* (RJ); *Jornal do Commercio* (AM); *Jornal do Commercio* (RJ); *Jornal dos Sports* (RJ); *Lavoura e Comércio* (MG); *Manchete* (RJ); *Mensário do Arquivo Nacional* (RJ); *Movimento* (RJ); *Suplemento literário - O Estado de S. Paulo* (SP); *O Fluminense* (RJ); *O Pasquim* (RJ); *O Pioneiro* (RS); *Opinião* (RJ); *Realidade* (SP); *Tribuna da Imprensa* (RJ). The texts were gathered from the Hemeroteca between 06 May 2020 and 27 February 2021.

The sample showed results not only about the film, but also about Janaína Amado's book *Conflito social no Brasil*, also published in 1978. A few texts even mentioned both works (cf. *O Pasquim*, 11 August 78, p. 23; Chagas, 1979; Bonfim, 1979). Thus, the film and the book contributed to the space given to the Muckers in the press in the late 1970s.

Most of the entries were film-related³⁷ — 153 of them, including reviews; film release announcements; festivals coverage, mostly from the Festival de Gramado and II Mostra Internacional de Cinema do MASP (Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand); interviews with Bodanzky and Gauer; film showtimes in local movie theaters, accompanied by synopses; making-of coverage; general texts about Brazilian cinema; and texts related to other audiovisual works quoting *Os Mucker* as a reference. Twenty entries mentioned and reviewed the book, nine entries mentioned the historical Mucker event (with no references to the book or film), and there were only three false positives.

4.2. Authorship readings: Jorge Bodanzky, Wolf Gauer, and the *documentário-ficção* style

Jorge Bodanzky (1942-) was born in São Paulo, the son of Austrian parents, who were Jewish and anarchists. They migrated to Brazil in 1937, fleeing on the brink of Austria's takeover by the Nazis (cf. Mattos, 2006, p. 29). He is an accomplished cinematographer and documentarist, best known for his works in the Amazonas. For example, the award-winning film *Iracema - Uma Transa Amazônica* (1974), co-directed with Orlando Senna. During the 1970s, Bodanzky delivered a series of reportages, documentaries, and short documentaries to German television and organizations, such as the Institut für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht (FWU).

Wolf Gauer (1941-), born in Heidelberg, Germany, met Bodanzky in Munich while still a student. They co-founded the production company Stop Film and the sound studio Stop Som in 1971. Their collaboration was marked by using 16 mm film with

³⁷ I counted the entries with both film and book references as film-related when they focused mostly on the films.

direct sound and playful work that stretched the boundaries of documentary and fiction (cf. Mattos, 2006, p. 151; Ramos, 2012, p. 83). Some of their films before the *Mucker* also dealt with migration — *Deutsche Auswanderer auf Jamaika* (1974) — and with connections between Germany and Brazil — *Industriearbeiter in Deutschland - Industriearbeiter in Brasilien* (1974).

The directors featured in a few pictures included in *Mucker* press texts. For instance, a portrait of Bodanzky (cf. *Manchete*, 11 February 1978, p. 118) carrying a camera in his hand among the production; a picture of Bodanzky talking alongside a pensive Gauer during an interview (cf. Chagas, 1979); a making-of scene including Bodanzky and Gauer in action (cf. Campos, 1978). Bodanzky and Gauer were painted as the *auteurs* responsible for the film.

The filmmakers provided insights into the production, namely how they came into contact with the Mucker — through reading a newspaper article and then visiting the site where they lived, respectively — and why they decided to film the event (cf. Barbara, 1979; Pararraios, 1979b). These testimonials help to position Bodanzky and Gauer as the authors of the *Mucker* — they make the story meaningful and give social relevance to their product. Beyond advertising the film, they also hint at how they wish the audience to understand their work:

Além de encontrarmos a possibilidade de filmar a história “de dentro para fora”, vimos a chance de tocar o dedo numa ferida importante para a formação cultural do Brasil, a imigração. O imigrante é um dado de nossa cultura e a maneira pela qual ela foi feita e a sutileza com que idéias e ações estranhas ao sistema foram filtradas, tudo isso nos interessa para entender o Brasil. Os documentos que existiam sobre este episódio, com raras exceções, davam interpretações simplórias e bastou uma ida ao local para constatar outras razões do massacre. (Barbara, 1979)

Similar to Back’s testimonials, there is an urgency to understand how immigration is part of Brazilian culture and how it is necessary to understand the contemporary context. It is interesting how it is described in the interview above — as a wound. It suggests how immigration was not a smooth process and left traumas still around today. Nevertheless, Bodanzky’s personal history as a second-generation migrant in Brazil and Gauer’s immigration is not in the foreground of the texts or explored in them, unlike the authorship readings of *Aleluia*, *Gretchen!* Possibly, this is because the filmmakers were not directly connected to the migration context of the Mucker. However, Bodanzky mentioned in an interview that Gauer was born in the

same region as the Mucker ancestors (cf. Pararraios, 1979b). Hence, the participation of Mucker's descendants in the film was much more appropriated in the press as a discourse of authenticity and legitimization.

The press elaborated differently on the authorship strategy, mainly through Bodanzky's filmography and the style developed by both directors. For example, Bodanzky's previous films *Iracema - Uma Transa Amazônica* (1974) and *Gitirana* (1976) are usually mentioned:

Já está pronto o longa-metragem 'Os Mucker', co-dirigido por Jorge Bodansky e Wolf Gauer. Bodansky é o co-diretor, junto com Orlando Senna, de "Iracema" e "Gitirana", famosos no exterior, mas ainda inéditos no Brasil. (Spencer, 1978)

The curious thing about using this strategy is that the films were not shown in Brazil at the time, but were referenced because everyone knew them. It is possible that the films were famous because of their polemical censorship — in an interview with Antônio Abujamra for the television show *Provocações* (TV Cultura, 2016), Bodanzky explained that both films did not receive the CPB – Certificado de Produto Brasileiro, and, therefore, were not allowed to be shown in Brazil. It was a bureaucratic arrangement that obliquely censored the films. The filmmaker Orlando Senna, who co-directed *Iracema* and *Gitirana* with Bodanzky, also commented on the theme in his biography edited by Hermes Leal:

Sabíamos, desde suas concepções, que os filmes não seriam exibidos no Brasil enquanto durasse a ditadura, que o máximo possível eram mesmo as exibições clandestinas, como terminou acontecendo. [...] Essa situação esdrúxula só terminou em 1980, com a abertura política, com a liberação de todos os filmes proibidos. Nesse mesmo ano *Iracema* foi apresentado no festival de Brasília e levou quase todos os prêmios, em uma homenagem-resgate de um filme realizado seis anos atrás, e foi lançado comercialmente. *Gitirana* foi o último filme a ser liberado, a ser anistiado, e foi distribuído para circuitos alternativos pela Dina Filmes. (Leal, 2008, p. 232)

The disguised censorship is no coincidence: both films showed Brazil through critical discourse, and as Bodanzky described in the above mentioned interview, they were political. A reference to *Iracema* and *Gitirana* could also hint that the *Mucker* was part of a politically challenging body of work critical of the dictatorship. Using this interpretative strategy, the author, Bodanzky, applies his style to his subsequent films, which further contain his "hidden" message — his critical view of the regime.

Many writers in the press tried to further interpret Bodanzky films through what was called “*documentário-ficção*,” demonstrating a cohesion in his body of work:

Bodanzky vem trabalhando há muito tempo com a técnica de *documentário-ficção*, que empregou em *Caminhos de Valdez* (1972), *Iracema* (1975) e *Gitirana* (1976), entre outros filmes. (Lage, 1979)

The “fiction-documentary” genre was described in different texts as a technique, language, style, or line of work. Gauer notes that it has roots in experiences from the beginning of Cinema Novo (cf. Campos, 1978). Based on the film theorist and historian David Bordwell, I understand the *documentário-ficção*, though, as a set of production standards that also leads to a particular style:

No sentido mais estrito, considero o estilo um uso sistemático e significativo de técnicas da mídia cinema em um filme. Essas técnicas são classificadas em domínios amplos: *mise-en-scène* (encenação, iluminação, representação e ambientação), enquadramento, foco, controle de valores cromáticos e outros aspectos da cinematografia, da edição e do som. O estilo, minimamente, é a textura das imagens e dos sons do filme, o resultado de escolhas feitas pelo(s) cineasta(s) em circunstâncias históricas específicas. (Bordwell, 2013, p. 17)

The film was also described as a “documentário de época” (Pereira, 1979), “documentário de reconstituição histórica” (Azeredo, 1979a), “histórico, de estilo documental” (Azeredo, 1979c), and seldomly as a “drama” (*Diário da Noite*, 23 April 1979, p. Variedades - 12). The interpretations of the film usually pointed to a convergence of fiction, documentary, and history. The idea of the film being partly a “documentary” is mainly due to filmmakers advertising *Os Mucker* in this manner, for it could also easily be described as a fiction film, especially because of the lack of elements traditionally associated with the documentary genre, such as interviews and archival material, in the film.

Bodanzky and Gauer often explain the *documentário-ficção* genre. The directors highlight their work’s hidden mechanisms and meaning and how they should be interpreted. This style was also a starting point for discussing how the film was produced. In a typical authorship reading strategy, Cecília Prada, for example, recognizes the repetition of elements throughout the directors’ filmography:

Para os dois, o impasse principal a ser resolvido é como adequar a técnica à limitação financeira. Ou seja: como se tornar independente das verbas oficiais. Seu trabalho tem mostrado isso: a co-produção, o uso de 16 mm ampliados depois para 35mm, o uso sempre que possível de som direto, o aproveitamento dos elementos do próprio povo, com uma redução de atores profissionais ao mínimo possível. (Prada, 1979)

The reduction of professional actors is one of the key elements of the style. Instead, local people are given a voice. The presumed effect of the involvement of locals is the emanation of authenticity:

Optamos pelo estilo documentário-ficção — diz Bodanzky — apesar de ser um filme histórico, a fim de aproveitar a autenticidade que só o pessoal local podia oferecer, incluindo-se aí a protagonista, atriz de Porto Alegre, Marlise Saueressig, criada na região dos Mucker. (*Jornal do Brasil*, 19 November 1978, p. Caderno B - 9)

Accordingly, the use of the Hunsrückisch German dialect is mentioned in the press to corroborate the idea of authenticity: “o dialeto hunsruecksch [*sic*] entra em cena, como dado de realismo e documentação” (Lage, 1979). The story is told not by scholars, newspapers, or court cases, but by the descendants, who retell it in their own language as if it were frozen in time. Describing the language as “original” supports this idea — “Falado no dialeto alemão original, conservado pelos descendentes” (*O Pioneiro*, 20 January 1979, p. 32). Ultimately, the general concept was that using the dialect would reveal the truth about the events. Paul Thompson, professor of oral history, argues that it “can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place” (1998, p. 22). In the case of *Mucker*, the power of oral history is the dialect and the voice of the descendants. Although the descendants did not make the film, as it was directed and produced by Bodanzky and Gauer, the impression left with the viewer is one of uncovered and previously unheard truth. The filmmakers were the facilitators; however, their representation of the Mucker events was usually not discussed. The press much more often commented on the historical Mucker to explain the subject of the film, as will be illustrated next.

4.3. Translations of the Mucker

Descriptions of the Mucker in the context of the film’s reception revealed interesting interpretations, since there were varying opinions about the Mucker in the press. Interpretations also highlight different aspects of the movement divided into religious and political aspects or a mix of both, such as in “estranho episódio místico-político” (Azeredo, 1978). In addition, the descriptions mostly deal with the

historical Mucker, not the ones depicted in the film. Thus, the texts rely on sources other than the film itself to describe them, although these sources are usually not specified.

In ‘Jacobina: uma aproximação biográfica além do mito’ (2015b), immigration historian Haike Roselane Kleber da Silva claims that the Mucker group was active between 1868 and 1874 in the region of Sapiranga, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, under the leadership of the couple Jacobina Mentz and João Jorge Maurer (cf. p. 68). According to Kleber da Silva, the area was inhabited by families with German migration backgrounds. They found religious and spiritual comfort in Jacobina and regarded Maurer as a healer (cf. p. 69). Jacobina and Maurer came to be seen as healers and preachers in a region that suffered from a shortage of physicians. The interest and mythification surrounding Jacobina stemmed from her trance episodes, believed to be divine manifestations.

Historian Janaína Amado in *Conflito Social no Brasil - A Revolta dos Mucker* (1978), a seminal book on the movement published the same year as the film’s release, identified 169 members — children up to 13 years made up 30% of the group. Amado counts another 80 Mucker who could not be identified, adding up to at least 249 members. She estimates, however, a total of 700 Mucker and 1,000 supporters. Although 64% of the identified members were born in Brazil, most only spoke German. In terms of literacy, Amado describes that 57,3% were illiterate and 23,5% were semi-illiterate. Predominantly rural, they were primarily farmers and artisans. Another interesting point in the data is that 85% of the members were protestants (cf. pp. 127-134). Based on her doctoral thesis, Amado’s work was the first academic book solely about the Mucker.

Anthropologist Maria Amélia Schmidt Dickie, in her doctoral thesis *Afetos e circunstâncias: um estudo sobre os mucker e seu tempo* (1996), provides an important interpretation of the reasons behind the opposition towards the Mucker through the analysis of the judicial proceedings against them. The settlers accused them of disrespecting the Churches, Catholic and Protestant, and their morals, prohibiting schools, and they were accused of disrupting societal and political order (cf. p. 162).

Opponents saw the Mucker as not peaceful but violent because they were “outside the law” (cf. p. 167):

Por isto, quando confrontados com um comportamento que consideravam ameaçador de seus valores, conceberam-no como “ilegal” e passível de solução através da ação das agências governamentais de controle da ordem. O que chama a atenção, no entanto, é que os colonos acionaram a lei do Estado para sancionar atos enquadrados na sua concepção de ilegalidade, *depois* de já ter realizado e *enquanto* realizavam diversas agressões aos Mucker, *ao mesmo tempo* em que ameaçavam o Estado de “agir por conta própria”, caso ele não correspondesse as suas expectativas. Nem sempre, portanto, os colonos recorriam às agências estatais de aplicação da lei. (Dickie, 1996, p. 171)

In May 1873, pressures from local settlers, who saw the Mucker as threatening their safety, resulted in a police investigation (cf. Dickie, 1996, pp. 3-4). During the following months, the tensions intensified to the point that in June 1874, for two nights, the Mucker set fire to several houses, warehouses, and stores resulting in the deaths of many of their opponents. Mucker houses were plundered and burned in response (cf. Dickie, 1996, pp. 4-5). Lastly, the military arrived in the region and, after a few unsuccessful attempts, set fire to the house where the Mucker were entrenched. Many died, including women and children. A group of Mucker escaped and took refuge in bushes; Jacobina was among them. Due to whistleblowing from a captured Mucker, they were found on August 2 of that year and assassinated (cf. Dickie, 1996, pp. 4-5). However, a Mucker survivor, João Daniel Noé, maintained that Jacobina was not murdered but committed suicide (cf. Noé, 1977, p. 396, cited in Biehl, 1999a, p. 3). Precise numbers about the casualties are not available due to unreliable numbers from the police at the time and no official death count.

The narratives about what happened were not unanimous, and the film is also not an attempt to bring an ultimate representation of the events. However, it does end with the massacre and suicide of the remainder of the Mucker, including Jacobina. In ‘Ímpeto discursivo na construção da narrativa Mucker’ (2015a), Kleber da Silva demonstrates how the *Deutsche Zeitung* writer Karl von Koseritz was responsible for creating a myth around the Mucker, portraying their leaders as frauds and manipulators, as well as attributing violent crimes to the group. Koseritz’s texts were based on what was “said” about the Mucker and were not based on facts (cf. p. 135). According to Marion Brepohl de Magalhães, Koseritz was a popular and active advocate of German political integration in Brazil, but he had his own ideals of civilization. For example, he

condemned Asian immigration as “backward” (cf. 1998, pp. 88-91). The Mucker and what they represented were not in his plans. João Guilherme Biehl, professor of Anthropology at Princeton University, in his doctoral thesis *Jammerthal, The Valley of Lamentation-The Mucker War*, argues that:

The Mucker’s last social function was to command the attention of all upstanding, obedient citizens, showing them what could potentially happen to those not living in conformity with ‘modern reality’. On 27 June 1874 Koseritz wrote that: ‘It should be permitted that these criminals be destroyed like wild animals by dogs, so that an honorable man would not have to foul his hand’ (*Deutsche Zeitung*, 27 June 1874). The Mucker represented the ‘former’ nature of an imaginary Germanist reality, the expression of a morbid social process of immigrant integration as developed by Koseritz and his associates. (Biehl, 1999a, p. 14)³⁸

Moreover, since Jacobina and Maurer’s friends started to follow Mucker customs, they were being handled “nas arenas públicas (media, eclesiástica, política, médica e legal) como incorporações de fanatismo, alienação mental, barbárie e criminalidade” (Biehl, 1999b, p. 157). The official and traditional channels of order and communication promulgated a very negative image of the Mucker while not exposing the crimes against them (cf. Biehl, 1999a, p. 10). No exception was found in the group’s denomination, which was already translated by the press in the context of the film’s reception.

4.3.1. Translating the denomination “Mucker”

The name “Mucker” was given by opposers to demean the group, which did not have a self-designation (cf. Dickie, 1996, p. 3). The group was then translated for other contemporary German speakers — a name, its translation, and its meaning were given. A translation of the word “mucker” from German to Portuguese was frequently provided in press texts about the film. Although it was not always the same translation, it was always understood as derogatory, thereby maintaining the marks of the prejudice, but now directed to “non-German” readers. The word is said to be created by German immigrants in Brazil:

Esta palavra Mucker não existe em alemão. É criação do dialeto falado no Rio Grande do Sul pelos imigrantes da região de Hunsrueck, e quer dizer carola, beato, porém no mau sentido da expressão. Resumindo, um panaca, uma pessoa desagradável. (Putziger, 1979)

³⁸ The page numbers for this article refer to the PDF file on Biehl’s website at: <http://joaobiehl.net/publications/articles/> (Accessed: 7 June 2023).

The word, though, can also be found in German and appears in 19th-century dictionaries, such as the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* by the Brothers Grimm. In volume VI (words starting with L and M), first published in 1885, “Mucker” is someone who *murrt* (to grumble), *brummt* (to hum), or *grollt* (to rumble). Examples of sentences with “Mucker” associate the word with being a pietist, bigot, hypocrite, and insidious. The *Grammatisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart* (1793-1801) provides a similar definition, stating that “Mucker” is a hypocrite in religion, someone who appears pious but is rather vicious. According to this dictionary, “Mucker” could also broadly mean someone who can conceal harmful intentions and is treacherous. Today, the Duden, a dictionary of Standard High German, indicates that “Mucker” is still a derogatory word and synonymous with “*Heuchler*” (hypocrite) or “*Lügner*” (liar).

Further research into the etymology of “Mucker” reveals that the term was already in use during the first half of the 19th century and connected to a religious group, also described as a sect, that was similarly accused of religious fanaticism in Königsberg, then a Prussian city. In *Preußen: Aufstieg und Niedergang 1600-1947* (2007), Christopher Clark, professor of history at the University of Cambridge, describes that the group included many high-ranked city members. They gathered around the priests Johann Wilhelm Ebel and Heinrich Diestel, who offered a sort of “marriage counseling” combined with sexual practices. At the time, the press reported controversially on the investigation of the so-called “Muckerprozess,” which started in 1835³⁹ (cf. pp. 486-487).

Other texts show that it is indeed a German word and provide the following direct translations: “santarrão, em alemão” (*Manchete*, 11 February 1978, p. 118); “Mucker (beatos, em alemão)” (Mattos, 1979); “significa beato, com um tom de desdém” (Silveira, 1979a); “em alemão, beato, mas usado pejorativamente, no sentido de fanático” (Campos, 1978). Gauer, born in Germany, supports this translation, saying “É uma palavra alemã que significa uma pessoa de religiosidade exagerada, uma expressão pejorativa” (Chagas, 1979). These translations reinforce the religious aspect

³⁹ Interestingly, according to the statistical tool Wortverlaufskurven of the *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (DWDS), which can illustrate the frequency of use of individual German words over time, the word “Mucker” reached its peak from 1870-1879 but enjoyed growing use throughout the 19th century. The use of the term peaked during the Mucker in Brazil, not during the episode in Königsberg, indicating a possible circulation of reports about the Mucker of Sapiranga in Europe.

with the derogatory interpretation of the group's religious practices. "Beato," a Catholic terminology, underlines the sarcastic meaning: an extremely religious person or fanatic. Furthermore, Dickie notes that the translation of Mucker as "santarrão" or "beato" appears in the literature after a biased and Manicheist book about the group was published by the Jesuit Ambrósio Schupp in 1900 (cf. Dickie, 1996, pp. 2 and 289-291).

The translations intend to explain a "foreign" word to the public, providing more background to the events that inspired the film but do not challenge the meanings of the word. Some texts do not attempt a direct translation of the term, but indicate that it is offensive: "O termo 'mucker', também em uso, é considerado xingamento e ofensa" (*Diário do Paraná*, 09 August 1979); "*Mucker* no dialeto *hunsruecksh* tem conotação pejorativa, de ofensa" (Fonseca, 1979); from an interview with Bodanzky, "Até hoje, *mucker* na região é sinônimo de palavrão" (Barbara, 1976). These examples expose how "mucker" surpasses a specific meaning and shows audiences how the Mucker were still unpopular 100 years after the events, as the name continues to have negative connotations.

4.3.2. The historical Mucker and the fictional Mucker

Interestingly, many interpretations and disputes about the Mucker can be seen in the press reception in the 1970s. The texts are not unanimous and are usually not based on the cinematic Mucker. Since this is a reception analysis, it will not be investigated how the film portrays the Mucker, but rather how the press reception interprets them based on the film.

Many descriptions are straightforward saying it was a messianic movement: "um movimento messiânico no interior gaúcho, que termina em chacina" (Pereira, 1979); "movimento messiânico que surgiu no Rio Grande do Sul, na segunda metade do século passado" (*Jornal do Brasil*, 19 November 1978, p. Caderno B - 9); "O tema de 'Os Mucker' é um movimento messiânico havido no sul do Brasil há cerca de um século entre os imigrantes alemães" (Spencer, 1978); "episódio de messianismo e dissensão social" (*Jornal do Brasil*, 07 May 1979, p. Caderno B - 6).

Other descriptions focused on religion are mostly from pejorative points of view: “espécie de seita” (Campos, 1978); “seita religiosa” (*Correio de Notícias*, 21 June 1978); “seita de fanáticos” (Barbara, 1979); “comunidade fechada, de religiosidade fanática, distribuindo igualitariamente os produtos de seu trabalho” (*Jornal do Brasil*, 07 May 1979, p. Caderno B - 6); “viviam numa organização social ditada pela Bíblia” (Silveira, 1979a). Nonetheless, some non-negative descriptions in this direction were to be found: “comunidade de ‘irmãos’” (*Diário do Paraná*, 09 August 1979); “conflito místico-social” (Azeredo, 1979b); “comunidade religiosa alemã” (Silveira, 1979b).

In the first instance, these descriptions seem not so different, as they all focus on the religious aspect. Taking a closer look, they perfectly translate the various descriptions of the Mucker throughout time. Their opposers saw them as fanatics, while supporters viewed them as a religious community. Further, these differences expose how messianic movements are treated differently if understood from a liberal or authoritarian standpoint, a fact brought up in an article at the time:

o filme *Os Mucker* trouxe à tona não apenas a figura de Jacobina Mentz, mas também um tema razoavelmente estudado na área acadêmica, sem a mesma contrapartida junto ao público: movimentos messiânicos brasileiros, apresentados em literatura comprometida, ora autoritária, ora liberal. Fanáticos, loucos, sanguinários ou bandidos na versão autoritária, os membros desses movimentos são apresentados como pacíficos, ordeiros, místicos ou católicos ortodoxos na versão liberal. (Bonfim, 1979)

Interestingly, the Mucker movement was also understood from a political perspective, a socialist community or experience: “espécie de comunidade socialista” (*Manchete*, 11 February 1978, p. 118), “experiência socialista” (*Diário do Paraná*, 10 August 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 6), “forma de comunidade, digamos, socialista” (*O Fluminense*, 09 May 1979, p. 9), “experiência libertária, socialista, e iluminada” (Putziger, 1979). Variations of the term “socialismo” were not brought up in the film, only “comunismo.” It happens in a party scene where the local population is divided for and against Jacobina, the latter fraction saying that communism is to blame for the Mucker (00:16:41-00:20:19). The movement, as presented in the film, though, is understood to be socialist, which was also illustrated in texts published before its release.

Similarly, the Mucker were often described with an emphasis on their intention to be a community, a self-sufficient social model: “se organizaram em irmandade

religiosa e em sociedade comunitária” (Martins, 1979); “modelo social comunitário” (Poles, 1978); “modelo social auto-suficiente” (Lage, 1979); “espécie primitiva de cooperativa” (Campos, 1978). Further descriptions of their activities also follow this pattern: “os Muckers criaram um sistema cooperativo que dispensava transações comerciais” (Pararraios, 1979a); “instituíram um regime de trabalho coletivo em que a propriedade privada não tinha vez” (Mattos, 1979).

In the press, the economic structure of the group also justified the intrigues: “modelo social comunitário, contra o qual logo nasceu a inimizade do restante da população e das autoridades” (Poles, 1978); “auto-suficiência acabou irritando os outros cidadãos, também alemães, e de pressões em pressões a violência eclodiu, com a minoria sendo esmagada pela maioria” (Barbara, 1979). It is worth mentioning that there are strong anti-communist feelings and politics in Brazil, which dates back to at least the 19th century. The accusation that the Mucker were communists goes back to their time and can be seen, for example, in an 1874 publication of the *Deutsche Zeitung*:

Se a pena de morte não existe, não existe algum parágrafo sobre deportação? Fora com todos para a Patagônia ou para a Terra do Fogo, ou qualquer ilha no grande oceano, para que possam, então, repensar seus crimes e estudar de novo sua Bíblia... se vão conseguir no futuro reformar toda a humanidade com envenenamento, morte, fogo e comunismo. (D.Z., 01/08/1874, cited in Biehl, 1999b, p. 149)

According to Seyferth, it was common for leaders of demonstrations for better conditions in the colonies to also be considered “communists” by the authorities, in a context in which the authorities were already targeting socialists and communists because of the threat they posed to State’s security (cf. 2014, p. 151). This accusation survived throughout Brazil’s history, including during Vargas’ regime, when anti-communist measures were amplified, with many immigrants extradited for communist activities (cf. Geraldo, 2007, pp. 4-5). In addition, one of the main reasons for the military coup in 1964 was to safeguard the country against the “communist threat,” demonstrating the permanence of the theme. According to Marcos Napolitano:

O viés conservador anticomunista era o único cimento da coalizão golpista de 1964 liderada pelos militares, que reunia desde liberais hesitantes até reacionários assumidos, golpistas históricos e golpistas de ocasião, anticomunistas fanáticos e “antipopulistas” pragmáticos, empresários modernizantes e latifundiários conservadores. (Napolitano, 2020, p. 314)

The dictatorship's continued opposition against the left should be considered when describing the Mucker as socialists. Whether the press writers support the ideology or not, these descriptions point to the film as a work of resistance against the regime, especially when the reviews do not disapprove of the film or the Mucker movement. As such, there is a different tone to these public descriptions of the Mucker as a left-wing movement than the accusations in the 19th century. The "communist threat" was also seen as one of the reasons for the massacre:

Mas aos olhos das colônias vizinhas — e depois do governo imperial —, havia ali a ameaça do comunismo. Marginalizado e reprimido, o grupo se arma. A investida final, comandada por vozes oficiais e executada pelos colonos inimigos, vai fulminar quase todos os Mucker. Os sobreviventes, mais uma vez liderados por Jacobina, matam-se mutuamente. (Mattos, 1978)

According to this explanation, the massacre was imminent due to the Mucker's presumed violent acts: "desde seu surgimento, os *muckers* vinham sendo responsabilizados pela maioria dos casos de roubo e morte ocorridos na região" (Campos, 1978). In the following case it is not determined what the Mucker were doing. Nevertheless, it required an intervention: "ocasionando muitos problemas e exigindo uma intervenção armada das forças do governo" (*Diário da Noite*, 23 April 1979, p. Variedades - 12). Much of the pictorial representation of the Mucker in the press emphasized that they carried guns, which could corroborate the assumed violence, but it could also indicate an act of resistance.

The Mucker was often portrayed carrying guns in a defense position as if waiting for their opposers. They are usually seen in a trench, squatting with their weapons. The camera captures them from the back or side. The background of these motifs is the nature of the region. Curiously, several press texts described the filmmakers' intention not to focus on the violence in the film:

Apesar de o fato histórico ter sido violento, não colocamos violência aparente em primeiro plano. Porque se a história fosse transformada num banguê-banguê, o fator social seria minimizado. É mais importante para nós explicar o que gera a violência do que descrever a violência. (Barbara, 1979)

This visual focus on the violence in the press could have been a marketing strategy. Other shots focused on the violence included one where the authorities examined the belongings of a person who had died (cf. *Diário do Paraná*, 09 August 1979) and also a shot of a hanged man (cf. Pararraios, 1979b). Photos of the authorities

ordering the slaughter of the Mucker also appeared in the press (cf. Martins, 1979; Putziger, 1979; *Diário da Noite*, 04 June 1979, p. Variedades - 16). These roles were given to well-known professional actors José Lewgoy and Paulo César Pereio, rather than to the local people. Their portrayal could help bring audiences to the movie theater and be seen as a sign of validation of the project.

By contrast, another interesting description of the Mucker is as a “pacífico grupo de seres humanos” (Fonseca, 1979). The text includes a shot of a scene of Jacobina having sexual intercourse. Another harmonious motif that appeared once in the press shows the Mucker working in the field, surrounded by beautiful nature (cf. Martins, 1979). The press did not often show stills of the group in peaceful mise-en-scènes or compositions demonstrating community. The visual storytelling preferred to explore the armed conflict and the complex role of Jacobina, as seen in the following section.

4.3.3. Jacobina’s role as a saint, devil, and leader of the Mucker

A popular motif in the sample was Jacobina. Standing alone or as a group leader, she is often seen with a cross over her chest. Jacobina was positioned in the film, and by reviewers, as the Mucker leader because of her spiritual experiences.

Marlise Saueressig’s performance as Jacobina was often acclaimed, culminating in a Best Actress award at the VII Festival de Gramado. It was often mentioned that Saueressig was born in the same region where the Mucker lived, which was said to add depth to her interpretation of the character and could influence how it was read:

— Optamos pelo estilo documentário-ficção — diz Bodanzky — apesar de ser um filme histórico, a fim de aproveitar a autenticidade que só o pessoal local podia oferecer, incluindo-se aí a protagonista, atriz de Porto Alegre, Marlise Saueressig, criada na região dos Mucker. (*Jornal do Brasil*, 19 November 1978, p. Caderno B - 9)

Again, authenticity is reinforced. Although Saueressig is a professional actress, her connection to the Mucker region affords her credibility in the role. However, Jacobina’s historical role among the Mucker was at center stage, not an analysis of the character performed by Saueressig. Jacobina was frequently mentioned as the leader of the movement: “O tema central do filme gira sobre a vida de Jacobina Mentz, filha de imigrantes alemães, que supostamente possuía poderes sobrenaturais — o que a tornou líder de colonos” (*Manchete*, 11 February 1978, p. 118). Her leadership was often

attributed to a supernatural force, either Christian or pagan, which carries different meanings and can be traced back to the Mucker massacre.

Some texts mentioned the divergent perspectives over who Jacobina was, a saint or a witch: “camponesa Jacobina Mentz, vista por seus adeptos como uma espécie de ‘médium’ de uma justiça superior e como reencarnação de Cristo. Ao lado da ‘bruxa’ ou da ‘santa’ - estava o curador” (*Diário do Paraná*, 09 August 1979); “uma mulher com forte poder místico, Jacobina Mentz, dita ‘santa’ ou ‘bruxa’ — de qualquer forma uma extraordinária líder e mentora” (Fonseca, 1979). The attempt to understand a woman through binary opposites, positive or negative values, is repeated in the reviews, not necessarily successfully.

Interestingly, the descriptions of Jacobina in the press continued her systematic defamation in the 19th century. In the article *A irmã da bruxa: liderança religiosa feminina e perigo* (1998), Dickie analyzes how Jacobina’s image was increasingly manipulated and ruined by her opposers, supported by the local population, who were frightened. There was a belief that Jacobina had supernatural powers or was possessed. There was particular interest, also from the police, in Jacobina’s possible pregnancy, as it was feared that she might be carrying a devil’s child (cf. p. 83). Her “uncontrolled” sexuality was understood as evil (cf. p. 84) and often mentioned in the press:

O sexo é livre, e Jacobina é a primeira a passar da teoria à prática, passando em revista tanto os machos recém-agregados, quanto os de casa, e portanto já afeitos tanto ao sistema quanto às suas coxas e adjacências, pelo que, convenhamos, é de lamentar-se que tenham sido extintos tão rapidamente. (Putziger, 1979)

Among the words used to characterize her were “líder religiosa” (*Diário da Noite*, 23 April 1979, p. Variedades - 12) and “iluminada” (Putziger, 1979). In the following example, “mística solteirona Jacobina Mentz, assediada por visões premonitórias e voltada para uma interpretação muito especial dos Evangelhos” (Mattos, 1979), there is a derogatory tone with the use of “solteirona,” a possible echo of the characterization of the Mucker as “beatos” seen in Chapter 4.3.1. The comment also shows how she was viewed as a deviant Christian.

Jacobina’s perceived heretics were also described through her messianism: “orientação messiânica de uma camponesa” (Lage, 1979), and “espécie de ‘Antônio

Conselheiro' do Sul do Brasil" (*Correio Braziliense*, 02 June 1979, p. Variedades - 21). Antônio Conselheiro was the messianic leader of Canudos, an event often compared to what happened to the Mucker by the press. Canudos will be elaborated on in Chapter 4.4.1. Returning to Jacobina, the reviews approached her particular and intense religiosity through a historical perspective or with scorn. Discussing her from a religious perspective was not usually of interest to reviewers.

However, although it was not always explicit, the religious aspect was associated with a political goal — Jacobina's goal, the goals of the group, were linked to the resolution of their problems in Brazilian society at the time:

Teria sido ela [Jacobina] a primeira a entender que o movimento já ultrapassara os limites de uma questão religiosa e, a partir daí, sua liderança teria se exercido de maneira a buscar uma maior conscientização dos colonos alemães para a solução de seus problemas, entre os quais o de sua enorme marginalização dentro da comunidade. (Campos, 1978)

The messianic movement works as a collective towards a new order of justice and virtue, breaking the current order of oppression (cf. Negrão, 2001, p. 119). As such, it is not only a religious movement, but demands real social and political change for its followers. Jacobina symbolized the hope of a better life for her supporters. For detractors, she represented a threat to the world they knew. Ultimately, the Mucker defied those that made them a preferred target for persecution. Moreover, their defiance of master narratives about being "German" in Brazil made them a particularly visible threat to several institutions of power. At the same time, they maintained stereotypes about living as Germans in Brazil, as will be seen next.

4.3.4. The Mucker's "Germanness": matters of language and identity

In the vast majority of the press texts analyzed in this dissertation, there was a reference to the "Germanness" of the Mucker, in the context of migration, ancestry, or language, which often reveals more about how the event is interpreted, and the Mucker's otherness in relation to Brazilians and to other Germans. For example: "grupo de colonos alemães perseguido e massacrado" (Campos, 1978); "comunidade de camponeses de origem alemã" (*O Fluminense*, 01 June 1979, p. 7); "imigrantes da região alemã de Hunsrueck, que chegando ao Brasil resolveram formar uma comunidade muito especial em bases comunitárias" (*Jornal do Brasil*, 24 October

1978); “brasileiros analfabetos e de origem alemã” (Martins, 1979); “Seus membros, na maioria analfabetos, descendiam dos imigrantes de Hunsrueck ou eram alemães de nascimento” (Lage, 1979).

In the last two examples, illiteracy is a highlighted feature often appearing in the press. The emphasis suggests a lack of traditional education by Western standards, and it was taken as a reason for the nonconformist behavior of the group. Ultimately, it can also be understood as an attempt to discredit the Mucker and justify the violence and fanaticism against them. Remarking on illiteracy could also be a way to distinguish the Mucker from other German migrants, who were seen as successful. Amado recognizes that the Mucker identified in her statistics were possibly slightly under the literacy level of São Leopoldo citizens (cf. 1978, p. 131). The Mucker, as Dickie describes, “empana o mito de origem da colonização alemã no Rio Grande do Sul, contruído que é sobre os pilares do trabalho, da produtividade, da indústria” (cf. 1996, pp. 9-10). Illiteracy is then used to show how the Mucker challenged the master narrative of being German in Brazil. The emphasis on the first German migrants’ literacy also provides a contrast to the Mucker, who are described as illiterates:

Em 1824, os primeiros colonos alemães começaram a chegar ao Brasil. Vinham com o apoio de seu governo, materialmente preparados para enfrentar uma terra desconhecida, e eram, em sua grande maioria, alfabetizados. No Rio Grande do Sul, eles se fixaram na região próxima a Sapiranga, distante cerca de 90 km de Porto Alegre. Foi aí que, a partir de 1870, surgiram os *muckers*. Era a segunda geração dos alemães, nascida já na própria região. Analfabetos, viviam em completo isolamento, formando uma comunidade à parte sem contato com os colonos brasileiros. (Campos, 1978)

Here, the Mucker are Germans, and the other settlers are Brazilians, which reveals an integration issue. These German migrants are not assimilated and not living according to the Brazilian rules of society. The group is understood and described as Germans, not Brazilians “with German backgrounds.” The emphasis on the isolation of the group is also related to available discourses about “Germanness” in Brazil and repeated in different press texts. Since the 19th century there has been criticism of German communities in southern Brazil for being supposedly isolated — physically, and culturally: “pequena comunidade, praticamente fechada ao mundo exterior, e na qual predominavam leis e costumes próprios” (Fonseca, 1979); “procuraram viver em total isolamento, mantendo intacta sua cultura” (Silveira, 1979a). The description of the

group's organization as a "quisto social" (*Diário da Noite*, 23 April 1979, p. Variedades - 12) further exposes a common bigoted view, which has roots in the nationalization campaign's view of the German communities as diseases.

The isolation was supposedly due to religion, culture, and the self-sufficient model. The isolation was pointed to as a reason for the conflicts, which caused intolerance and aggression: "massacrada pela intolerância da época" (*Diário do Paraná*, 10 August 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 6); "por causa de seus estranhos hábitos místico-políticos, acabou sendo massacrada" (*Diário do Paraná*, 07 April 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 8); "um grupo de camponeses imigrantes da Alemanha forma uma comunidade fechada dentro de seus códigos e tradições, o que provoca seguidas agressões de seus vizinhos, culminando em sangrento massacre" (*Jornal do Brasil*, 17 November 1978, p. Serviço - 3). In the following example, the different practices resulted in opposition from the Catholic and Protestant churches:

Os colonos brasileiros, ao batizarem os alemães como *muckers* (em alemão, beato, mas usado pejorativamente, no sentido de fanático) expressavam todo o seu desprezo por aquela gente de fala estranha, comportamento completamente diferente do seu e que praticava um tipo diferente de religião, o que serviu, inclusive, para unir contra os *muckers* as tradicionalmente rivais Igrejas Católica e Protestante. (Campos, 1978)

The general idea is that the Mucker were different. They were the "Other" for various reasons, which ultimately caused discomfort, leading to disproportionate violence against a minority. The Mucker was also seen as a special case among the "Germans": "Os Muckers eram um grupo minoritário, esquisito demais para o gosto dos outros alemães vizinhos" (Putziger, 1979). They were considered "Germans" but were isolated from fellow Germans because of their different habits. The quote just below is from a review by Sílvio Putziger titled 'Hunsrueckish uber [*sic*] alles.' In it, the "German" elements are mentioned several times in a mocking tone — "Enfim, para quem gosta de chucrute, é um senhor prato", "alemoada", or:

enquanto os alemães praticam o esporte nacional tedesco: o conhecido Schlachtfest, ou seja a festa da matança de um suíno, com as suas conseqüências óbvias em nação de Os salsichas, Os linguíças, e As chopes.⁴⁰ (Putziger, 1979)

⁴⁰ The use of capital letters in "Os salsichas, Os linguíças, e As chopes" is interpreted here to emphasize a metonymy with Germany, as the Portuguese grammar prescribes writing the name of countries with initial capital letters.

According to Seyferth, at least since the nationalization campaign, there have been stereotypes related to the German's culinary habits, such as “*chucrute*” (sauerkraut) and “*alemão batata*” (German potato), which can be playful, but sometimes are meant as insults (cf. Seyferth, 2012, p. 32). These stereotypes still exist today. However, the title of the review suggests that the text interprets the film as though the culture “Hunsrückisch” is at stake and not the particular habits of the Mucker.

The “German” identity can also be traced to at least the Muckers’ time. The conflict between the Mucker and their opposers did not have ethnic origins. The group’s detractors considered themselves and the Mucker as Germans (“*alemão*”), as Dickie explains:

Alemão foi uma categoria utilizada pelos colonos, nos processos [judicial proceedings against the Mucker], que trazia uma dupla referência: por um lado indicava o lugar de nascimento [...] por outro, se auto-identificavam como alemães, não como prussianos ou bávaros... mostrando que a categoria indicava mais do que o lugar de nascimento e operava uma unificação deste lugar que era étnica e não geográfica nem política. (Dickie, 1996, pp. 178-179)

However, if we consider Biehl, the Mucker were considered less “Germans” by their opponents. Biehl contends that the group did not comply with the Germanism developed by a German bourgeoisie in the south of Brazil:

I argue that the manufacture of these colonists as Other Mucker, as messianic, insane, and criminal, and their subsequent murder, were part of the dynamic consolidation of the political economy and *modus vivendi* of local Germanism. This new regulation of local life was tied to the constitution of an enlightened, albeit transplanted, German ethnicity in the south of Brazil. Through this process, ordinary peasants were transformed into Mucker twice over, viewed and treated as the offspring of an obscure, unruly and bestial stage of pathological evolution, which must be exterminated from one’s house, one’s neighbourhood and one’s own person using the ideas, values, and capital of a *hiesiges Deutschtum*. (Biehl, 1999a, p. 4)

The Muckers’ challenge of the *Deutschtum* was suggested in the press. The following example mentions the keyword “tribal” to understand why the Mucker were considered so different and outsiders:

Mas a auto-suficiência da comunidade, seu retorno a uma existência *tribal*, foi o que causou o verdadeiro escândalo. A campanha de difamação obedeceu a um padrão conhecido: o que a princípio era apontado como estranho, logo tornou-se ameaçador e proibido. (Lage, 1979)

The opposers seeing the Mucker as tribal means seeing them as not part of what they understood as a civilized society — their attitudes were not bound to the rules of the Empire or the Catholic or Protestant Churches, which caused fear and mistrust.

Moreover, it challenged the ideals of *Deutschtum* pursued by the German elites of the time. Interestingly, Gertz notes how during the Second World War, the Mucker were often remembered for what the author identifies as a fear of a “Nazi political messianism” (1994, p. 34). The Mucker was then translated for later generations as a political and religious “German” group, which then associated “German” with great danger of persuasion and alienation.

The “Germanness” of the movement is also inferred in the descriptions of the film’s dialogue: “Falado em alemão” (*Correio Braziliense*, 24 May 1979, p. Variedades - 23); “falado no dialeto regional dos imigrantes alemães” (Pereira, 1979). The language is referred to as the German language, without any specification, meaning “*Hochdeutsch*,” but the dialect is also identified. Although, from a scientific perspective, these definitions carry different meanings, the interchangeability of German/Hunsrückisch is connected to the identities of German descendants in Brazil, both how they perceive themselves and are perceived by others.

According to *Hunsrückisch: Inventário de uma Língua do Brasil* (2018), a book edited by Cléo Vilson Altenhofen and Rosângela Morello, the Hunsrückisch is an immigrant language, which can be traced back to 1824, the beginning of German migration in southern Brazil. It is still in use and was developed through language contacts and migration; it functioned as a language of daily interaction and intermediation between different immigrant groups. Thus, there is significant variation, and the language continually reshapes itself. The dialectal base can be traced back to the Hunsrück e Palatinate regions in west-central Germany and encompasses a continuum of linguistic variants between French-Moselian and French-Renonian. Furthermore, it has influences from other varieties of German language, the *Hochdeutsch* and the Portuguese⁴¹ spoken in the communities. Therefore, not every speaker is a Hunsrück migrant or descendent, as many learned Hunsrückisch in the migration context (cf. Altenhofen et al., 2018, p. 37).

⁴¹ An example of the mixture of Portuguese assimilation to the dialect can be found in the film *Berlim Brasil* (Martina Dreyer and Renata Heinz, 2009). Here, the journalist Marco Mallmann comments that the word “corn” is “Milhe” to Hunsrückisch speakers, a derivation of the Portuguese “milho,” since the word “Mais” did not exist in Germany when the migrants left in the 19th century. Many migrants needed the word, as they were planting corn in Brazil. Moreover, the word for “popcorn” in the dialect, according to Mallmann, was the playful “Pouf milhe.”

The fluid naming of the language among German descendants and Hunsrückisch speakers has led to a false assumption that the speakers are namely “Germans” and not “Brazilians.” The misunderstanding was already prevalent during the New State, as seen in Chapter 2.4., which raised questions about the boundaries of citizenship.⁴² In addition, the dialect was also described as positioning the Mucker in between Brazilians and Germans, not belonging to either of the groups: “Falando no mesmo dialeto da época o filme é tão inteligível para brasileiros como para alemães. Por isso leva legendas onde quer que seja exibido” (Pararraios, 1979a). The film’s dialogue is incomprehensible to other Brazilians but also to Germans in Germany, leaving the speakers of Brazilian Hunsrückisch in limbo.

German immigration during the 19th century is also a recurrent topic in the press. The first observation that can be made is that the scope of German migration to Brazil was not well-known, which can be traced back to disinformation, traumas, and silences intensified with the nationalization campaign, as described in Chapter 2.4. Otherwise, it would not have to be explained several times in the texts related to the film:

Desde o ano de 1825, aproximadamente, algumas regiões do interior do Rio Grande do Sul foram colonizadas predominantemente por imigrantes alemães. Estes vinham sobretudo da região do Hunsrueck. Eram pequenos agricultores e artesãos, que fugiam das sequelas políticas e sociais da Restauração. (*Diário da Noite*, 04 June 1979, p. Variedades - 16)

In a text, which also explains the Mucker context, the author highlights a similarity between the Mucker region and Europe, which allowed the drama to flourish:

No Rio Grande do Sul, bem perto de Porto Alegre, há um rio que imita o Reno. Mas, naquela região, colonizada por alemães há um século e meio, muita coisa imita a Europa. Inclusive o clima e a paisagem. Foi ali que aconteceu, por volta de 1875, o drama dos Mucker, uns brasileiros analfabetos e de origem alemã [...]. (Martins, 1979)

The comparison mostly calls attention to the subtle reference to the novel *Um rio imita o Reno* (1938) by Vianna Moog. The narrative follows the Brazilian engineer Geraldo Torres at his new construction site in Blumental, a fictional city of German immigrants in south Brazil, and his relationships with the locals while feeling foreign in his own country. The book is much discussed even today as a revelation of Nazi

⁴² According to Lesser, in the 1980s, approximately 40 years after the nationalization campaign ended, judges attempted to revoke Brazilian citizenship from Brazilians that could only speak Hunsrückisch (cf. Lesser, 2015, p. 74). The case reveals the persistence of a mentality that equaled language with nationality and could be seen as a continuation of fear against the “German peril.”

infiltration into German families in southern Brazil. The government used it at the time to illustrate German non-assimilation and distance from Brazilian culture and society, justifying the nationalization campaign. According to Rodrigo Luís dos Santos, copies of the novel were distributed in Rio Grande do Sul schools for “educational and informational” purposes (cf. 2017, p. 80). Moog’s German ancestry was used to authenticate his impressions of the German settlements. However, in Monica Hallberg’s insightful analysis of the novel, the text is viewed as a Germanophobic essay written with flat characters and narrative structures that represent the Germans as rude, barbarian, brutal, racist, and evil, as well as feeling superior to Brazilians (cf. 1996, pp. 126-131). Hence, the reference to *Um rio imita o Reno* expresses a rather negative perspective of the Mucker. Further in the press text, they are recognized as Brazilians but with a certain derogatory tone by using the article “uns,” which was not used to describe the German settlers at the beginning of the text, and the emphasis on illiteracy.

The Brazilians were also opposed to the Mucker: “conflito entre imigrantes alemães e brasileiros intolerantes” (*O Fluminense*, 18 May 1979, p. 7). In this case, the conflict involves German immigrants, not descendants, seen as victims of intolerance and their opposers as Brazilians. The cause of the intolerance is not explained. However, the grammatical construction of the sentence could suggest that it is a German migrant background. It could be that the writer was unaware of the Mucker history and interpreted the identities involved in the conflict this way.

Ultimately, many texts published about the *Mucker* film continue the biased descriptions of the Mucker from the 1870s, but some try to advocate for a better understanding of the movement. The reviews are more concerned with the historical events than with the filmic representation of them. Accordingly, the press expanded the Mucker history to question how similar events were represented in Brazilian history and to advocate revisionism of the country’s historical processes.

4.4. Revisionism — rethinking Brazilian history through the rediscovery of the Mucker

Na verdade, se assiste hoje no Brasil uma preocupação comum para com a revisão ou o redescobrimto de episódios sociais que por muitos anos foram renegados pela História. Isso se verifica sobretudo no cinema. (*Diário da Tarde*, 26 October 1979, p. 6)

The sentence above can be found in a text entitled ‘Filmes importantes ao Paraná em exibição no fim de semana.’ It is followed by an enumeration of films that deal with historical themes, one of which is *Os Mucker*. The film appeared in many press texts as a starting point for discussing how history is researched and represented in Brazil, the need for historical revision, and exposing a biased hegemonic discourse about messianic movements.

First, I need to examine the concept of “revisionism” to clarify how it is used for the research in this dissertation. Historians Denise Rollemberg and Janaina Martins Cordeiro, in ‘Revisionismo e negacionismo: controvérsias’ (2021), discuss the historical uses of the concepts “revisionism” and “denialism”/“negationism.” The problem illuminated by the authors is how “revisionism” carried different meanings throughout the last century. “Revisionism” was used as a derogatory and disqualifying concept in the context of criticism of a dominant orthodoxy in the political or historiographical field, revealing the political disputes between the speakers. For many, it is and has been closely linked with the concept of “denialism” (cf. Rollemberg and Cordeiro, 2021, pp. 60-64). “Denialism” is the practice of relativizing and denying past crimes, despite proven evidence, and shifting responsibility in past crimes (cf. Rollemberg and Cordeiro, 2021, p. 93).

According to Georgi Verbeeck, a professor of German history at the KU Leuven, in ‘The Holocaust and its Denial: A Paradigm in our Historical Culture,’ revisionism is “the putting up for discussion and re-interpretation of established scholarly insights” (Verbeeck, 2016, p. 202). To review, revise, revisit, challenge, and contest the representations of the past, without denying indisputable and verified evidence and scientific methods, is nonetheless an essential part of the researcher’s work, who should constantly aim for new perspectives to comprehend History and the world today (cf. Rollemberg and Cordeiro, 2021, p. 94). Rollemberg and Cordeiro recollect the work of

Henry Rousso (1987), to whom revisionism is part of the process of knowledge production, which is constantly being updated and developed, in the wake of archives, documents, new scientific approaches or distance in time (cf. Rollemberg and Cordeiro, 2021, pp. 76 and 78).

There is much discussion, especially in the human rights and transitional justice fields, about what can be considered revisionism or denialism, once because, according to Verbeeck, deniers use the first term for its positive connotations and to give credibility to their claims, as if it was scholarly proven. However, it lacks the historical method and is a front to specific political agendas (cf. Verbeeck, 2016, p. 202).⁴³ “Revisionism,” then, continues to be used in public and academic debate as a synonym for “denialism” (cf. Rollemberg and Cordeiro, 2021, p. 76). In this sense, it is important to assess the value of criticism that is labeled as historical revisionism by observing the actual use of the historical method, identifying intentions to expand on knowledge or to cover up, distort, or downplay events; the denial or opening of space to victims or other disadvantaged people at the time; the shift of historical responsibility and guilt; the justification of crimes.⁴⁴

The reception of *Os Mucker* appeals to the revisionists, as understood by Verbeeck, Rollemberg, and Cordeiro, as it questions the necessity and legality of the violence against a minority, it looks for more information about the events, and it challenges the prejudiced view over messianic movements. The film addresses events and problems that still need to be solved, clarified, or understood in Brazilian history. At the same time that the narrative has a very defined sequence of events and explanations for the tragedy, it still does not attempt to be a faithful rendition of what exactly happened — the reviewers also do not usually question the represented truth or try to find inconsistencies with the period identified (the latter is a widespread practice with historical films). Possibly, as it was a still relatively unknown event and *Os Mucker* was

⁴³ Verbeeck presents this discussion in the context of Holocaust denial, which intends to glorify and justify Nazi atrocities (cf. Verbeeck, 2016, p. 202).

⁴⁴ Today, there are many discussions on revisionism of the period of the military dictatorship in Brazil, although not all of these attempts are actually revisionism. For example, in 2019, Ricardo Vélez Rodríguez, then Minister of Education of Brazil, gave an interview to *Valor Econômico* (2019), saying that instead of a military dictatorship, Brazil was ruled by “um regime democrático de força” between 1964 and 1985. To *El País* (2019), Marcos Napolitano replies that this proposal is more negationism than revisionism.

the first film about it, the writers could not easily find reliable sources to make a judgment.

This film's representation speaks of different and contemporary problems: intolerance, authorities abuse, and violence. If the audience looks for a coherent interpretation of the events or to heal past wounds, they are trying to understand the present. In this sense, reflections upon the present context were triggered:

O filme, um ensaio realista do problema de confronto de duas sociedades como ponto de partida para uma análise também atual, põe, [*sic*] em evidência todos os preconceitos que até hoje ainda perduram na sociedade. (Pararraios, 1979a)

Bodanzky and Gauer claimed already having this in mind when thinking about the idea for the film, as evidenced by this quote from them both: “o que se quer mostrar é o processo de repressão que se abateu sobre o grupo e explicá-lo não como um fenômeno do passado, mas como um fato que está presente em nossos tempos” (Campos, 1978). However, the only explicit reference to the military dictatorship occurs in Putziger's text — “e afinal de contas não é de hoje que se sabe que com os militares não se brinca” (1979).⁴⁵ Curiously, unlike with *Aleluia, Gretchen!*, no explicit allegorical reading strategy was found in this sample. The Mucker's story was taken as a Mucker story, although it was also representative of other historical events, such as the Canudos massacre, as will be seen next.

4.4.1. Reference to Canudos — reevaluating perspectives on messianic movements

While discussing the *Mucker* in terms of messianism, many texts touch on how messianic movements are usually described in Brazilian scholarship:

Os Mucker trouxe à tona não apenas a figura de Jacobina Mentz, mas também um tema razoavelmente estudado na área acadêmica, sem a mesma contrapartida junto ao público: movimentos messiânicos brasileiros, apresentados em literatura comprometida, ora autoritária, ora liberal. (Bonfim, 1979)

The Mucker movement was mentioned in two references (cf. Lage, 1979; Pereira, 1979) as being similar to the Peoples Temple, a U.S. American social-religious

⁴⁵ Interestingly, when I discuss my research with fellow scholars, there is a tendency to relate the topics to the present moment in the 2020s and the threat of a new dictatorship in Brazil. Thus, a film, which does not literally represent a military dictatorship, still evokes the military dictatorship in its reception in two different historical contexts.

movement that made headlines in 1978 for a mass murder-suicide of its members in Guyana. Nevertheless, the biggest number of comparisons by far was to Canudos, probably the most well-known messianic movement in Brazil. It is not surprising, then, that many texts allude to Canudos in an attempt to contextualize for readers who the Mucker were, making a comparison using parameters of either similarity or difference. One of the most frequently mentioned differences was the “German” background of the Mucker: “Baseado na reconstituição de episódio histórico semelhante ao de Canudos, ocorrido em fins do século XIX, entre emigrantes alemães” (*Correio Braziliense*, 02 June 1979, p. Variedades - 21); “estranho episódio místico-político que resultou numa espécie de *Canudos* germano-gaúcho, no século XIX” (Azeredo, 1978). Canudos was also said to be a bigger event than the massacre of the Mucker:

Esta *confraria* — que lembra fato semelhante ocorrido no Nordeste, em proporções mais vastas, e na mesma época, o episódio de Canudos — interessou as autoridades até o ponto em que outros camponeses da mesma raça resolveram acabar com os *Mucker*. (Fonseca, 1979)

Nonetheless, it is not accurate that Canudos happened in the same period. The movements were indeed quite different in terms of proportion and also, for example, historical period and geographical location. In a study about Canudos and another messianic movement, Juazeiro, historian and anthropologist Ralph Della Cava provides key information about Canudos: the event occurred between 1893 — 1897, the time of *República Velha*. Eight thousand members were being led by Antônio Conselheiro in Canudos, in the state of Bahia, Northeast Brazil (cf. Della Cava, 1975, p. 121). However, a text of *Jornal de Caxias* hints at the similarities the press saw between the two movements: a messianic leadership, an auto-sufficient social model, and massacred by official troops (cf. Lage, 1979). The same text also points to something, which is a recurring feature in other entries — a comparison of the Mucker and Canudos that attempts to expose how messianic movements were still perceived from a racist point of view:

Um dos aspectos interessantes da história de *Os Mucker* é que ela denuncia a fragilidade das explicações ensaiadas para os movimentos de forma religiosa e conteúdo social discrepante: sua ocorrência em épocas diferentes sugere a ressurgência de um padrão de comportamento social capaz de se atualizar sob diversas condições; o deslocamento geográfico destrói a argumentação de base naturalista e étnica com que Euclides da Cunha tenta justificar o fanatismo e a competência guerrilheira dos discípulos do Conselheiro. (Lage, 1979)

The texts refer to how Canudos was often portrayed in racist terms in literature. Euclides da Cunha's book, *Os Sertões* (1902), is the most representative example. Historian José Maria de Oliveira Silva demonstrates how the interpretations of Canudos have changed over time in his article 'A guerra de Canudos e Os Sertões de Euclides da Cunha: imaginação popular e revisão acadêmica' (2001):

Embora a tradição euclidiana sobre a dicotomia sertão/litoral não seja homogênea ou uniforme, somente na década de 40 novos caminhos interpretativos são abertos na análise sobre a Guerra de Canudos. Até então, predomina a ideologia do argumento do fanatismo religioso e político e estereótipos classistas e racistas que projetavam uma imagem negativa dos sertanejos e de Conselheiro como "bandidos", "fanáticos", "agressivos" para justificar o massacre de Belo Monte como sendo uma comunidade monarquista pelas forças do exército. (J. M. de O. Silva, 2001, p. 33)

Notably, the revisionist agenda against the messianic movements in the press texts does not completely break the discourse. For example, it levels what happened in the northeast region with what happened in the south but still maintains a prejudiced viewpoint of both groups. In the example below, a statement from Bodanzky and Gauer, it is quite clear that the bigoted view of messianic movements haunts the Brazilian imagination. The statement does not mention Canudos by name but refers to the northeast region *and* primitive regions. This comment is questionable, as it seems to imply that certain regions and social groups are seen as civilized while others are not. Importantly, it serves to expose a prejudiced "public opinion" in Germany and does not reflect Bodanzky and Gauer's personal view:

É interessante também porque será uma composição de uma televisão alemã, mostrando para o pessoal da Alemanha como é possível que com descendentes de alemães aconteçam coisas que até então a gente só tinha conhecimento no nordeste e em regiões mais primitivas. (Campos, 1978)

Bodanzky had also shared a similar perspective in an interview with *Jornal do Brasil*: "Isto mostra que existe também *Nordeste* no Sul e com alemães, ou seja, não se trata de um fator cultural mas de circunstancia: isolamento, pobreza e ignorancia importam uma consequência social" (Barbara, 1976). These comments demonstrate that a certain value is attributed to "German," as the Mucker event was not expected among German descendants. At the same time, it explains the event through particular social and economic circumstances — isolation, poverty, and ignorance (which can be read

here as illiteracy, reinforcing the civilization argument) — that can happen anywhere and within every social group.

4.4.2. The forgotten history

Throughout the last decades, the Mucker has continued to populate the southern imagination. Another film about them has been produced, *A Paixão de Jacobina* (Fabio Barreto, 2002), and there has been a rise in research interest. Nevertheless, in the 1970s it was still not well known, hence the frequent notion in the press texts that the historical episode involving the Mucker is obscure, unknown, forgotten, and silenced and requires explanation. To emphasize this matter can be seen as a marketing strategy for the film, a bit of drama to intrigue the audience: “Os fatos — geralmente desprezados pela historiografia oficial e atualmente em evidência revisionista” (Mattos, 1979); “obscuro capítulo da história brasileira” (Martins, 1979); “capítulo quase ignorado da história do país” (Azeredo, 1979b); “Narrativa pouco divulgada” (*Diário da Noite*, 23 April 1979, p. Variedades - 12); or:

Um século depois das ocorrências que a película conta, o povo da região ainda prefere silenciar quando se menciona o caso; a mesma coisa fazem em geral os compêndios de História, que a tudo se referem com registros de duas ou três linhas. (Lage, 1979)

Some of the texts situate the event within the history of German migration in Brazil: “Dentro da história da imigração alemã, estes fatos ficaram praticamente desconhecidos” (*Diário da Noite*, 04 June 1979, p. Variedades - 16); “fatos registrados na história da colonização alemã no Brasil, ocorridos nos últimos anos do século passado, desconhecidos, parcialmente, até então” (Fonseca, 1979). Not only does it reinforce a “German” background of the conflict, but it also indicates an event, which until that moment was not associated with the history of “German migration in Brazil” — the Mucker did not convey the image of what was “expected” from the German migrants. They were fiercely attacked by local media at the time and fought by military forces. However, the reception of the film suggests that the event was silenced or hidden by the official History, meaning by the judicial procedures and press of the time:

“levanta as questões centrais e procura dar a verdadeira interpretação da história dos Mucker, geralmente mal contada e deliberadamente distorcida, com exceção do recente livro de Janaína Amado, *Conflito Social no Brasil — Revolta dos Mucker*” (Chagas, 1979).

Some possible causes are given for this phenomenon: “A rebelião dos *Mucker*, esmagada, permanece até hoje ignorada pela quase totalidade da população, envolta na névoa da lenda, dos preconceitos, das suspeitas” (Azeredo, 1979a). The massacre of the Mucker was described as a non-comprehended event in terms of what it was, what it meant, and due to the language barrier. Perhaps as attempts to fill these gaps, many texts provided explanations of who the Mucker were and how they lived, as well as their struggle to survive:

A comunidade liderada por Jacobina Mentz formou-se, num vale afastado, em 1873 ou pouco antes. Seus membros, na maioria analfabetos, descendiam dos imigrantes de Hunsrueck ou eram alemães de nascimento. A recessão econômica havia criado um problema difícil para as famílias que, explorando pequenos lotes, não tinham mais como subdividi-los para sustento dos filhos, nem conseguiam recursos para adquirir terras próximas. A economia (mercantil) provocava alterações em valores religiosos que até então vinham seguindo curso autônomo na comunidade de origem alemã. (Lage, 1979)

The new look at the Mucker history is facilitated by the inclusion of Mucker descendants in the film. The press texts suggest that they went through a particular cathartic process during the film production, reviewing the steps of their ancestors and gaining a new perspective on the massacre. As a result, it can be said that the film has an interesting layer for viewers — it has the “based on real events” tag, which suggests that the descendants are revisiting the events. Their participation in the film production, along with other local people, was often mentioned in various types of texts about the film, such as the film showtimes in local movie theaters, often after the actors’ names (cf. *Jornal do Brasil*, 08 May 1979, p. Caderno B - 6).

Moreover, there were many references to the film being made in Rio Grande do Sul, where the events happened: “*Os Mucker* foi realizado na região em que ocorreu esse episódio de messianismo e dissensão social” (*Jornal do Brasil*, 07 May 1979, p. Caderno B - 6). Like some ritual, the descendants revive the last moments of their ancestors in the very place where the massacre happened, seeking to uncover the past and find peace with their own history. In an interview with *Movimento*, Bodanzky reveals that a transformation occurred within the local population from shame and fear to acknowledgment and pride:

até a preparação do filme ainda havia muito receio em levantar a história dos Mucker, que é a mancha negra da história da colonização alemã. Durante as filmagens, com a participação da

população local, deu-se o inverso. Eles passaram a assumir e até se orgulhar de ter tido esse passado. Quer dizer, deixou de ser vergonha para ser motivo de orgulho. (Chagas, 1979)

The *Fluminense* published a different quote from Bodanzky that mentions another level of change: “O preconceito transformou-se em compreensão das causas e efeitos daquele episódio histórico” (*O Fluminense*, 09 May 1979, p. 9). The catharsis was facilitated by the social and historical understanding of who the Mucker were and what generated the violence against them. For the local population, gaining social consciousness of their local history helps them understand their own identity. For outsiders, the lesson is a deeper comprehension of social and power struggles in Brazil, which also allows them to understand their own identities in the country.

Differently to many memory studies and many revisionism movements in History, the subtle idea behind the texts about the *Mucker* was not about “never forget,” but more “what else is under the carpet?” Wolf Gauer said in an interview: “Nós contamos só nos últimos 100 anos 40 conflitos desse tipo, como Canudos, por exemplo” (Chagas, 1979). The Muckers’ history is not an isolated case, and the repercussions of these events are real. The film and press texts ultimately provoke the spectator to question their knowledge and understanding of Brazilian history, as well as their comprehension of the current social and political context. However, not all interpretations of the film are positive or indicate a revisionist impulse. One of Brazilian’s highest regarded filmmakers interpreted *Os Mucker* as a far-right film — this particular and rather single view will be analyzed next.

4.5. Glauber Rocha’s interpretation: a far-right film?

In the Hemeroteca search, one register revealed Glauber Rocha’s reading of the film in the last part of an interview, subtitled “E Glauber não entendeu,” with Bodanzky and Gauer in *Movimento*:

M — Como vocês viram a declaração do Glauber, num telefonema ao Festival de Gramado, dizendo que o filme era de direita, reacionário.

JB — Uma declaração totalmente absurda. Se ele visse o filme não teria como dizer isso. Que interesse uma extrema-direita alemã teria num filme desses, que é justamente o contrário? Ele fez isso por ignorância.

M — Provocação pura.

JB — Foi fruto da ignorância dele de não conhecer nosso trabalho. (Chagas, 1979)

To my understanding, it was the only entry at the Hemeroteca with an interpretation of the film as far-right. The original statement can be read in a Jairo Ferreira's report of the 1979 Gramado Film Festival:

Glauber Rocha, embora ausente, enviou um texto que os jornais gaúchos publicaram: “Acho que esse filme do Bodansky, “Os Muckers”, é de extrema direita, porque foi co-produzido pelo Instituto Goethe, que está a serviço da Cia. O melhor filme do festival é Raoni, de Luis Carlos Saldanha”. (27 January 1979, p. 42)

The whole text, ‘Socos e insultos agitam Gramado,’ published in the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*,⁴⁶ focuses on the conflicts that erupted at that year's Festival. The statement was accompanied by Glauber Rocha's picture with the provocative subtitle: “Glauber contra Bodansky” and a photo of Paulo César Pereio with a correspondent subtitle: “Peréio contra Ipojuca.” Glauber Rocha's accusation is reminiscent of Cavalcanti's review of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (Chapter 3.6.1.) The film was interpreted contrary to the meaning intended by the filmmaker. However, his claims were based on factors outside of the film, extra context. It cannot be verified whether Glauber Rocha watched *Os Mucker*.

Rocha's reading of *Os Mucker* is different from others, but not surprising given the conflict between filmmakers who had different ideas of what Brazilian cinema should be. Their disagreements related to aesthetics, themes, language, financing, exhibition, market, and audience. Based on this, Glauber Rocha's statement could be a way to position his work as distant from the films that Bodanzky and Gauer were making. However, it is unclear how. It could be political, considering the ideological attributions to the film. To accuse the film of being far-right — and expressing this in a negative light — puts Glauber Rocha up against this political group.

Other hypotheses could uncover what is behind Glauber Rocha's comment. First, the film was a co-production between Brazil and Germany, with the Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) as one of the production companies (cf. IMDb, no date). This could have been read distortedly as another type of cooperation involving a German

⁴⁶ This newspaper was not included in the Hemeroteca when the search was conducted.

institution. There was no mention of either the Goethe Institute or the ZDF in the Hemeroteca entry, making it difficult to track how the information about the co-production would have been communicated at the time.

Rocha's statement might also originate from a disagreement between Bodanzky and Orlando Senna, who co-directed *Iracema* and *Gitirana*. In a review of the book *O homem da montanha*, a biography of Orlando Senna, Maria do Rosário Caetano writes that Rocha's interpretation was a way to stand with Senna:

Ela [the fight] se estendeu em agressões múltiplas e envolveu até Glauber Rocha, que – para defender o amigo e conterrâneo Senna – chamou Bodanzky de “agente do Goethe” no Brasil(referindo-se ao Instituto Cultural Brasil-Alemanha). A história está registrada em páginas de jornais gaúchos, publicadas durante o Festival de Gramado de 1979 (no qual Bodanzky concorreu com *Os Mucker*). (Caetano, 2009)

The source of Caetano's affirmation is unclear, but a register of the disagreement could be found in the research sample. In February 1978, *Jornal do Brasil* published a text about Senna's accusations against Bodanzky:

Na semana passada, o cineasta Orlando Senna acusou o cineasta Jorge Bodanzky de “irregularidades e safadezas” em relação aos filmes *Iracema* e *Gitirana*, em que trabalharam juntos. Entre as denúncias, a de que Jorge tentou usurpar-lhe o crédito de diretor, a de ter uma empresa “testa-de-ferro”, a de ser agente da ocupação estrangeira do país e a de “retaliar mafiosamente” as pessoas. Wolf Gauer, sócio de Jorge na produtora Stopfilm, é definido como “ativo picareta internacional” e a Embrafilme é denunciada por fazer “acordo secreto” com Jorge: os filmes seriam mantidos longe do público brasileiro mediante cessão de verbas oficiais para a Stopfilm. (Barbara, 1978)

The text also included testimonials from Roberto Farias (then president of Embrafilme), Paulo César Pereio (actor in *Iracema* and *Mucker*), Jean Claude Bernardet, Maria Rita Galvão (director of the Cinemateca Brasileira de São Paulo at the time), and Wolf Gauer refuting and discrediting the allegations. Glauber Rocha's words might indeed echo Senna's accusations, as their friendship dates back to their teenage years.⁴⁷

Ultimately, trying to interpret Glauber Rocha's comment might not lead to a conclusive answer, but the statement shows what a complex and polemic figure he was. Moreover, it is an excellent example of the disputes between the notables of Brazilian cinema at the time. Although his interpretation was unique, the reception of *Mucker* showed that the audience did indeed tend to understand the film from a political point of

⁴⁷ Their relationship is outlined in the biography *Orlando Senna: o homem da montanha* (Leal, 2008).

view. There could be several reasons for this: the auteurism — since Bodanzky partly directed the film, it should be viewed as a political fight, much like his other forbidden films —; also related to auteurism, the many interviews and quotes from Bodanzky and Gauer, which point to the social and political aspects of the film; and the references to historical events that occurred in Brazil, which were also understood with political bias — naming other events points to the problematic perspectives through which many social conflicts were evaluated, a criticism of the status quo that implies an opposition to the military dictatorship.

4.6. Partial conclusion

This chapter analyzed the reception of *Os Mucker* (1978), which revealed an “Other-German” not only in relation to “Brazilians” but also to other “Germans.” The varied descriptions of the historical Mucker, which were more in focus than the Mucker as film characters, revealed how their rituals (e.g., habits, religion, social and work organization) challenged expectations and imaginations about the “German migrant” in Brazil.

The represented “German” is mostly interpreted as an unexpected “German” in a situation equally unexpected in southern Brazil. This situation should perplex spectators and reveal causes other than ethnicity to explain the configuration of a messianic or social-religious movement. A (self)image and master narrative from the 19th century of the “German” migrant as industrious, hard-worker, successful, educated, and civilized is confronted with the Mucker members, with good and bad connotations — peasants, oppressed, religious fanatics, illiterate, rebels, socialists, or communists. Many descriptions of the Mucker echo the master narratives attributed to the Mucker in their time, such as their fanaticism and uncontrolled sexuality, and the ones attributed to German migrants in general — of non-assimilation and isolationism.

The texts in the press about *Os Mucker* informed readers about a need for revisionism of historical processes in Brazil, such as the treatment given so far to the messianic movement of Canudos, but also to discover other events apart from the

Mucker that were still unknown to explain the country's contemporary context further. To discuss the violence against the Mucker was a possibility to criticize authoritarianism during a period of censorship.

Authorship was then identified as an important reading strategy since Bodanzky and Gauer were known for their previous explorations of Brazil's problems and for being politically challenging. Therefore, the film is also considered a critical discourse about the contemporary moment. The attention paid to the *ficção-documentário* style and how the filmmakers articulate the filmic narrative through working with the local people shaped the interest in the film. The supposed authenticity was often held up as a sign of a new "Brazil" in the cinema — previously unseen "people" on the screen now came into focus, with their own voices and testimonies.

The varied interpretations were found in different text genres, not only in reviews, revealing once more the importance of a broad research sample. It was in an interview with Bodanzky and Gauer, for example, that Glauber Rocha's commentary was uncovered, and the many film synopses were sources of varied descriptions of the Mucker.

5. *As Filhas do Fogo* (1978) — translating the foreignness of the Other

5.1. Film and press sample overview

The peculiarity of the reception of *As Filhas do Fogo* (Walter Hugo Khouri, 1978) in comparison to *Os Mucker* and *Aleluia, Gretchen* is that, with a few exceptions, it does not address the film's "German" references. However, it acknowledges a lurking, foreign "European" atmosphere. The analyzed sample shows different reading strategies and themes — through auteurism, the fantasy/horror genres, psychoanalysis, and geography — relevant to understanding why the reception differs from the other films.

The film was primarily seen as Walter Hugo Khouri's film. Since Khouri did not focus on themes such as social identity or political matters, the reception sample of *As Filhas do Fogo* does not interpret the film from these perspectives. For example, the horror/fantasy genre was not understood in relation to "German" or in a settler context, but alongside genre expectations and how Khouri interpreted the genre. The chapter will begin with a brief overview of the film and then move into the sample analysis, divided into the reading strategies/themes. Subsequently, there will be a discussion about the lack of references to the "German" in most of the texts.

As Filhas do Fogo is a fantasy horror film with elements taken from gothic literature. Distributed by Embrafilme, the film was first released at the 1979 Gramado Film Festival; however, it was outside the competition. It was produced by Lynxfilm and, interestingly, co-produced by Editora Três, a Brazilian publishing house that published the magazine *Planeta*,⁴⁸ which included articles about esotericism, spirituality, culture, and ecology. The national release in movie theaters was accompanied by a contest promoted by the Editora Três/*Planeta* — anyone who wished to win had to send in a film review of *As Filhas do Fogo* and a report about a paranormal phenomenon (cf. *Diário do Paraná*, 10 February 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 8).

The film begins with the young woman Diana inviting her girlfriend Ana, who suffers from anxiety, to spend the holidays at her home in Gramado, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, south of Brazil. Diana explains that the house was built by her deceased

⁴⁸ The founders of Editora Três bought in 1972 the rights to reproduce a Brazilian version of the French magazine *Planète* (cf. Pellegrini, 2012).

German grandfather, who planted German seeds in the backyard, creating an enclosed and isolated property, resisting the native vegetation. Diana lives there alone with the governess, Mariana, since her mother, Sílvia, committed suicide when Diana was a child. Moreover, her older sister died in mysterious circumstances, and her father constantly travels. During a walk in the forest, Diana and Ana meet the neighbor Dagmar, who is apparently recording the sounds of the birds.

Dagmar invites both women to visit her. She reveals that she is a parapsychologist and was actually recording dead people's voices. Contrarily to Diana, Ana can also hear the voices and starts to have visions of her friend's deceased mother and of Sílvia and Dagmar together. Dagmar invites the women to the "Baile dos colonos," a celebration of settlers, and asks her aunt Gertrudes to make costumes for them. Back at her home, Diana welcomes a homeless man who asks for food and drink. The man involves himself with the governess and is caught by the women drinking wine in the cellar. They force him to drink more than he can handle with a gun that belonged to Diana's grandfather and was used in the First World War. He runs into the woods and is found dead the next day, wrapped in plants by the lake.

The women go to the party staged with a big cross, a bonfire, masks, medieval-inspired costumes, and folk music. They are received by a few guests, who say the party has yet to begin and offer them a beverage. Diana and Ana decide to wait at Dagmar's house. When they arrive, they find out that the party has not taken place for years and Dagmar's aunt Gertrudes died long ago. Ana cannot take the revelations and dies from fear. Diana shoots Dagmar and realizes she is trapped in the house, completely covered by vegetation. Mariana leaves Diana's family property in mourning, as if aware of everything that happened.

As stated by Khouri in an interview with Rubens Ewald Filho, the relationships between the female characters in the context of eroticism and the supernatural were influenced by Sheridan Le Fanu's novel *Carmilla* (cf. Ewald Filho, 1979). This canonical example of Gothic literature, published in 1872, features a vampire who attacks young women. Khouri aimed, then, for what he called a "vampirismo sensual-poético-amoroso" (Mattos, 1979). There is no actual vampire in the film, but

the idea of life draining away, together with the fine line and relationships between the dead and the living, is central to the plot. The similarities between the two works lie in the absence of the protagonist's mother, the characters' melancholy, the visitor that stirs up the household, and the lesbian love relationships.

The connections to the Gothic — the haunted and isolated house or the female characters who are victims of the voyeur's gaze — manifest themselves in *As Filhas do Fogo* through an atmosphere of tension, mysticism, and anguish. Film researcher Laura Cánepa identifies that horror stories often appropriated Gothic elements, such as the supernatural and the lingering presence of a decadent past, taking the form of evil characters or shaping physical spaces (cf. Cánepa, 2008, p. 30).

Moreover, the film references German culture along with mystery, mysticism, and the occult. Khouri is not known for making fantasy films — his *O Anjo da Noite* (1974), a horror film with Gothic features, is the one that comes close to the genre. *As Filhas do Fogo* was filmed in Gramado and Canela, two cities with significant connections to Italian and German migration, and the film constantly refers to “German” elements: “German” vegetation (planted by Diana's grandfather), the architecture of the houses and the decor, the migration background of the characters, the settlers' party. Furthermore, there are a couple of scenes with short dialogues in German without subtitles, in which the main characters cross to a different place in time.

The search for “as filhas do fogo” in the Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira database led to 109 entries in 18 periodicals between 1970 and 1979.⁴⁹ Apart from two false positives and two entries from October 1974 and December 1975, which refer to Gérard de Nerval's book *As Filhas do Fogo* (original title: *Les filles du feu*, 1854), all the entries refer to Khouri's film. A direct relation between the two works could not be identified; however, it is always possible that the book's title inspired Khouri. The book also has some German characters and is a collection of novels permeated with romanticism and nostalgia for a lost past and lost lovers. The melancholy and the stories

⁴⁹ The periodicals are: *A Luta Democrática* (RJ); *A Notícia* (MG); *Correio Braziliense* (DF); *Diário da Tarde* (PR); *Diário de Natal* (RN); *Diário de Pernambuco* (PE); *Diário do Paraná* (PR); *Folha Diocesana* (MG); *Jornal da República* (SP); *Jornal de Caxias* (RS); *Jornal do Brasil* (RJ); *Jornal do Commercio* (AM); *O Cruzeiro: Revista* (RJ); *O Estado de Mato Grosso* (MT); *Suplemento literário - O Estado de S. Paulo* (SP); *O Fluminense* (RJ); *O Pioneiro* (RS); *Tribuna da Imprensa* (RJ). The texts were gathered from the Hemeroteca between 21-28 April 2020.

centered around female characters, so dear to Khouri, might also have resonated with him.

Several texts mention both *Os Mucker* and *As Filhas do Fogo* in the context of the 1979 Gramado Film Festival but without a direct connection. A few entries were about Khouri's next film, released in 1979, *O Prisioneiro do Sexo*. Thus, *As Filhas do Fogo* is mentioned as an earlier work by Khouri. There are also a few texts about other festivals, an award ceremony, and short bios of people involved in the film.

Moreover, an article about marketing tests in the southern city of Curitiba, in the state of Paraná, revealed interesting audience data for the film: *As Filhas do Fogo* was released in the movie theater *Cine Vitória* and had an audience of 3,500 in three days. The test was designed to investigate the reception of a film that was so different from the ones they usually screened there, such as *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) and *The Towering Inferno* (John Guillermin, 1974) (cf. Negrão, 1979). Khouri's film was framed as an "art film" since it is not a typical Hollywood production despite the horror and thrilling elements.

5.2. Authorship readings: Walter Hugo Khouri, filming the melancholy of the supernatural

Walter Hugo Khouri (1929-2003) was a second-generation migrant from his Lebanese father's side and a third-generation migrant from his Italian mother's side (cf. Khouri, no date). Khouri made 24 feature films between 1954 and 1999 and is distinguished for having built an authorial career of box office successes within the framework of the production instability that marks the history of Brazilian cinema. His work captured a lonely and distressing urban environment, mainly portraying the bourgeois by exposing its melancholy, anxieties, and attempts to find existential meaning in sexual intercourse or through an idyllic search for inner freedom in nature (cf. Mazzini, 2014, p. 3).

At the time, Khouri was more popular than Sylvio Back, Jorge Bodanzky, and Wolf Gauer, as he had already achieved an established career with frequent appearances

within the exhibition circuit. Therefore, the press writers are often familiar with his filmography and compliment him: “o mais hermético e cerebral dos diretores do cinema brasileiro” (*Jornal do Brasil*, 19 November 1978); “o diretor mais coerente do cinema brasileiro” (*Diário do Paraná*, 03 February 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 8); “consagrado diretor” (*Diário da Tarde*, 11 September 1978, p. 3); “Exímio condutor de atores e de narrativas, Khouri esmera-se mais que nunca, numa direção irretocável” (Mattos, 1979).

There were also compliments for *As Filhas do Fogo*, considered in relation to other national productions: “Este é o melhorzinho [*sic*] dos nacionais em cartaz” (Mottin, 1979); “superprodução a cores que apresenta condições técnicas poucas vezes utilizadas pelo cinema nacional” (*Diário da Tarde*, 11 September 1978, p. 3); “um dos filmes mais bonitos e bem elaborados do cinema brasileiro recente” (Mattos, 1979). Khouri’s films were often acknowledged for their technical qualities. José Mário Ortiz, in the *Enciclopédia do cinema brasileiro* (2012) writes about the beginning of Khouri’s career, and how it played an important role in his later work:

cursando a Faculdade de Filosofia da USP, trabalhando na televisão (TV RECORD), escrevendo para jornal sobre Ingrid Bergman e Fritz Lang e atuando como assistente no preparo de *O cangaceiro* de Lima Barreto, nos estúdios da Vera Cruz. Essa origem parece ter marcado definitivamente sua produção posterior, em termos de exigência de um cinema de qualidade, da importância dos estúdios e da presença de técnicos de qualidade e de equipamentos para se obter um bom produto fílmico. (Ortiz, 2012, p. 387)

Nevertheless, the attention to his excellence was used against him in discourses about the supposedly “non-Brazilian” character of his work. Renato Luiz Pucci Jr., an authority on Khouri’s filmography, discussed the accusations from film critics during the 1960s and 1970s in ‘Clarice Lispector e Khouri: estrangeiros?’ (2003). The criticism stated that Khouri was not making Brazilian cinema and that he was anti-national. In the opposite direction to the *estética da fome* proposed by Glauber Rocha, his films represented the bourgeoisie, and his productions looked expensive (cf. Pucci, 2003, p. 72).

As I demonstrated in *A melancolia do prazer* (cf. Mazzini, 2014, pp. 6 and 7), Khouri was criticized throughout his career, even by foreign critics, for not discussing Brazil’s political or social problems in his films and for not making Brazilian cinema. Glauber Rocha, for example, considered Khouri alienated from his context and contemporary national cinema, producing escapist films (cf. Rocha, 2003, pp. 118 and

120). An exemplary moment of this conflict was in 1970 during the exhibition of *O Palácio dos Anjos* (Walter Hugo Khouri, 1970) in Cannes. The film was selected to represent Brazil at the festival. However, there was a discussion about the supposed absence of Brazilian aspects. In the interview with Khouri, Sergio Motta, who wrote for the *Folha de S.Paulo*, describes what happened:

Durante a entrevista transferiu-se para o palacio dos festivais a tradicional discussão em torno da tematica dos filmes brasileiros. Khouri defendeu seu ponto de vista, afirmando que filma aquilo que lhe é familiar, e que seria pouco honesto de sua parte fazer-se turista em seu proprio pais e ir filmar no Nordeste, o que talvez pudesse fazer com amabilidade, apenas para satisfazer a critica européia.

Em relação a esta, e diretamente a ela, lançou a acusação do “colonialismo cultural” que constrangeria cineastas brasileiros a buscarem o insolito, o tropical, o pitoresco, para serem aceitos na Europa como autenticamente brasileiros. (Motta, 1970)⁵⁰

Khouri rebuts European critics who believe that Brazilian cinema should have “exotic” elements and portray tropical or odd realities to be authentically “Brazilian.” In this context, it is interesting to bring in Rosario Hubert’s ‘The Diplomacy of Exoticism: Brazilian Accounts of the Global South’ (2018):

If exoticism is the projection of a gaze that distances the Other by making it foreign (*exo* ‘from the outside’), I contend that in the discursive economy of the Global South, exoticism becomes a token of both difference and identity, a rhetorical strategy that enables translation, continuation, and fragmentation of such a gaze. (Hubert, 2018, p. 37)

Brazil’s supposed national identity, national cinema, and national culture were a matter of self-identification and how Brazil was recognized internationally. The case is exemplary in that it questions what kind of art is expected from Brazil while evaluating its cultural products’ level of “Brazilianess.” The “exoticism” or “imitation” assessment is performed inside Brazil and by a foreign gaze that influences the reconfiguration of Brazil’s identity. In several historical moments, Brazilian arts have recognized the colonialist discourses that restrained it and played with the “exoticism” expectations and dialectical cultural mobility, which is also part of Brazilian identities. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam put it this way:

Brazilian artists have been fecund in innovative and subtly anticolonial aesthetic coinages, whether literary, painterly, cinematic, or musical, among them “anthropophagy” (Oswald de Andrade), the “aesthetics of hunger” (Glauber Rocha), the “aesthetics of garbage” (Rogério Sganzerla), and “Tropicália” (Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso). Most of these aesthetics revalorize by inversion what had formerly been seen as negative, especially within colonialist discourse. Thus, cannibalism, for centuries the very name of the abject savage “other,” becomes

⁵⁰ This newspaper was not included in the Hemeroteca when the search was conducted.

with the Brazilian modernists an anticolonialist trope and a term of value. (Shohat and Stam, 2012, p. 196)

Interestingly, these anticolonial critics and “foreign” artistic manipulations are also viewed by the foreign gaze as particularly “Brazilian,” thereby creating a new paradigm of what “Brazilian” art should be. Nevertheless, during the 1970s, many of these expectations about a “Brazilian” identity in the national cinema faded in Brazil, as did the demand for Brazilian cinema to be political and confront social issues. According to Autran and Ortiz, there was a change of attitude from many Cinema Novo filmmakers, who looked for an approximation with the *povo*. The cinema is then considered a place where national identity becomes visible — and the film language is adapted for the big market (cf. Autran and Ortiz, 2018, p. 223).

However, another intellectual dispute occurred at the end of the decade: the “*patrulhas ideológicas*” (ideological patrols). In 1978 the *Jornal do Brasil* published an interview of *O Estado de S. Paulo* with filmmaker Carlos Diegues, ‘Cacá Diegues: por um cinema popular sem ideologias’ (31 August 1978) with the title ‘Uma denúncia das patrulhas ideológicas’ (3 September 1978). During the following months, several other newspapers, magazines, and relevant contemporary personalities on the cultural scene, such as Glauber Rocha, Jorge Amado, Gilberto Gil, and Henrique de Souza Filho (Henfil), elaborate on the “*patrulhas ideológicas*.” According to Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda and Carlos Alberto Pereira, in *Patrulhas ideológicas, marca registrada* (1980), the idea behind the patrols was that left-wing groups were allegedly restricting freedom of artistic expression in the national popular cinema. Many discussed whether the patrols were indeed an ideological dispute between the cultural elite or a sensationalized publicity stunt, a manipulation of the right-wing press, a general disagreement with the left-wing, or, more complex, a dispute over market and power, keeping in mind that many leftist filmmakers worked at Embrafilme and exercised control over cultural policy. The problem, however, was apparently already *in the air* and assisted in the rupture of a cohesive opposition against the dictatorship by the intellectuals (cf. Hollanda and Pereira, 1980, p. 8). However, as a filmmaker already overlooked in these political matters, Khouri was apparently not involved in these debates.

Another theme appeared in the press' reception of *As Filhas do Fogo*. In the article titled 'O Brasil não se encontra no cinema brasileiro' and published in *Jornal do Brasil*, Ely Azeredo condemns the excess of pornography in Brazilian national cinema, considering the film part of this problem: "E Walter Hugo Khouri, com *As Filhas do Fogo*, lançando mão do *fantástico* a fim de sofisticar um erotismo frequentemente artificioso" (Azeredo, 1979c). A reader's letter from Eliane Frick Rosat was published in the next edition of the same newspaper. She complains about the Brazilian cinema and lists several films, which in her opinion, all have the same theme:

Como prestigiar o cinema nacional? Abre-se o jornal e entre estreias, continuações e reapresentações, so ha *Inquietações de uma Mulher Casada*, *As Filhas do Fogo*, *Os Imorais*, *Embalos Alucinantes* (a troca de casais), *Pintando o Sexo*, *Nos Tempos da Vaselina*, *O Atleta Sexual* etc. Sera que os roteiristas, escritores e produtores não teriam outros temas ? Depois não querem que se assista aos enlatados americanos! (Rosat, 1979)

Khouri's film involves eroticism, but it is a very different genre from the other works listed in this letter, which are primarily comedies that focus significantly on sex. However erotic it is, *As Filhas do Fogo* does not have sex scenes. The hypothesis is that the reader was familiar with Khouri's filmography, which contains many sex scenes, and assumed the same about this film.

In addition, the context in which Azeredo and Rosat criticized eroticism in *As Filhas do Fogo* was a moment in Brazilian film where productions took a more erotic turn. The 1970s was the time of the *pornochanchadas* — these were films characterized by a mixture of comedy of manners and eroticism. The genre was canonized by the Boca do Lixo, a region in the city of São Paulo with intense film activity. Many producers and film distributors were based here. There were low-budget and agile productions, many focusing on erotic appeal. Boca producers Alfredo Palácios and Antonio Polo Galante produced several of the Khouri's films, such as *As Deusas* (1972), *O Último Êxtase* (1973), *O Prisioneiro do Sexo* (1979) and *Convite ao Prazer* (1980). Ultimately, the apparent conservatism of the comments above is, firstly, a criticism of the general use of eroticism in Brazilian cinema and a questioning of what Brazilian cinema should be. It also questions if sex is representative of our identity.

Khouri's films focused on existential questions of modernity in line with art forms that came after the Second World War and had an atmosphere of

incommunicability, loneliness, and anguish. These features are also notable in the work of Ingmar Bergman, a filmmaker often evoked as a parameter to understand Khouri's work. One of the reviews, for example, comments on similarities between *As Filhas do Fogo* and *Cries & Whispers* (Ingmar Bergman, 1972) (Mattos, 1979). However, there are also unfavorable comparisons with the Swedish filmmaker, such as accusing Khouri of fraudulently imitating him:

Não se pode dizer, no entanto, que o ciclo [III Mostra Anual do Cinema Brasileiro] se abrirá com brilho: o primeiro programa é *As Filhas do Fogo*, de Walter Hugo Khoury, a contrafação nacional de Bergman [...]. (*Jornal da República*, 03 January 1980, p. 11)⁵¹

Khouri's filmography has several contact points with Bergman's, which led to these comparisons: the intensive use of close-ups, the idyllic displacement from the city to the countryside, the use of complex female protagonists, often overwhelmed by past dramas, as well as existential questions. Both are filmmakers who seek the expression of their characters' inner worlds, whether through dialogues or pictorial elements (cf. Mazzini, 2014, p. 15). The press reception was not unanimous about the value of the similarities between Khouri and Bergman. It was also used as an accusation of his "non-Brazilian" cinema:

Retornando às sugestões de cunho bergmaniano e à atmosfera fantástica que tanto lhe apraz, Walter Hugo Khouri faz as pazes com o seu público em "*As Filhas do Fogo*", oferecendo-nos um trabalho muito próximo de "*O Anjo da Noite*" e "*O Desejo*", dois dos seus melhores filmes. As críticas à sua suposta alienação ainda não cessarão desta vez. Khouri continua gélido, elegante, interiorizado. Mas tampouco encontramos agora a aridez de "*Paixão e Sombras*" ou a falta de inspiração de "*O Prisioneiro do Sexo*". (Mattos, 1979)

As is noticeable in this example, auteurism is a common strategy in the sample. The comparison with Khouri's previous films situates the film within a filmography, finding recurring differences. In contrast to the other filmmakers in this dissertation, Khouri had already produced 15 feature films in Brazil before *As Filhas do Fogo*, making it easier for the audience to identify recurrences:

One motto of auteur criticism was Renoir's remark that a director really makes only one film and keeps remaking it. Recurrent subjects, themes, images, techniques, and plot situations give the director's films a rich unity. Knowledge of the auteur's other films may thus help the viewer understand the one at hand. (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003, p. 416)

⁵¹ Although the text is from the beginning of January 1980, the database included it in the search results.

Themes recurrent in Khouri's work, and *As Filhas do Fogo* is no exception, are anxiety, existential crises, and the drama of the inner self: "Sendo fiel a seus roteiros, mais uma vez o tema central de Khoury é um drama existencial" (Hohlfeldt, 1977), or:

Dentre os filmes de Khouri constam 'As Deusas', 'O Anjo da Noite', 'Desejo', 'Paixão e Sombras', 'Último Extase', todos filmes muito intimistas e que revelam, segundo os críticos, uma acentuada preocupação deste cineasta para com a alma humana. (*Diário do Paraná*, 10 February 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 8)

The themes Khouri works with were also narrowed down:

É verdade, de quando em quando os personagens repetem aquele texto comum à maior parte dos quinze filmes que Khoury dirigiu antes de *As Filhas do Fogo*: a sensação de vazio e de inutilidade da vida, a angústia profunda que parece inerente à própria natureza humana, o nenhum prazer de estar vivo, o impulso frágil de arrastar-se pelo mundo assim como um morto vivo. (Avellar, 1979)

In an exercise to list recurrent features in the filmography, the author is searched for in the film. The repeating elements associated with Khouri do not necessarily gain new meanings in the new scenario. Other reviewers also identified different recurrent elements:

Nada disso foge à temática habitual do diretor. Assim como não fogem as relações amorosas entre mulheres, a participação ativa da natureza (aqui a exuberante, belíssima Gramado, RS), a catarse através da morte, o fascínio pela arquitetura das moradas ou os misteriosos portadores de desígnios do além. Ou ainda detalhes mais específicos como o afogamento em lagos de águas plácidas, o personagem masculino que vem de fora para alterar o interior das casas-pessoas, as brincadeiras com armas de fogo. No entanto, Khouri revela novas motivações. (Mattos, 1979)

Even though there are new inspirations, such as the Gramado's scenery or the parapsychological elements, Khouri is still himself, revealed through the mask of fantasy. The film is still recognized as his work, and there is no breach in the overall aesthetics. Nevertheless, as seen in the following section, the fantasy and horror features bring different ways to interpret the film.

5.3. Phantasmagorically fantastic — reading through horror and fantasy genres

Khouri's film is denominated in principle as a fantasy film — "o fantástico *As Filhas do Fogo*" (Azeredo, 1979a). But, as it shown on the poster, "Uma história de erotismo e terror que ultrapassa as fronteiras do sobrenatural" (*Jornal do Brasil*, 12

August 1979, p. Caderno B - 8), the film is also sometimes described by its erotic and horror features:

Procurando discutir um tema dos mais inquietantes da atualidade, isto é, a vida depois da morte, o filme conta a história de uma jovem que tem o dom de se comunicar com os mortos, mas que acaba se envolvendo em inexplicáveis circunstâncias que enfim provocam uma tragédia. (*Diário do Paraná*, 10 February 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 8)

Additionally, the film is seen as pioneering work in national cinema: “um dos primeiros do cinema nacional a abordar temas paranormais como a vida após a morte” (*Diário da Tarde*, 11 September 1978, p. 3); “Fugindo inteiramente de tudo o que já se fez no cinema nacional, a película aborda da vida após a morte, numa história baseada em fatos reais, publicados pela revista ‘Planeta’” (*Diário do Paraná*, 16 September 1978, p. 2º Caderno - 5). The magazine *Planeta* was mentioned both on the film posters, “Inspirado nas estarrecedoras revelações da revista Planeta” (*Jornal do Brasil*, 12 August 1979, p. Caderno B - 8), and in reviews, “Inspirado nas reportagens publicadas na Revista Planeta” (*Diário da Tarde*, 11 September 1978, p. 3). Since the magazine was known for paranormal themes, this is indicative of the genre of the film and the strategy for marketing it to the audience.

A reading strategy through genre includes expectations and conventions, elements that are identified as belonging to the genre or that distance the film from it. The audience notices these elements and can search for the meanings in the genre’s use of images, sounds, and narratives, or how the film in question reinvents them, the possibilities of phenomenological reception, or, for example, the theoretical questions behind the genre and its historical-social-cultural roots.

Several codes in the film analyzed here, for example, the presence of ghosts, the voices of deceased persons recorded on tapes, the mysterious settlers’ party, and the atmosphere haunted by the dead easily puts the film within the fantasy/horror genre. Film theorist and historian René Prédal identifies fundamental processes that occur in the fantasy film: the intrusion of an extraordinary element into an ordinary world, the projection of an ordinary element into an extraordinary world, or the presence of extraordinary elements that evolve in a universe that is itself extraordinary (cf. cited in Held, 1980, p. 64). *As Filhas do Fogo* presents several extraordinary elements to the

audience that permeate the universe of an apparently ordinary German colony. Thus, it can be characterized as a fantasy film.

Fantasy as a genre, however, is generally difficult to define, as there are no fixed recurrences in narratives, characters, or aesthetics. Nonetheless, according to David Butler, the industry considers fantasy to be a genre, including works with sword and sorcery themes. Still, as a theoretical approach, it is far too reductionist (cf. Butler, 2009, pp. 17 and 41). He agrees with Kathryn Hume's argument in *Fantasy and Mimesis* (1984) that fantasy should be understood as an impulse rather than a genre or mode, for it can be used in all genres and even in films that reach for verisimilitude (cf. Butler, 2009, p. 41):

As an impulse, fantasy articulates our desires and concerns, whether they are conscious or unconscious, controlling or liberating, expressing a fear of change or yearning for transformation, be it personal, political, social, sexual and so on. (Butler, 2009, p. 120)

In her seminal doctoral thesis about horror in Brazilian cinema, *Medo de quê?* (2008), Laura Cánepa argues that in the 1970s, the horror genre moved from the B film category and became part of Hollywood productions with an already established audience. *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, EUA, 1973) is the emblematic example, followed by others such as *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) and *Carrie* (Brian de Palma, 1976) (cf. Cánepa, 2008, pp. 67-68). The artistic horror genre is characterized by fear, aversion, and attribution of magical powers; a narrative set in a world as we know it with the intrusion of a threatening and impure monster of supernatural powers; and by physical reception, which invites intense reactions to the work, resulting in fear materialized through chills, shivering, fright, and screams (cf. Cánepa, 2008, pp. 10, 13, and 18). The reception of *As Filhas do Fogo* describes the film through feelings of mystery, fear, and suspense. The texts generally allude to “emotions,” which, although very vague, means that they are intensified:

Diana, que mora apenas com a governante e dois empregados que vive os momentos mais drásticos e misteriosos, envolvendo a visita e até mesmos os vizinhos. (*Correio Braziliense*, 28 September 1979, p. Variedades - 23)

‘As filhas do fogo’ conta a história de cinco mulheres envolvidas em estranhas formas de amor, com lances de muito suspense, emoção e medo. (*Diário da Tarde*, 11 September 1978, p. 3)

Tudo começa quando duas jovens amigas inseparáveis resolvem passar as férias na cidade natal da mãe de uma delas, há anos falecida. Lá chegando, começam a se viver momentos de emoções, suspense, mistério e medo. (*Diário do Paraná*, 16 September 1978, p. 2º Caderno - 5)

The acknowledgment of emotions also validates the interpretation of the genres. In horror cinema, the audience engages emotionally with the narrative and their sensorial experience during the film. In contrast to the reception of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* and *Os Mucker*, the reviewers of *As Filhas do Fogo* write about more emotional reactions and allude to the atmosphere of fantasy, the unfamiliar and the mysterious:

Climas. Disso se fazem os bons filmes de Khouri. Climas que envolvem num só clima o erotismo, a poesia, a sensorialidade e a extrasensorialidade. “*As Filhas do Fogo* é uma sucessão de climas que exigem do espectador um bocado de entrega e outro tanto de fantasia. Atmosfera a um tempo claustrofóbica e escapista, lúgubre e encantadora. (Mattos, 1979)

The atmosphere is responsible for the phenomenological reception associated with the genre, as in this testimonial of the collective experience when the film was first screened:

versa sobre um inquietante tema: uma jovem tem o dom de se comunicar com os mortos. A plástica do filme é uma das mais belas do cinema brasileiro. Tem muito suspense também. E não deixa de ser um filme de terror também. Quando o filme foi exibido em “hors-concours” no Festival de Gramado, no encerramento, sábado último, o público até conteve a respiração por causa do clima terrível de “*As Filhas do Fogo*”. (*Diário do Paraná*, 02 February 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 7)

An intensive investigation of the film based on the genre was not found in the sample, except a review that includes a formal analysis of the camera framing, which contributes to the genre:

Uma das características da narrativa é bem esta: qualquer que seja a situação — duas moças numa sauna, um desembarque no aeroporto de Porto Alegre, um passeio pelas ruas de Gramado, ou o encontro casual com uma mulher que grava o canto dos pássaros na floresta — a câmara começa a narrá-la a partir de um detalhe que não permite a compreensão do conjunto. O espectador vê todas as coisas envolvidas num clima de mistério, como coisas irreais. (Avellar, 1979)

The determination of genre was also possible through the pictorial identification of elements that together proposes a horror scenario:

Ana e Diana, fantasiadas, vão à festa. É noite e a atmosfera é de estranheza, como a de um sonho. Chegando ao local encontram apenas alguns homens tocando música e o anfitrião que não é outro senão o forasteiro-pai disfarçado. Há uma enorme fogueira e aparatos em forma de cruz. Como Diana está vestida de Joana D’Arc, o espectador supõe que se vá justificar o título do filme com algum ritual macabro, à semelhança dos habituais filmes de terror. Mas, à maneira onírica, é mais uma pista falsa. (D’Andrea, 1979)

Nevertheless, the use of horror and fantasy elements was not always seen to be successful. In the following review, the techniques were unconvincing to the point that the film received only two out of five stars in the film program section of the newspaper (cf. *Jornal do Brasil*, 16 August 1979, p. Caderno B - 6):

Mas, de fato, o que existe neste filme é só uma tentativa de reviver uma brincadeira já morta no cinema há muito tempo: cercar o espectador de estímulos sonoros e visuais que o deixem meio desorientado, confuso e assustado com as coisas que vê (feitas à imagem e semelhança do mundo em que se vive) mas que não entende. E esta brincadeira nem mesmo se realiza, porque a relação que se estabelece entre a câmara e as personagens filmadas é aquela mesma que se pode encontrar em seus filmes anteriores. As ações são de tal modo esfriadas, que as personagens parecem mortos vivos mesmo. (Avellar, 1979)

Another negative review demeans the public, stating that its majority searches for “simple emotions,” which the film apparently does deliver, although not having “anything to say”:

O bolo é muito bonito e tal. Só que falta o recheio. É incrível como ele consegue enrolar — e até com muito clima e suspense — durante cerca de 90 minutos, para dizer absolutamente nada. Como boa parte do público está à procura de simples emoções, o filme pode agradar. (*Jornal de Caxias*, 03 February 1979)

The same newspaper later published a review by a different author. It follows the same argument, acknowledging the aesthetic but claims that the author’s message is confusing:

Fotografia linda, boa música, clima de suspense bom e só! [...] Na verdade, Khouri dá um verdadeiro ‘banho’ em termos de técnica, mas só restam idéias confusas e um final abrupto. (*Jornal de Caxias*, 24 February 1979)

These texts repeat the idea that something in the narrative was unclear. At this point, it is interesting to refer to Tzvetan Todorov, who argues that fantasy is not in the supernatural elements of the text but in the way of reading it, in its reception. In *Introdução à literatura fantástica* (1992), he states: “O fantástico é a hesitação experimentada por um ser que só conhece as leis naturais, face a um acontecimento aparentemente sobrenatural” (Todorov, 1992, p. 31). For the author, the character does not necessarily experience this hesitation, but the spectator does and must therefore take a position on the events, whether natural or supernatural (cf. Todorov, 1992, p. 37). Furthermore, in the end, the fantasy work does not resolve the ambiguity nor define if the events in the plot are natural or supernatural (cf. Todorov, 1992, p. 48).

According to Butler, Todorov's understanding of fantasy is exclusive. It should not be used as a genre classification, as it does not consider the socio-historical context, the theoretical implications, and the differences in the reception (cf. Butler, 2009, p. 26). Moreover, the hesitancy is potentially frustrating to an audience used to classical mainstream cinema since there is no climax to the mystery, and the uncertainty remains after the film ends. Butler observes this phenomenon in the reception of the film *The Innocents* (Jack Clayton, 1961), based on Henry James' *The Turn of The Screw* (1898) — a book considered by Todorov to belong to the fantasy genre. However, the money-driven industry focuses on a different type of fantasy, as the unresolved plots are too risky (cf. Butler, 2009, pp. 26-28). The reviews of *As Filhas do Fogo* that complain about an unclear and unresolved narrative may have different expectations of fantasy films based on classic Hollywood storytelling. The hesitation until the end of the story was undesirable and considered bad filmmaking.

From a narrative point of view, *As Filhas do Fogo* was a special case. But thematically, it was well rooted in Brazilian horror cinema. Cánepa identifies that the horror in Brazilian cinema manifests through a constant intertwining of the national and foreign horror repertoires — the former includes, for example, national oral traditions, folklore, and representations of famous crimes. The latter includes appropriation and displacement of Hollywood's box-office hits as well as the representation of themes that make sense in Brazilian reality, such as haunting, possession, and telekinesis. There is also an intersection of erotism and horror, or Gothic and Brazilian melodramas. Moreover, the bigoted representation of Afro-Brazilian religions ultimately demonstrates what is considered deviant from the social norms in the Brazilian context: the fear of the "Other" and prejudices that the horror works from, which is regarded as a transgression (cf. Cánepa, 2008, pp. 427-429). Many of these features can be identified in *As Filhas do Fogo*. However, the reviews are not usually concerned with the development of horror in a particular Brazilian context and do not discuss transgressions as social critique.

The main feature of the film, the reason why it was perceived as fantasy/horror, was identified in a great number of the texts — the parapsychology: "O encontro das duas com uma especialista em parapsicologia leva a uma série de experiências

fantásticas” (*Jornal do Brasil*, 13 August 1979, p. Caderno B - 6). The terminology refers to the study of psychic phenomena and extrasensory perception, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and psychokinesis. The first institutional approach to parapsychology was in London at the *Society for Psychical Research*, founded in 1882. The contact with the dead, the mysteries of the afterlife, and mediumship — the parapsychological elements in the film are often outlined in the press texts:

Drama parapsicológico sobre uma jovem que tem a força de se comunicar com os mortos. (*Diário do Paraná*, 17 February 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 8)

Dagmar, então, lida com o ego auxiliar Ana e a ela revela que seu trabalho é gravar vozes de pessoas que já morreram. Ana escuta uma gravação e percebe vozes angustiadas que chamam. Se consegue ouvir, será capaz de ver, afirma-lhe Dagmar. (D’Andrea, 1979)

The parapsychology was also identified as a trigger for horror events in the film:

A estranha senhora tem o costume de gravar sons da natureza e vozes... de pessoas mortas. Pode, ainda, fazer materializar-se diante de pessoas sensíveis a figura de entes falecidos. Trazendo de volta a imagem da mãe de Diana (Selma Egrei), com quem tivera um caso de amor, ela leva as moças a um progressivo dialaceramento [*sic*], que termina na morte ou no confinamento eterno numa casa bloqueada por paredes de heras. (Mattos, 1979)

The fear of and curiosity about the parapsychological experience was translated into horror features. As is typical for the genre, the unknown, the unexplainable, and the uncanny are developed in a narrative that plays out the possibilities and dangers of the phenomenon. Further, in the reception of the film, it was observed how Khouri interpreted the parapsychology according to his filmography:

Baseado em um conto da revista ‘Planeta’, o diretor aborda os fenômenos parapsicológicos e os mistérios da vida depois da morte, sem renunciar ao seu tema usual, o permanente questionamento existencial do ser humano. (*Jornal de Caxias*, 24 February 1979)

However, in the following text, it is claimed that Khouri worked outside his typical style with the parapsychology theme: “Khouri tentou desvendar alguns dos mistérios relacionados aos fenômenos parapsicológicos, e com isso praticamente saiu fora daquele que é a sua linha habitual de cinema” (Spencer, 1979). This interpretation was an exception since, as other reviews demonstrate, *As Filhas do Fogo* shows the filmmaker’s authorial marks, especially the characters’ inner conflicts and anxieties. The film is then considered not to be about parapsychology — it is Khouri’s perspective on parapsychology:

uma incursão do diretor pelo mundo da parapsicologia (F. A. dos Santos, 1979)

A incursão do discutido diretor paulista pelo terreno da parapsicologia na história de uma mulher defrontada com os fantasmas de seus antepassados. Terror e suspense bem como na linha do perfeccionismo Khouriano. (*Diário do Paraná*, 06 February 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 8)

The film is ultimately viewed as a development of the director's style and point of view:

O crítico Rubens Ewald Filho, de São Paulo, considera-o o melhor filme do realizador desde *O Corpo Ardente*: “Em vez de se repetir no mundo confinado de pequenas crises existenciais, Khouri partiu para explorar o universo do *fantástico*: a angústia após a morte, a *sincronicidadedos tempos, os universos paralelos, os elementais, as gravações de vozes de pessoas mortas*”. (Azeredo, 1979b)

Some texts quote Khouri's explanation of why the theme is so important to him and his take on it. Here is the filmmaker's input — it is also an authorship reading in the review, as it informs how the film can be interpreted:

Ele [Khouri] diz ainda que o gosto pelo fantástico se ampliou muito hoje em dia, a partir das experiências da parapsicologia, e que seu interesse particular é pelas pesquisas de registro de vozes de pessoas aparentemente mortas em gravadores de fita magnética. “A conjunção de um elemento de alta tecnologia eletrônica e de um fenômeno parapsicológico marcante e estranho me pareceu algo fascinante e aterrador”. (Avellar, 1979)

Khouri mentions the allure of the sound recorder. It is a prop and a symbolic element of the film, also identified by reviewers. Laura Cánepa, in *O imaginário da paranormalidade na ficção fantástica brasileira* (2011), noted that the sound recorder acts as an intermediate between the real world and the supernatural:

Tal fenômeno não poderia deixar de marcar as histórias fantásticas brasileiras, que se caracterizam tanto por um fascínio tecnológico específico (decorrente de nosso processo tardio e dependente de industrialização), quanto pela permeabilidade nacional ao sincretismo religioso (caracterizada inclusive pela facilidade com que a própria doutrina espírita, por si só bastante híbrida, foi recebida em nosso país). (Cánepa, 2011, p. 5)

Spiritism, considered both a philosophical and Christian doctrine and a religion, is centered on the belief in reincarnation and that spirits can communicate with this world through mediums. Welthon Rodrigues Cunha argues in ‘Mediunidade e parapsicologia’ (2013) that Spiritism and parapsychology intertwine in Brazil, as parapsychology was developed outside the academia, unlike in the United States and Europe (cf. Cunha, 2013, p. 69). The spiritists, who were interested in its legitimation, were responsible for its unfolding. Following Catholic dominance, they were discriminated against since the end of the 19th century (cf. Cunha, 2013, p. 69). As stated in the sociological studies of Cândido Procópio Camargo and Roger Bastide in the 1960s, the scientific dimension of Spiritism was not in the foreground in Brazil,

unlike in France. In Brazil, the emphasis was on the mystic and religious aspects (cf. Stoll, 2002, p. 365), which places the film in a national context.

One film program gives another important clue about the context: “Drama de terror filmado em Gramado (RS) abordando um tema muito em voga hoje: a parapsicologia” (*Diário do Paraná*, 03 February 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 8). A quick search of “parapsicologia” in the Hemeroteca Digital between 1970 and 1979 reveals an astonishing number of 3,480 entries in 71 periodicals — a significant increase from 1960-1969 with 1,614 entries in 55 periodicals, and more than the 3,060 entries in 49 periodicals from 1980-1989.⁵² The entries from the 1970s, the New Age Era, refer to books, courses, lectures, events, television shows, and texts about parapsychology — the word was very visible in public discourse.

The following are a few examples of what happened at the time: the first *Colóquio Brasileiro de Parapsicologia* occurred in 1973. One of the most important Brazilian writers of the last century, Hilda Hilst, performed parapsychological experiments during 1974 and 1978, also with a sound recorder, and participated in the fifth edition of the Colloquium in 1977 (cf. D’Angelo, 2018). The famous and controversial Uri Geller, who performed parapsychological phenomena — or magic tricks to his critics — visited Brazil in 1976. His live television appearance on July 15 on TV Globo reached an audience of 90% (cf. *O Globo*, 17 July 1976, p. 10).⁵³

The film’s reception mentions and focuses strongly on parapsychology without explaining the meaning of the word, which is illustrative of how in vogue parapsychology was at the time. Furthermore, noting the theme could have been a marketing strategy to bring bigger audiences to the movie theaters, or it could simply be what reviewers found compelling about the film.

Ultimately, the reception of *As Filhas do Fogo* not only looked for Khouri in the film but also for how he translates the genres of horror and fantasy into the narrative. As mentioned above, genre elements were identified in the film and related to themes

⁵² The search of the database was conducted on 02 February 2022.

⁵³ The text was not part of the reception study sample.

typical of Khouri's work. However, mystery and family relationships suggest another reading strategy in the sample: psychoanalysis.

5.4. Psychoanalysis as a reading strategy

The longest review in the press samples from the Hemeroteca database analyses *As Filhas do Fogo* using psychoanalysis: “Com base na psicanálise, o filme procura retratar simbolicamente os múltiplos aspectos da personalidade” (D’Andrea, 1979). Using concepts such as the Oedipus complex, separation-individuation, repression, ego, and penis envy, the author Flávio Fortes D’Andrea is straightforward about his interpretation strategies and searches for revelations of the human inner reality. He goes even further to compare the characters’ relationships to the clinical scenario of therapist and patient: “A relação de Dagmar com Diana e, por extensão, com Ana, tem vários pontos de contado [*sic*] com a usual relação terapêutica-paciente em psicoterapia” (D’Andrea, 1979). Although D’Andrea was a psychiatrist, the analysis of the review is still relevant as he chose this particular film to interpret.

A psychoanalytic reading strategy can have different objects of interest, for instance, the narrative itself and hidden relationships between the characters, the meaning of the images, or the spectators’ feelings and reactions towards the film. Another object, according to film theorist Dudley Andrew, can be the director’s own psyche, which would be revealed through his films (cf. Andrew, 1984, p. 135). The possibilities are then multiplied depending on which psychoanalytic theory is used — for example, a post-Jungian reading strategy can identify the possible archetypes hidden in the film; or a Freudian reading strategy, as used by D’Andrea, can examine how the Oedipus complex manifests itself in the film characters.

There can be several reasons to choose this kind of reading, even when the film does not directly involve psychoanalysis, as is the case with *As Filhas do Fogo*. It is possible to use psychoanalysis to understand any film. Still, if I am to assume Staiger’s position that reading strategies are historical and not random, the choice of the strategy can be explained. First, this reading strategy was a typical choice for film scholars in the

1970s. The theoretical frameworks used most often were Jacques Lacan and Sigmund Freud, while Carl Jung started to gain more attention in the 21st century. Andrew argues that structuralism and phenomenology, the methods previously in vogue, could not explain the domain of “desire” in the films or its ideological and psychological implications:

Its entry into the field around 1970 indicates a need to invoke a new method, psychoanalysis, to help account for whatever is important about cinema. Always on the fringe of film theory, in this year psychoanalysis comes center stage to invite a complete redescription of the field. (Andrew, 1984, p. 134)

As Jane Gaines demonstrates in ‘White Privilege and Looking Relations’ (1986), feminist film theories of the mid-1970s applied psychoanalytic approaches from Freud and Lacan to understand the text and the spectators’ process of identification, thereby uncovering mechanisms of women’s oppression:

The feminist commitment to revealing the patriarchal assumptions behind familiar cinematic language dates from the mid-seventies with the appearance of Clare Johnston’s “Women’s Cinema as Counter-Cinema” and Laura Mulvey’s often reprinted “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” The latter essay, coinciding as it did with the publication of Christian Metz’s “The Imaginary Signifier,” paired with a supporting theoretical statement from the editors of the *British Screen*, helped introduce psychoanalytic concepts into contemporary film theory where they quickly streamlined a Marxist problematic which dealt awkwardly with the social individual. The terms of psychoanalysis, introduced through the permission of Althusserian Marxism, made it possible to investigate the sites outside the workplace where oppression is experienced. (Gaines, 1986, pp. 62-63)

This kind of review is fitting for the film, as it presents terms used by the feminists in the 1970s, such as voyeurism and pleasure, and is centered on the story of five women connected by familiar and love relationships. In addition, if Khouri was expected to explore the inner world of the characters, a psychoanalytic review makes more sense than a historical analysis of the diegesis.

Moreover, this kind of analysis searches for a message that is not obvious, not revealed by simple cause and effect in the narrative. As Andrew describes it, beyond the apparent logic, psychoanalysis aims to break down the narratives to find the source of their power over the audience and why we place so much emphasis on them (cf. Andrew, 1984, p. 139). Accordingly, D’Andrea sought to decipher the narrative and look at how it had a cathartic effect on spectators:

Numa visão superficial, trata-se de uma película de mistério e suspense contando a estória de uma adolescente que vai passar as férias com uma amiga, no sul do país, e vê-se envolvida com fenômenos paranormais não suficientemente esclarecidos e de funestas consequências. O

espectador pode sentir-se mais ou menos emocionado e aterrorizado com as insinuações horróricas a respeito das fronteiras entre a vida e a morte e sair do cinema, catarticamente purificado, como quem sai de uma sauna, aliás o cenário da primeira sequência do filme, sem preocupar-se em descobrir o que havia por trás dos disfarces. E “As Filhas do Fogo” é uma obra de muitos disfarces. (D’Andrea, 1979)

D’Andrea assumed there is more to *As Filhas do Fogo* than genre conventions. He wanted to decode the film he identified as a “tentativa de compreensão da realidade interior do homem” (1979). And the method in vogue at the time was precisely a psychoanalysis approach that tends to universalise inner experiences. From this perspective, the “German” elements of the film are not significant as “German” elements, but in how they represent processes in the psyche. D’Andrea argues that the “German” elements in the film, e.g., Diana’s grandfather planting German seeds in native Brazilian land, represent two important allusions:

Diana conta que o jardim foi construído pelo avô, que arrancou árvores e arbustos nativos, adubou a terra e plantou sementes germânicas, desvirginando a paisagem antiga. A menção ao avô e à ecologia parece-nos conter duas importantes alusões. A primeira seria uma referência à intrusão do homem, do sexo, nas relações simbióticas pré-genitais, simbolizadas pela floresta virgem. A segunda é a idéia de que o mundo primitivo pode ser afastado, reprimido, mas tende sempre a voltar, apesar das manobras defensivas. (D’Andrea, 1979)

He understands the “German” intrusion in nature as a metaphor for inner development processes, i.e. the intrusion of sex in the pre-genital symbiotic relationships. Moreover, the “German” is insinuated in a remark about the grandfather’s gun:

Ela [Diana] confessa, à amiga, desejar atirar-lhe nas nádegas com a própria arma, uma velha pistola que está dependurada na parede da sala, como troféu, símbolo fático, tendo também servido o avô na guerra de 14-18. (D’Andrea, 1979)

The German input is translated as sexual and connected to one of the most devastating wars in contrast to a primitive and repressed world. Through the ecological metaphor, D’Andrea’s review also hints at another reading strategy identified in the sample, which is focused on the landscape, nature, the region, and the social, political, and identity issues connected to it.

5.5. Geographical reading — Gramado as a foreign place in Brazil

The geographical reading in this reception study refers to an interpretation of the film related to its representation of the physical, social, and political structure of a determined place, which provides particular inferences about the narrative and what it means. In terms of *As Filhas do Fogo*'s reception, Gramado is both the geographical place where the film was shot and where the narrative takes place:

Totalmente rodado em Gramado e em Canela, no Rio Grande do Sul [...] (*Diário da Tarde*, 11 September 1978, p. 3)

Uma jovem estudante de São Paulo vai a Gramado (RS) passar uns tempos na mansão onde uma amiga vive praticamente sozinha: a mãe morreu há alguns anos e o pai está sempre em viagens. (*Jornal do Brasil*, 13 August 1979, p. Caderno B - 6)

One text in the sample is enthusiastic about parts of the film being filmed in the Parque Knorr, one of Gramado's main tourist attractions and the location of Diana's estate:

Muitas produções gaúchas, e até paulistas tiveram algumas cenas realizadas na Cidade das Hortênsias [Gramado], mas esta é a primeira vez em que toda a realização de um filme ocorre naquela localidade, principalmente no Parque Knorr. (Hohlfeldt, 1977)

Canela was also a shooting location. However, it is not always included in the press texts — “inteiramente filmado em Gramado” (*Tribuna da Imprensa*, 09 January 1979, p. 10) — and it is not the diegetic place of the narrative. Therefore, this analysis will focus on the meaning of Gramado for the reception. The importance lies in the city's tourism built around the idea of a reconstructed German ethnicity, which is sometimes seen as European and non-Brazilian.

As this example suggests, “a participação ativa da natureza (aqui a exuberante, belíssima Gramado, RS)” (Mattos, 1979), the vegetation is introduced as a character in the film — it is alive, it traps the characters, it isolates them, it constantly fights the primitive vegetation, it holds the voices of the dead, and it is a place where people are found dead. According to Dagmar, the local nature is considered a passage to other worlds. Ana tells Diana how her anxiety grew when she arrived in Gramado: “Parecia que eu estava chegando a um lugar estranho, distante, longe de tudo” (*As filhas do fogo*, 00:04:05-00:04:10).

One of the direct references to a “German” element in the reception sample for the film is the German vegetation in the psychoanalytic review, which, as seen above, acknowledges that Diana’s grandfather planted German seeds in the garden after destroying the native vegetation (cf. D’Andrea, 1979). The German nature in the film is personified by many triangle-shaped pine trees disposed around the garden, which is obviously not a specific German vegetation. The German grandfather personifies a foreign force that intrudes and dominates, a metaphor for colonization. But the review adds the sexual tone of “devirginate” — something that is not present in the dialogue:

Foi o meu avô quem plantou todas essas árvores aqui. Ele derrubou toda a mata que havia e tornou a plantar uma a uma dessas que você está vendo com sementes que tinha trazido da Alemanha. Primeiro ele queimou tudo o que havia, fez um fogo enorme que durou muitos dias. Não deixou nada em pé. Depois levou anos adubando, plantando, enxertando, até ficar assim. Ele queria fechar tudo, ter um lugar escondido, isolado, protegido, um lugar só pra ele. Foi por isso que ele mandou cercar o parque inteiro com redes de arame muito altas. Não queria ser incomodado por ninguém. E ninguém podia entrar. E a mata selvagem ficava isolada também, lá fora. Eu me identifico muito com esse meu avô. Eu também sinto vontade de ficar protegida e isolada de tudo, só com as coisas que eu gosto. Ele morreu antes que eu nascesse, mas é a pessoa da família que mais me fascina, é a única, aliás. Você precisa ver o retrato dele. Era um alemão forte, lindo, parecia um deus. (*As filhas do fogo*, 1979, 00:09:20-00:10:43)

The dialogue exposes how central the German grandfather is to the film, so close to Diana and so imposing on the landscape.⁵⁴ Still, his role is not discussed or even mentioned in the reviews, except D’Andrea’s analysis. The press texts focused on the importance of nature for the narrative without elaborating on its origin or colonization references. A quote from Khouri explains the allure of Gramado’s nature: “É o inferno psicológico num paraíso geográfico. Uma compulsão neurótica que conduz ao desespero, algo assim como viver entre quatro paredes ao ar livre” (Karam, 1977). The landscape is understood to worsen the characters’ anxieties. A dynamic force in nature was identified: “dicotomia que existe entre as sombras dos personagens e a vida explosiva da paisagem” (Hohlfeldt, 1977). If the characters are petrified and seized by fear, nature is moving and full of life — or souls.

The atmosphere, previously mentioned as associated with the horror/fantasy genre, was also linked to Gramado: “Walter Hugo conseguiu um clima perfeito nas belas paisagens gaúchas de Gramado e Canela” (*Diário do Paraná*, 16 September 1978,

⁵⁴ Through a film analysis perspective, the dialogue can also be understood as alluding to a master narrative related to German colonization in the south, namely the misleading perception that Germans lived completely isolated in their own world, with their own culture (German seeds), leaving the “wild forest” (Brazilian identity) out.

p. 2º Caderno - 5). Furthermore, for Khouri, the city has a fantasy aura, which fascinated him:

O porque de Gramado é explicado pelo diretor por sua atmosfera especial, seu mistério latente e “um sentido de espaço diferente”. Para ele, Gramado tem um clima de “science fiction”.

- Em 75, vi um disco voador na Serra Gaúcha. Estava com Pola Vartuck, quando a eletricidade do carro falhou. O céu estava estrelado e de repente, vimos um objeto luminoso que passou por nós. (Karam, 1977)

The city is illustrated with a particular paranormality that suits the film and works as a marketing campaign for Gramado. Yet this feeling of *otherness*, of a different place, also appears in a different constellation — Gramado as a foreign, European town: “tudo isso filmado nos locais mais bonitos (leia-se europeus) de Gramado e Canela” (*Jornal de Caxias*, 24 February 1979). Gramado is even specifically associated with Switzerland: “Totalmente filmado em Gramado, uma das regiões mais belas do Brasil, mas que lembra muito mais a Europa, em especial a Suíça, do que propriamente o Brasil” (*Diário do Paraná*, 02 February 1979, p. 2º Caderno - 7). These associations originate from the city’s tourist history, which cultivated the idea that German immigrants built Gramado. Therefore, it evokes foreign and European associations.

The region where Gramado is located received Portuguese, Italian, and German immigrants in the 19th century. The city was officially created in 1954 after emancipation from Taquara. Manoela Valduga, in her Master dissertation *Desmitificando um modelo de desenvolvimento* (2007), elaborates on the formation of Gramado as a tourist attraction. At the beginning of the 20th century, the village started to welcome tourists, who stayed for long periods in the summer. The first hotel, Bertollucci, was founded in 1918. Gramado was known for its gastronomy, nature, and mild weather, which attracted people with respiratory diseases. Over the following years, due to train line interruption, the tourists decamped to the coastal areas of Rio Grande do Sul, which were becoming more urbanized and accessible. Gramado’s influential citizens started to shape the village to regain its economy (cf. Valduga, 2007, p. 130).

The approach was to artificially create a European aesthetic for the village. The idea was that it should have a history and feel traditional, and it was part of the narrative

of the German and Italian migration to the region. Valduga explains that Gramado's tourism relies upon the city's similarity with Europe, especially Germany. At the same time, it distances itself from the rest of the country (cf. Valduga, 2007, pp. 140 and 151). A representative example of this strategy is the architecture of the city. Edson Dorneles, from city hall, revealed that the architectural style in Gramado is called *bávarafalk* and is a tourist attraction (cf. Dorneles, 2001, p. 64). Looking at the word's etymology, if "bávара" refers to Bavaria and "falk" to falcon, I understand that *bávarafalk* alludes to the bird's predatory grasp. It suggests that the "Bavarian" architecture aims to grasp tourists.

The house in the Parque Knorr is considered the exemplary reference of the "Bavarian Style": a farmhouse (*Bauernhaus*), close to the *Rottaler Bauernhaus* style, with wooden ornaments and painted details on the façade known as *Lüftlmalerei*. The term "Bavarian style" is still used today in academic and non-academic texts to describe the main architectural style in Gramado. However, it is imprecise and refers to a mix of architectural elements found in Bavaria and other parts of Germany. The term aims to translate a particular "German" architecture for tourists in a "German" settlement area.

In 'Uma pequena Europa na Serra Gaúcha: as apropriações culturais na arquitetura do espaço urbano de Gramado (RS)' (2018), Daniel Luciano Gevehr and Francieli Berti point to a cultural appropriation of the Bavarian housing style in their analysis of the origin of the city's architecture since the immigrants settling in the region were not from Bavaria (cf. Gevehr and Berti, 2018, p. 52). Other German styles, such as timber framing (*Fachwerk*), are likewise on display in hotels, churches, public and private institutions across the city, and houses with Italian influences (cf. Gevehr and Berti, 2018, p. 56).

Some buildings from colonization have timber framing and other architectural styles related to German immigration. However, as noticed by Seyferth, the incentive for the "German" or "Italian" construction is related more to tourism than to the settlement history:

O que torna diferentes as cidades que se desenvolveram nas regiões povoadas com imigrantes, e as casas nelas predominantes, são, principalmente, o tipo de expansão urbana resultante do sistema de distribuição dos lotes coloniais e certos detalhes da construção, como o telhado empinado, o aproveitamento do sótão, a existência de um espaço que tem funções de porão,

mesmo sem ser subterrâneo, a distribuição do espaço, e ainda a decoração. Outros detalhes da arquitetura poderiam ser apontados, mas não são predominantes, como a verga em arco, a antaria, a decoração de balcões, beirados e molduras nas janelas com madeira trabalhada em ondulações, etc. [...] Na verdade, a presença de uma pequena área destinada ao cultivo de flores, na frente da casa, é um costume mantido nas regiões de imigração, costume particularmente cultivado por teuto-brasileiros. (Seyferth, 1990, pp. 46-47)

Also, Gramado's nature was carefully negotiated to achieve a German aesthetic. Trees were imported in 1953 from the German Black Forest to the Lago Negro, an important tourist attraction today (cf. Valduga, 2007, p. 139). The city started to translate a "German culture" for tourists, for non-Germans:

A mudança do perfil do turista que visitava Gramado no verão, para a imagem de cidade de frio, ocorrida a partir da década de 60, pode ser atribuída à confluência de atrativos que foram surgindo com o passar dos anos, desde o cenário europeu, construído no imaginário local, a partir da arquitetura, da confecção de malhas, do chocolate, do Café Colonial e, mais recentemente, do *fondue*, produtos da gastronomia apreciados em baixas temperaturas. (Valduga, 2007, p. 159)

The Gramado Film Festival, held for the first time in 1973, was a product of strategic tourism and envisioned a nationwide divulgation of the town. Journalists writing for cinema columns became aware of the city and its European "new" traditions, although possibly unaware of their extent. Therefore, any reference to Gramado in the press texts could have been considered a reference to "German" elements in the film. If the city is a nationwide tourism spot known for its "Germanness," mentioning it in the reception of the film could be seen as an identification of "German" elements in the film. Although, as seen in some press texts, the city is considered European and not specifically German.

However, there is one review that identifies the landscape in Gramado as European but discredits the possibility of an underlying meaning of the location for the film by maintaining that it could have been filmed anywhere in the country:

Como poderia, porém, ser filmado em qualquer outro lugar do país. Mas talvez Khoury quisesse dar crédito aos seus mais tradicionais inimigos que o chamam de cineasta "europeu". E assim, na paisagem "européia" de Gramado, o diretor paulista pôde dar vazão aos seus delírios metafísicos, parapsicológicos, transcendentais e correlatos. (*Jornal de Caxias*, 03 February 1979)

For the review's author, the film narrative does not depend on Gramado. The filming location is justified through the "European" filmmaker. Hence, according to this writer, the "German" references reveal Khouri's supposedly own foreignness to Brazil. The press texts about *As Filhas do Fogo* generally overlook the "German" elements in

the film and how they influence the narrative. The following section will focus on this part of the film's reception.

5.6. The (non-)presence of the “German” reference in the reception

The direct reference to a “German” element appears briefly in only two texts in the sample. In the psychoanalytic review, as seen in Chapter 5.4., the author D’Andrea notes that Diana’s grandfather was a German immigrant who brought German seeds to plant on his property in Gramado, and he kept his gun used during the First World War. The review interprets the “German” input as sexual and connected to violence and devastation.

The “German” reference also appears in a review, which identifies German folk music as the source of Rogério Duprat’s soundtrack for the scenes set at the settlers’ party:

Em contrapartida, Rogério Duprat (primo de Khouri) fez talvez a sua mais bela e adequada trilha sonora. Basta avaliar o que ele extraiu de tensão de um simples tema do folclore alemão, na festa imaginária em que Ana e Diana tomam do vinho oferecido pelo criado de Dagmar. (Mattos, 1979)

The music plays during the entire party scene (01:17:52-01:21:40) and is diegetic since there are musicians on the stage. For the author of that review, the soundtrack carries narrative cues about cultural references, marking the geographic space of a settlers’ party, and it hints at suspense while stretching musical notes with a circular percussion arrangement in the background. In fact, the music does have the sonority of a *Fest* played during folk dances.

In conclusion, the focus of the texts in the sample is mostly to identify the place of *As Filhas do Fogo* in Khouri’s filmography, the fantasy and horror elements, and the meaning of the film’s location. The evaluation depended on the comparison with previous works — there was still melancholy, eroticism, and escapism in the film, although it is weaved into a fantasy/horror scenario.

The “German” elements might have been secondary in the interpretations, and whether they were German or not might not have affected the interpretation of the film

through authorship. The German elements are not specific to the message he wanted to tell; they would be interpreted as just a costume for his auteurism. Khouri's typical and recognizable style was maintained, and how it fitted in the "German" location was not explored. A possible explanation is that if many considered Khouri a "European" filmmaker, the "German" features simply fit the costume.

Moreover, Khouri had no personal connection to the "German" culture represented; he had a certain foreign gaze. He travels to Gramado and uses the products of German migration as the narrative background for his tale about parapsychology. Although there is a connection between the "German" and instances of mysticism, superstition, and spirituality, as in the *Mucker*, a deeper meaning or historical roots were not explored in *As Filhas do Fogo*.

The pictures published in the press about the film also do not present a pictoriality associated with German references. They focus on the female characters, Khouri filming, or Diana holding her German grandfather's gun. One poster could be a subtle reference — the costume proof (cf. *Diário da Tarde*, 19 September 1978, p. 3). The poster (cf. *Jornal do Brasil*, 12 August 1979, p. Caderno B - 8) has a medium close-up of Diana and Ana together in bed, dressed, with their faces turned to each other with closed eyes, from a *plongée* point of view. The mask used by one of the settlers' party participants frames the picture in a voyeur arrangement.

Other possible reading strategies that were not explored at the time of *As Filhas do Fogo*'s release include the connections to the European Gothic literary traditions, only uncovered in recent scholarly work (cf. Cánepa, 2010; Sá, 2012), and German Romanticism. The film was also not read from a socio-political perspective as an allegory of German colonization in southern Brazil or as an exploration of the effects of parapsychology in Brazil, for example. Although some reviewers found the film confusing, they did not consider reading it as an allegory, as with *Aleluia, Gretchen!* Possibly because Khouri himself was known for not discussing social and political issues.

5.7. Partial conclusion

This chapter analyzed the reception of *As Filhas do Fogo* (1978) and how “German” elements were subtly translated as an “Other,” foreign, giving the overall impression of a “non-Brazilian” scenario in the film. The foreignness and uncanny were supported by different reading strategies: through authorship, since Khouri was considered by many to be a “non-Brazilian” filmmaker and carried his own supposed foreignness to Brazil; genre, including horror and fantasy film aesthetics and the thematization of the “other side” by the parapsychology; the psychoanalysis, which reveals an “interior” unknown world; geography, the use of Gramado as a location and the city’s recent reorganization as a “European” place in Brazil. The explicit “German” designation was noticed in only two press texts: a psychoanalytic review (cf. D’Andrea, 1979), which observed the German references to be sexual with allusion to colonization and violence, and a review by Mattos (cf. 1979), which remarks on the use of German folk music.

The chapter also demonstrated that the press sample of *As Filhas do Fogo* followed the tendencies of the 1970s. There were a couple of critical views about eroticism and how it represents (or does not) Brazil and Brazilian cinema. Alongside the commentary about Khouri’s filmography and his place in Brazilian cinema, the texts ultimately reveal the search for a Brazilian cinema.

6. Conclusion

Since the turn of the millennium, we have had a manifold of Brazilian films related to German migration in Brazil or Brazilian migration in Germany: for example, the aforementioned *A Paixão de Jacobina* (Fabio Barreto, 2002), a different take on the Mucker, and the documentaries *Walachai* (Rejane Zilles, 2013) and *Berlim Brasil* (Martina Dreyer and Renata Heinz, 2009). Others include *Olga* (Jayme Monjardim, 2004), *Cinema, Aspirinas e Urubus* (Marcelo Gomes, 2005), *Outro Sertão* (Adriana Jacobsen and Soraia Vilela, 2013), *Praia do Futuro* (Karim Aïnouz, 2014), *Menino 23* (Belisário Franca, 2016), and *Muito Romântico* (Melissa Dullius and Gustavo Jahn, 2016). Long before these films, however, three films from the second half of the 1970s attracted some attention in Brazil: *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (Sylvio Back, 1976), *Os Mucker* (Jorge Bodanzky and Wolf Gauer, 1978), and *As Filhas do Fogo* (Walter Hugo Khouri, 1978). The directors all have a migration background (first to third generation) and the films tell stories, in very different styles, of German migrants and their descendants in southern Brazil. *Aleluia, Gretchen!* was the very first Brazilian film with this theme.

The reception analyses based on press material published in the 1970s and collected using the Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira database demonstrate a wide range of interpretations of these films. The methodology was based on the historical materialist approach of Janet Staiger in *Interpreting Films* (1992), which analyzes how historical contexts of production and exhibition of films influence their diverse interpretations. In this dissertation, I assembled reviews, film synopses, movie theater showtimes, festival coverages, and interviews to ascertain the environment of spectatorship under censorship. Many of the varied interpretations were based on the different text genres: for example, the concerns over *Aleluia, Gretchen!*'s reception among the German settlements and the accusations in festival coverage of the film being pro-Nazi; in the case of the *Mucker*, Glauber Rocha's commentary about the film being far-right was published in an interview with the filmmakers and the diverse descriptions of the film, repeating such descriptions of the Muckers in the 19th century, were present not only in the reviews but also in synopsis of the film. The criticism of eroticism in Brazilian cinema was shown in the reception of *As Filhas do Fogo* in a readers' letter and an article on national cinema. These instances of apparent displaced translations and

interpretations of the films and the “German” elements can be marginal and not obvious at first. However, the comparison of varied types of text, and in the context of censorship, helped understand the reception of the films.

The research in this dissertation revealed not only an alterity constructed about the German migrant, a disputed symbol of national and foreign representation, but also ideological disputes and a yearning for answers about unclarified topics in Brazilian history. These include the massacre by the government of social-religious movements and minorities and the influence and persistence of authoritarian ideologies from the Vargas regime until the military dictatorship.

Drawing on references to German migration in Brazil, such as Seyferth (cf. 1990; 1994; 1997; 2004; 2012; 2014), Gertz (cf. 1987; 1994; 2008), and Luebke (cf. 1990), it was possible to observe the master narratives created around these themes and how the interpretations of the films consciously or unconsciously perpetuated or challenged them. The varied translations and interpretations revealed multifold understandings of “German” in Brazil and provided a complex overview of the political situation at the time. The unifying thread, nevertheless, is the perception of the “German” as “Other” or “foreign” in Brazilian film reception in the 1970s. The texts about the films help to construct an alterity in relation to the category “German.” At the same time, there is no articulation of the meaning of the word “German” or who is implied in the denomination “German.” “German” is both “non-Brazilian” and “Brazilian,” since the films inform about different Brazilian realities, and, therefore, some texts inevitably also inform about correlations with “Brazilian.”

The violence of the “Other-German” is in the foreground of the interpretations of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* On the one hand, “Brazilian” is distanced from the violence; on the other hand, a connection between the violence of the Nazi regime and the Brazilian military dictatorship is revealed. The connections between German migration, Nazism, and authoritarianism in Brazil were interpreted in different ways, making the film controversial and resulting in apparent contradictory accusations of being for or against Nazism. The emphasis of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* is on the German family’s migration and how the members do or do not adapt to “Brazil.” This perspective builds on their

otherness, also in relation to the violent ideology that they bring. These encounters find a counterpart in Brazilian Integralism.

The reception of *Os Mucker's* revealed an "Other-German" in relation to Brazilians and other Germans. The varied descriptions of the historical Mucker, which were more in focus than the fictional Mucker, uncovered how their rituals (e.g., habits, religion, social and work organization) challenged expectations and imaginations about the "German" migrants in Brazil. Moreover, it showed how heterogeneous these expectations are. But also, the authors' own political positions and repetitions of master narratives about German migration in Brazil and the Mucker event are revealed through how they articulate expectations for migrants in their work. But as with *Aleluia, Gretchen!* there is also an approximation to "Brazilians" — i.e. the Mucker were compared to the members of the Canudos messianic movement.

Although the "German" elements were mostly overlooked in the reception of *As Filhas do Fogo*, the texts inferred a foreignness or an unfamiliar place, which is first related to Khouri's own supposed foreignness to Brazil. It is also shown through fantasy and horror genre appropriations, the thematization of parapsychology, an atmosphere that opens up an unfamiliar place, and the use of Gramado, a "European" city, as location. The "German" elements are then subtly translated as "Other," foreign. They are mostly not recognized as "German." Still, the overall impression was of a "non-Brazilian" scenario.

Ultimately, the analyses in the dissertation demonstrated varied interpretations and translations of "German" in Brazil. Further, the analyses showed that master narratives and prejudices that can be historically tracked were challenged or maintained in the films. In *Aleluia, Gretchen!* the German migration is closely associated with Nazism. Many of the texts used in the analysis did not distinguish between the ideology and "German" cultures, elaborate on other instances of migration, or focus on German migrants that were not Nazis. Moreover, the commentaries about the rejection of Brazil or the difficulty of adaptation to Brazil are remnants of the "German peril" anxiety and the non-assimilation fears that date back to the 19th century.

In *Os Mucker* film, “German” is mainly interpreted as an unexpected “German” in a situation equally unexpected to be found in southern Brazil. The point is to perplex spectators and to emphasize causes other than ethnicity to explain the configuration of a messianic or social-religious movement. A (self)image from the 19th century of the “German” migrant as industrious, hard-working, successful, and civilized is confronted with the Mucker members — peasants, oppressed, and uneducated. They are rebels, socialists, or communists, challenging the master narrative of “German” migrants. Moreover, many descriptions of the Mucker in the press in relation to the film echo what was said about the Mucker at their time — for example, the fanaticism and the uncontrolled sexuality — and depictions used of German migrants in general as to the non-assimilation and isolationism. Nevertheless, the references to “German” are more articulated in the press material used in the analysis than in the previous reception, including historical facts related to German migration in the 19th century.

Aleluia, Gretchen! also deals with German migration. However, the film focused on the migration wave related to the Second World War, as did the press reception, giving the impression that German immigration started only because of the war. Nevertheless, the two reception studies reveal spectators looking for new data on issues related to German migration in Brazil that were by then still not sufficiently articulated — namely, Nazism in Brazil and the Mucker uproar. In *As Filhas do Fogo*, however, the “German” references, when noticed, allude to colonization but without any historical discussion.

Interestingly, the three films associate “German” with violence; they all have film frames with mostly German migrants or descendants holding guns. However, the theme of violence is primarily addressed in the reception of *Aleluia, Gretchen!* and *Os Mucker*. The Nazi violence is condemned in *Aleluia, Gretchen!* while, in *Os Mucker*, it is seen in the context of the class struggle. Lastly, in *As Filhas do Fogo*, it is associated with the horror genre. However, the “German” element was not necessarily used to challenge the ongoing authoritarianism and the regime or interpreted this way. It is also not necessarily connected to Geisel, although it is hard to affirm whether these connections were not published due to censorship.

In general, the reception of the three films was deeply rooted in Brazil's history during the 1970s. There was a new moment of German ethnicity re-articulation, a new search for "Brazil" in cinema, and the rediscovery, or revisionist impulse, regarding Brazilian historical events, which shaped reception at the time. Although the conception of the films originated from different personal motivations and biographical backgrounds of the directors, related or not to the mentioned themes, the reception demonstrates the weight of the military dictatorship and the search for a deeper understanding of the country's history in the context of censorship.

Commentary on *Aleluia, Gretchen!* in newspapers often discussed Nazism and Integralism filmic representations. It expanded on the themes and other connections to Brazil's history, such as the arrest of Nazi criminals or Brazil's participation in the Second World War. The texts concerning *Os Mucker's* informed the audience about the need for change in Brazil, such as the historical treatment of the messianic movement of Canudos. The reception analysis also uncovered an interest in understanding historical processes related to migration, violence, and authoritarian ideologies and how such an understanding could further explain the political situation in Brazil at the time.

In this sense, there is also a concern about identifying how the films explore uncharted waters in Brazilian history, including social groups still unseen on screen. In the press samples used in the reception analysis of *As Filhas do Fogo*, Brazil's history was not in focus. Instead, the emphasis was on parapsychology, which enjoyed growing interest then, and some views about eroticism and how it represents (or does not) Brazil and Brazilian cinema.

The three very different films still had a common reading strategy — *auteurism*, which also inferred the interpretation of the films and the "German" elements. Authorship was privileged as a significant reading strategy. For example, it appeared more often than historical comparison, allegorical or psychoanalytic readings. In the case of *Aleluia, Gretchen!*, the director, Sylvio Back, was understood to have authority on the theme, as his mother was a German migrant. The representation of the "German" in the film was usually not criticized, apart from unexplored allegations in a few texts about the reception of the film among German audiences.

While Back was born and raised in southern Brazil and filmed his own “*Heimat*,” Bodanzky, Gauer, and Khouri went to the south and performed a foreign gaze. Thus, the authorship strategy in the reception of these films approximates the filmmakers to their films in different ways. For instance, Bodanzky and Gauer were known for their previous exploration of Brazil’s problems and for being politically challenging. So, their films are taken as a critical discourse of the contemporary moment or through political perspectives. The attention to their *ficção-documentário* style and how they articulate the filmic narrative working with the local culture and people shape interest in the films.

The authorship strategy in the reception of *As Filhas do Fogo* mainly situates the film in Khouri’s complete filmography, so analyzing this strategy was imperative to understand the reception of the “German” references in *As Filhas do Fogo*. If Khouri usually explores the characters’ inner worlds, a psychoanalytic review would make more sense than a historical analysis. This may explain why the “German” references and the socio-political implications of German colonization in southern Brazil were overlooked in the film.

Conclusively, this research has demonstrated the importance of reading strategies, historical context, and historical background in how people interpret films. In this sense, a wide range of research possibilities are left open, such as a reception study of the films based on contemporary interpretations to see if there are changes or continuations from the 1970s interpretations and the reading strategies used. Another possibility is to analyze the reception in Germany in comparison to a Brazilian audience. A reception study of more recent Brazilian films about German migration stories would also be interesting. Ultimately, these studies help us to understand how we interpret films and how our historical context and cultural background influence how we interpret them and observe the “Other.”

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8. Kurzfassung

In der zweiten Hälfte der 1970er Jahre gab es in Brasilien ein ungewöhnliches Thema, das in drei Filmen von bekannten, aber sehr unterschiedlichen Filmemachern immer wieder auftauchte: Die Geschichten handelten von deutschen Einwanderern und ihren Nachkommen im Süden Brasiliens. Der erste Film, *Aleluia, Gretchen!* (Sylvio Back, 1976) gilt als der erste Spielfilm überhaupt, der die deutsche Einwanderung in den Süden Brasiliens thematisiert. Es handelt sich um ein politisches Drama, das in den 1930er bis 1970er Jahren spielt, mit einem Hauch von Spannung und Surrealismus. Im Mittelpunkt der Geschichte steht eine deutsche Familie, die nach Brasilien auswandert und in den Nationalsozialismus verwickelt wird. Der zweite Film, *Os Mucker* (Jorge Bodanzky und Wolf Gauer, 1978), ein so genannter fiktionaler Dokumentarfilm, porträtiert die sozial-religiöse Bewegung der Mucker um 1874. Der dritte Film schließlich, *As Filhas do Fogo* (Walter Hugo Khouri, 1978), ist ein Fantasy-Horrorfilm, der hauptsächlich in den späten 1970er Jahren spielt. Er handelt von deutschen Nachkommen von Einwanderern, die sich mit der Parapsychologie beschäftigen. Diese Filme stehen in keinem direkten Zusammenhang und haben sehr unterschiedliche Stile und Erzählweisen. Außerdem repräsentieren sie verschiedene historische Epochen. In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass Brasilien von 1964 bis 1985 unter einer Militärdiktatur stand, war ich neugierig, was die Botschaft dieser Filme sein könnte.

Ernesto Geisel, Armeegeneral und selbst Nachkomme deutscher Einwanderer, war von 1974 bis 1979 Präsident Brasiliens. Geisel gilt heute als der Präsident, der die politische Öffnung der Diktatur einleitete. Marcos Napolitano weist jedoch darauf hin, dass es erst nach 1978 ein Öffnungsprogramm gab. Geisels Regime ist beispielsweise verantwortlich für 39 verschwundene Oppositionelle und 42 Tote sowie für eine umfassende Presse- und Kunstzensur. Währenddessen gab es bereits 1976 Angriffe der politischen Rechten auf die Associação Brasileira de Imprensa (ABI) und den Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil (OAB), was zu Unsicherheit und Misstrauen gegenüber dem Regime führte. 1978 litten die Regimegegner immer noch unter den Bombenanschlägen einer rechten Gruppe, die gegen die Öffnung war. Sie richteten sich gegen Einzelpersonen, Universitäten, Buchläden und die Presse. Überraschenderweise förderte

das Regime auch eine Kulturpolitik, die vielen Künstlern, die sich offen gegen die Diktatur wandten, Raum gab (vgl. Napolitano, 2020, S. 229; 234; 252; 294).

Laut Arthur Autran und José Mario Ortiz (2018) führten die Entwicklung der Kulturindustrie und die jüngsten staatlichen Investitionen in diese Industrie nach 1974 zu einer neuen Achtung der “regionalen Vielfalt” und zu aktualisierten Vorstellungen des “Brasilianers”, der “nationalen Identität” und des “National-Populären”. Das Kino ist also reich an literarischen Adaptionen und Darstellungen der brasilianischen Geschichte und Kultur, mit einer Aufwertung des Begriffs “populär” und einer *spectacularization* des “Nationalen” (vgl. Autran und Ortiz, 2018, S. 221-225) — ausgewählte “nationale” Ereignisse werden gefeiert, dramatisiert, inszeniert und in Spektakel verwandelt.

Filmmacher, Kritiker und Wissenschaftler diskutierten darüber, was das “brasilianische Kino” ausmacht. Das Umfeld des Kinos war beeinflusst von der Dominanz US-amerikanischer Filme auf dem Markt, den Schwierigkeiten der Filmproduktion in Brasilien und der Ästhetik des modernen Kinos weltweit. Letztlich ging es darum, zu definieren, was brasilianisch ist, wie Brasilien repräsentiert werden sollte und welche Art von Kino an Bedeutung gewinnen und staatlich gefördert werden sollte.

Die Filme *Aleluia*, *Gretchen!*, *Os Mucker* und *As Filhas do Fogo* zeichnen sich in diesem Jahrzehnt durch ihre Bezüge zur deutschen Migration und zum kulturellen Erbe aus. Vor den 1970er Jahren waren Spielfilme, die die deutsche Migrationsgeschichte thematisierten, nicht üblich. Diese plötzliche Wende könnte eine Reaktion auf die oben beschriebene Suche nach einer aktualisierten nationalen Identität und Geschichte sein oder auch eine Referenz an Geisel. Das Szenario ist jedoch weitaus komplexer. Die brasilianische Migrationsforscherin Giralda Seyferth identifizierte in den 1970er Jahren auf kultureller und symbolischer Ebene eine Tendenz des deutsch-völkischen Revivals, das sich in individuellen, familiären und kollektiven Diskursen über eine gemeinsame Identität innerhalb der deutschstämmigen Bevölkerung artikuliert — etwa in Form von Kolonialmuseen, folkloristischen und touristischen Veranstaltungen, Belletristik und Sachbüchern - und das in der

Auseinandersetzung mit dem brasilianischen Nationalismus eine komplexere Bedeutung erhält (vgl. Seyferth, 2012, S. 23).

Aus diesem Grund schlage ich eine Rezeptionsstudie vor, die sich auf die Printmedien stützt, um zu analysieren, wie *Aleluia*, *Gretchen!*, *Os Mucker* und *As Filhas do Fogo* zum Zeitpunkt ihrer Veröffentlichung rezipiert und interpretiert wurden. Das Hauptziel besteht darin, Wiederholungen und Dissonanzen in der Rezeption zu beobachten und mögliche Gründe für ihre Vielfalt zu formulieren, die auf dem historischen Kontext, einschließlich der politischen, kulturellen und filmischen Sphäre, beruhen. Das zweite Ziel ist zu beobachten, wie die Presse die “deutschen” Elemente in den Filmen übersetzt und liest: Werden Identitäten und Stereotypen darüber, was es bedeutet, Deutscher, deutscher Migrant oder Nachkomme eines Deutschen in Brasilien zu sein, in Frage gestellt oder reproduziert? Ebenso interessiert mich, wie die unterschiedlichen Lesestrategien der Zuschauer die Bedeutung des “Deutschen” und die Rezeption der Filme beeinflussen.

Auch die Filme selbst könnten als Untersuchungsgegenstand dienen, um herauszufinden, wie sie Stereotype und Meistererzählungen prägen. Durch den Vergleich der Rezeption der Filme kann jedoch untersucht werden, warum bestimmte Themen aufgegriffen wurden und andere nicht, welche Diskussionen oder Polemiken ausgelöst wurden, welche Werte dem “Deutschen” in Brasilien zugeschrieben wurden und mit welchen Ereignissen und Bildern diese verbunden wurden. Eine Rezeptionsstudie kann einen einzigartigen Einblick in die Auslöser von Interpretationen und Deutungskämpfen geben und zeigen, wie diese drei Filme, die unterschiedliche Themen der deutschen Migration behandeln, unterschiedliche Vorstellungen von der kulturellen, sozialen und politischen Bedeutung dieser Begegnungen hervorrufen. In einer Zeit der politischen Unsicherheit offenbaren die Interpretationen dieser Filme einen komplexen Kontext, in dem die Interpretationen auch darauf abzielten, die Interpreten ideologisch zu positionieren.

Die Rezeptionsanalysen, die auf Pressematerial aus den 1970er Jahren basieren und in der Datenbank der Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira gesammelt wurden, zeigen ein breites Spektrum von Interpretationen dieser Filme. Die Methodik basiert auf dem

historisch-materialistischen Ansatz von Janet Staiger in *Interpreting Films* (1992), der analysiert, wie die historischen Kontexte der Produktion und Vorführung von Filmen deren unterschiedliche Interpretationen beeinflussen. Im Gegensatz zu der Annahme, dass das Publikum einen Film aufgrund der Art und Weise, wie er gezeigt wurde, interpretiert hat, analysiert diese Methode, wie die Menschen den Film tatsächlich interpretiert haben. Sie geht davon aus, dass scheinbar lose und widersprüchliche Interpretationen nicht zufällig sind. Vielmehr verweisen sie auf spezifische Diskurse über die Themen, Regisseure und Produktionen der Filme. Sie sind auch bedingt durch Lesestrategien und die Art und Weise, wie sich die Zuschauer selbst und ihre Identitäten zu den Filmen positionieren. So können die unterschiedlichen Interpretationen der Filme die verschiedenen Assoziationen mit dem “Deutschen” in Brasilien aufzeigen, die historisch begründet sein können. Darüber hinaus kann auch die Lesestrategie die Interpretation des “Deutschen” beeinflussen.

In dieser Dissertation habe ich Kritiken, Filmzusammenfassungen, Vorführungen, Festivalberichte und Interviews zusammengetragen, um das Umfeld des Publikums unter der Zensur zu untersuchen. Viele der unterschiedlichen Interpretationen basierten auf den verschiedenen Textgattungen: zum Beispiel die Besorgnis über die Rezeption von *Aleluia, Gretchen!* in den deutschen Siedlungen und die Vorwürfe in den Festivalberichten, der Film sei pro-nazistisch; im Fall von *Os Mucker* wurde Glauber Rochas Kommentar, der Film sei rechtsextrem, in einem Interview mit den Filmemachern veröffentlicht, und die verschiedenen Beschreibungen des Films, die solche Beschreibungen der Muckers im 19. Jahrhundert wiederholten, waren nicht nur in den Rezensionen, sondern auch in der Filmsynopse präsent. Die Kritik an der Erotik im brasilianischen Kino spiegelt sich in der Rezeption von *As Filhas do Fogo* in Leserbriefen und einem Artikel über das nationale Kino wider. Diese scheinbar verschobenen Übersetzungen und Interpretationen der Filme und ihrer “deutschen” Elemente können marginal und zunächst nicht offensichtlich sein. Der Vergleich der verschiedenen Textsorten und im Kontext der Zensur hilft jedoch, die Rezeption der Filme zu verstehen.

Staigers Fallstudien gehen von einem Deutungsereignis aus. Die vorliegende Dissertation geht den umgekehrten Weg — sie geht von den Texten aus und sucht nach

Interpretationsereignissen. Dies ermöglicht eine allgemeinere Betrachtung der Deutungen und eine genauere Untersuchung der Bedeutung der “deutschen” Bezüge in den Texten sowie der Frage, wann das “Deutsche” vernachlässigt wird.

Die Untersuchungen dieser Dissertation haben nicht nur eine konstruierte Andersartigkeit der deutschen Migranten, ein ein umstrittenes Symbol der nationalen und fremden Repräsentation, sondern auch ideologische Auseinandersetzungen und eine Sehnsucht nach Antworten auf ungelöste Themen der brasilianischen Geschichte offenbart. Dazu gehören die Massaker der Regierung an sozial-religiösen Bewegungen und Minderheiten sowie der Einfluss und das Fortwirken autoritärer Ideologien vom Vargas-Regime bis zur Militärdiktatur.

Anhand von Referenzen zur deutschen Migration in Brasilien, wie z.B. Seyferth (vgl. 1990; 1994; 1997; 2004; 2012; 2014), Gertz (vgl. 1987; 1994; 2008) und Lübke (vgl. 1990), konnte beobachtet werden, welche Meistererzählungen um diese Themen kreiert wurden und wie die Interpretationen der Filme diese bewusst oder unbewusst fortschrieben oder in Frage stellten. Die unterschiedlichen Übersetzungen und Interpretationen offenbarten vielfältige Vorstellungen von “dem Deutschen” in Brasilien und gaben einen komplexen Einblick in die damalige politische Situation. Der rote Faden der Rezeption ist jedoch die Wahrnehmung des “Deutschen” als “Anderes” oder “Fremdes” in der brasilianischen Filmrezeption der 1970er Jahre. Die Texte zu den Filmen tragen dazu bei, Fremdheit in Bezug auf die Kategorie “deutsch” zu konstruieren. Gleichzeitig wird nicht artikuliert, was das Wort “deutsch” bedeutet oder wer mit der Bezeichnung “deutsch” gemeint ist. “Deutsch” ist sowohl “nicht-brasilianisch” als auch “brasilianisch,” da die Filme über verschiedene brasilianische Realitäten informieren und somit einige Texte zwangsläufig auch über Bezüge zum “Brasilianischen” informieren.

Aus Gründen der Lesbarkeit werden im Folgenden Personen, die sich mit der deutschen Staatsangehörigkeit, Abstammung und/oder Ethnie identifizieren, als “Deutsche” bezeichnet. Der Begriff “Deutsche” impliziert also nicht notwendigerweise die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit. Er ist jedoch zunächst ein Hinweis auf die Zugehörigkeit zu einer sozialen Gruppe, die Merkmale der so genannten “deutschen

Kultur“ teilt. Dies muss aber nicht für alle Mitglieder die gleiche Bedeutung haben. Die Bezeichnung “deutsch” setzt auch keine Homogenität voraus oder schließt Personen mit brasilianischer Staatsangehörigkeit aus.

Um die Übersetzung des Deutschen in Brasilien zu erläutern, beziehe ich mich auf die Kulturwissenschaftlerin Doris Bachmann-Medick. Nach ihr kann Kultur als Übersetzungsprozess verstanden werden und Migrationsereignisse sind individuelle oder kollektive Momente der Übersetzung (vgl. 2012b, S. 112; 2018, S. 276). Übersetzung wird hier jedoch nicht im Sinne einer Übertragung von einer “Herkunftssprache” in eine andere verstanden, um eine “Äquivalenz” von Bedeutungen herzustellen. Sie folgt der kulturellen Wende in der Translationswissenschaft. Der Transfer und die Vermittlung von Kultur, die in Migrationsbewegungen stattfinden, werden hier als ein Geschehen verstanden, das Machtverhältnisse, Meistererzählungen, Stereotypisierung, Entfremdung und Aneignung offen legt. Darüber hinaus werden Identitäten und Zugehörigkeiten immer wieder neu definiert. Bachmann-Medick versteht Migranten nicht nur als diejenigen, die übersetzen, sondern auch als diejenigen, die für die Aufnahmegesellschaft übersetzt werden. Dennoch kann der Migrant nicht einfach im Gegensatz zur Aufnahmegesellschaft gesehen werden, denn Migration ist keine lineare, unidirektionale Bewegung zwischen zwei Orten — sie umfasst multiple Zugehörigkeiten und Loyalitäten (vgl. Bachmann-Medick, 2018, S. 273-278).

Die Deutschen wurden in Brasilien übersetzt und nahmen ihre eigenen Übersetzungen anderer sozialer Gruppen vor, oft in einem dialektischen Prozess der Wiederentdeckung ihrer eigenen Identität. Die Deutschen waren Gegenstand von Meistererzählungen und wurden zu verschiedenen Zeiten als “gute Kolonisatoren” oder “schlechte Kolonisatoren” dargestellt, was zu einer widersprüchlichen Regierungspolitik führte. Einige begünstigten die Deutschen, andere benachteiligten sie. Seit mindestens 200 Jahren ist die Übersetzung des Deutschen in Brasilien ein Prozess, der mit Verlusten und Missverständnissen, aber auch mit neuen Bedeutungen und Beziehungen verbunden ist.

Die Dissertation ist so aufgebaut, dass sie mit einem einleitenden Kapitel beginnt, das eine Erläuterung der Methodik, Herausforderungen für die Forschung und

einen Literaturüberblick enthält. Im zweiten Kapitel werden Darstellungen und Übersetzungen der deutschen Migration in Südbrasilien untersucht. Auf der Grundlage eines theoretischen Rahmens etablierter Autoren werden die Kategorien “deutsch” und “brasilianisch,” ihre zeitliche Konstruktion sowie Fragen transnationaler Kontakte, kultureller Identität und kultureller Übersetzung diskutiert.

Die folgenden drei Kapitel — Kapitel drei bis fünf — widmen sich der Rezeption von *Aleluia*, *Gretchen!*, *Os Mucker* und *As Filhas do Fogo* in der chronologischen Reihenfolge ihrer Veröffentlichung. Anhand dessen, was über die einzelnen Filme geschrieben und gedruckt wurde, untersuche ich, wie sie interpretiert wurden, welche Lesestrategien den Texten zugrunde lagen und welche Bedeutungen von “deutsch” und “brasilianisch” in den Rezeptionskontexten angenommen wurden. Viele dieser Schlussfolgerungen haben historische Wurzeln, die aufgezeigt werden und die Wiederholung alter Diskurse offenbaren.

Während sie die Filme für die Zuschauer interpretieren und übersetzen, interpretieren und übersetzen die Autoren die “deutschen” Elemente für ihr “brasilianisches” Publikum. Viele Texte agieren zwischen Kulturen, die keineswegs isoliert voneinander sind, sondern in gewisser Weise ein Wechselspiel der Alterität suggerieren. Wie sich durch die gesamte Dissertation zieht, wurde das “Deutsche” in der Regel als das “Andere” des Brasilianischen interpretiert — und nicht als Teil davon. In den Kapiteln wird daher untersucht, wie Alterität konstruiert und imaginiert wird.

Daher steht im dritten Kapitel und in der ersten Rezeptionsstudie die Gewalt des “Anderen Deutschen” im Vordergrund der Interpretationen von *Aleluia*, *Gretchen!* Da sich viele Texte mit den Zusammenhängen zwischen deutscher Migration, Nationalsozialismus und Autoritarismus in Brasilien beschäftigen, versucht dieses Kapitel, die historischen Gründe dafür aufzudecken und zu untersuchen, warum der Film so viele widersprüchliche Interpretationen erfahren hat, einschließlich des Vorwurfs, für und gegen den Nationalsozialismus zu sein.

Kapitel 4 untersucht die Rezeption von *Os Mucker* und zeigt unterschiedliche Lesestrategien auf. Ein relevanter Unterschied besteht darin, dass der Film ein reales historisches Ereignis darstellt und im selben Jahr veröffentlicht wurde wie ein

bahnbrechendes wissenschaftliches Werk über den Aufstand. Viele Interpretationen des Films basierten auf dem historischen Mucker und nicht auf dem fiktiven Mucker. Dennoch unterstützten sie Interpretationen ihrer Rituale — Bräuche, Religion, Sozial- und Arbeitsorganisation —, die sie zu einem exemplarischen “Anderen” im Verhältnis zu Brasilianern und anderen Deutschen machten.

Schließlich zeigt die Rezeptionsstudie zu *As Filhas do Fogo* in Kapitel 5, dass sich der Film von den beiden anderen unterscheidet, da die “deutschen” Elemente des Films in den Presstexten kaum Erwähnung finden. Das “Andere” ist in diesem Fall nicht unbedingt das “Deutsche.” Dennoch vermittelt er eine dargestellte Fremdheit, die auch durch die Ästhetik des Horror-/Fantasyfilms unterstützt wird.

Im sechsten Kapitel, dem Fazit, untersuche ich einen Zusammenhang zwischen den Rezeptionsanalysen der drei Filme und stelle die wichtigsten Ergebnisse dieser Untersuchung in Bezug auf die übergeordneten Forschungsfragen meiner Arbeit vor. Diese Ergebnisse werden im Folgenden näher erläutert.

Zunächst steht die Gewalt des “Anderen Deutschen” im Vordergrund der Interpretationen von *Aleluia, Gretchen!* Einerseits wird das “Brasilianische” von der Gewalt distanziert, andererseits wird der Zusammenhang zwischen der Gewalt des NS-Regimes und der brasilianischen Militärdiktatur aufgezeigt. Die Verbindungen zwischen deutscher Migration, Nationalsozialismus und Autoritarismus in Brasilien wurden unterschiedlich interpretiert, was den Film kontrovers machte und zu scheinbar widersprüchlichen Vorwürfen, für oder gegen den Nationalsozialismus zu sein, führte. *Aleluia, Gretchen!* konzentriert sich auf die Migration der deutschen Familie und darauf, wie sich ihre Mitglieder an “Brasilien” anpassen oder nicht. Diese Perspektive basiert auf ihrer Andersartigkeit, auch in Bezug auf die gewalttätige Ideologie, die sie als Deutsche mitbringen. Diese Begegnungen finden ihre Entsprechung im brasilianischen Integralismus.

Die Rezeption von *Os Mucker* offenbarte ein “Anderes-Deutsches” im Verhältnis zu Brasilianern und anderen Deutschen. Die vielfältigen Beschreibungen der historischen Mucker, die stärker im Mittelpunkt standen als die fiktiven Mucker, machten deutlich, wie ihre Rituale (z.B. Gewohnheiten, Religion, Sozial- und

Arbeitsorganisation) Erwartungen und Vorstellungen über “deutsche Migranten” in Brasilien herausforderten. Dabei wurde auch deutlich, wie heterogen diese Erwartungen sind. Aber auch die eigenen politischen Positionen der Autoren und die Wiederholung von Meistererzählungen über die deutsche Migration in Brasilien und das Mucker-Ereignis werden in der Art und Weise, wie sie die Erwartungen an Migranten in ihren Arbeiten artikulieren, deutlich. Aber wie in *Aleluia, Gretchen!* gibt es auch eine Annäherung an die “Brasilianer,” d.h. die Mucker werden mit den Mitgliedern der messianischen Bewegung von Canudos verglichen.

Obwohl die “deutschen” Elemente in der Rezeption von *As Filhas do Fogo* meist übersehen wurden, suggerieren die Texte eine Fremdheit bzw. einen fremden Ort, der zunächst mit Khouiris eigener vermeintlicher Fremdheit in Brasilien in Verbindung gebracht wird. Sie zeigt sich auch in der Aneignung von Fantasy- und Horrorgenres, der Thematisierung von Parapsychologie, einer Atmosphäre, die einen fremden Ort eröffnet, und der Verwendung von Gramado, einer “europäischen” Stadt, als Schauplatz. Die “deutschen” Elemente werden dabei subtil als “anders,” fremd übersetzt. Sie werden meist nicht als “deutsch” erkannt. Dennoch entsteht der Gesamteindruck eines “nicht-brasilianischen” Szenarios.

Im Ergebnis zeigten die Analysen der Dissertation unterschiedliche Interpretationen und Übersetzungen des “Deutschen” in Brasilien. Darüber hinaus zeigten die Analysen, dass in den Filmen historisch belegbare Meistererzählungen und Vorurteile in Frage gestellt oder aufrechterhalten werden. In *Aleluia, Gretchen!* wird die deutsche Migration eng mit dem Nationalsozialismus verknüpft. Viele der in der Analyse verwendeten Texte unterscheiden nicht zwischen der Ideologie und “deutscher” Kultur, gehen nicht auf andere Fälle von Migration ein oder konzentrieren sich auf deutsche Migranten, die keine Nazis waren. Darüber hinaus sind Kommentare über die Ablehnung Brasiliens oder die Schwierigkeit, sich in Brasilien anzupassen, ein Überbleibsel der Angst vor der “deutschen Gefahr” und der Angst vor Nicht-Assimilation, die auf das 19. Jahrhundert zurückgehen.

In *Os Mucker* wird die Darstellung des “Deutschen” vor allem als ein unerwarteter “Deutscher” in einer ebenso unerwarteten Situation im Süden Brasiliens

interpretiert. Es geht darum, die Zuschauer zu verwirren und andere Ursachen als die ethnische Zugehörigkeit zu betonen, um die Entstehung einer messianischen oder sozial-religiösen Bewegung zu erklären. Dem (Selbst-)Bild des 19. Jahrhunderts vom “deutschen” Einwanderer als fleißig, hart arbeitend, erfolgreich und zivilisiert werden die Mucker — Bauern, unterdrückt und ungebildet — gegenübergestellt. Sie sind Rebellen, Sozialisten oder Kommunisten, die die Meistererzählung der “deutschen” Migranten in Frage stellen. Darüber hinaus spiegeln viele Beschreibungen der Mucker in der Presse im Zusammenhang mit dem Film wider, was über die Mucker zu ihrer Zeit gesagt wurde — zum Beispiel Fanatismus und unkontrollierte Sexualität — und was über deutsche Migranten im Allgemeinen gesagt wurde in Bezug auf Nicht-Assimilation und Isolationismus. Dennoch sind die Bezüge auf “deutsch” in dem für die Analyse verwendeten Pressematerial deutlicher artikuliert als in der früheren Rezeption, einschließlich historischer Fakten im Zusammenhang mit der deutschen Migration im 19. Jahrhundert.

Auch in *Aleluia, Gretchen!* geht es um deutsche Migration. Der Film konzentrierte sich jedoch auf die Migrationswelle im Zusammenhang mit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, ebenso wie die Presserezeption, die den Eindruck vermittelte, dass die deutsche Einwanderung erst mit dem Krieg begann. Dennoch zeigen beide Rezeptionsstudien, dass die Zuschauer nach neuen Informationen über Themen der deutschen Migration in Brasilien suchten, die zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch nicht ausreichend artikuliert worden waren — nämlich der Nationalsozialismus in Brasilien und der Mucker-Aufstand. In *As Filhas do Fogo* hingegen spielen die “deutschen” Bezüge, wenn sie überhaupt bemerkt werden, auf die Kolonisierung an, ohne dass eine historische Auseinandersetzung stattfindet.

Interessanterweise wird in allen drei Filmen “deutsch” mit Gewalt assoziiert; in allen Filmen sind Filmbilder zu sehen, in denen zumeist deutsche Migranten oder deren Nachkommen eine Waffe in der Hand halten. Das Thema Gewalt wird jedoch vor allem in der Rezeption von *Aleluia, Gretchen!* und *Os Mucker* aufgegriffen. In *Aleluia, Gretchen!* wird die Gewalt der Nazis verurteilt, während sie in *Os Mucker* im Kontext des Klassenkampfes gesehen wird. In *As Filhas do Fogo* schließlich wird sie mit dem Horrorgenre in Verbindung gebracht. Das “deutsche” Element wird jedoch nicht

notwendigerweise verwendet, um den anhaltenden Autoritarismus und das Regime herauszufordern, und es wird auch nicht in dieser Weise interpretiert. Es wird auch nicht notwendigerweise mit Geisel in Verbindung gebracht, obwohl es schwer zu sagen ist, ob diese Verbindungen aufgrund der Zensur nicht veröffentlicht wurden.

Generell war die Rezeption der drei Filme tief in der Geschichte Brasiliens der 1970er Jahre verwurzelt. Ein neuer Moment der Artikulation deutscher Ethnizität, eine neue Suche nach “Brasilien” im Kino und die Wiederentdeckung bzw. der revisionistische Impuls brasilianischer historischer Ereignisse prägten die Rezeption dieser Zeit. Obwohl die Konzeption der Filme aus unterschiedlichen persönlichen Motivationen und biographischen Hintergründen der Regisseure entstand, die mit den genannten Themen in Verbindung stehen oder nicht, zeigt die Rezeption das Gewicht der Militärdiktatur und die Suche nach einem tieferen Verständnis der Geschichte des Landes im Kontext der Zensur.

In den Zeitungskomentaren zu *Aleluia, Gretchen!* wurde häufig über den Nationalsozialismus und die filmische Darstellung des Integralismus diskutiert. Sie griffen das Thema und andere Verbindungen zur brasilianischen Geschichte auf, wie die Verhaftung von Naziverbrechern oder die Beteiligung Brasiliens am Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die Texte über *Os Muckers* informierten das Publikum über die Notwendigkeit einiger Veränderungen in Brasilien, wie z.B. die historische Aufarbeitung der messianischen Bewegung von Canudos. Die Rezeptionsanalyse ergab auch ein Interesse am Verständnis historischer Prozesse im Zusammenhang mit Migration, Gewalt und autoritären Ideologien und zeigte, wie ein solches Verständnis die politische Situation in Brasilien zu dieser Zeit weiter erklären könnte.

In diesem Sinne geht es auch darum, herauszufinden, wie die Filme Neuland in der brasilianischen Geschichte erkunden, einschließlich sozialer Gruppen, die auf der Leinwand noch nicht zu sehen sind. In den Pressestichproben, die für die Rezeptionsanalyse von *As Filhas do Fogo* verwendet wurden, stand die Geschichte Brasiliens nicht im Mittelpunkt. Stattdessen lag der Schwerpunkt auf der Parapsychologie, die sich zu dieser Zeit eines wachsenden Interesses erfreute, sowie auf

einigen Ansichten über Erotik und wie diese Brasilien und das brasilianische Kino repräsentiert (oder auch nicht).

Die drei sehr unterschiedlichen Filme hatten dennoch eine gemeinsame Lesestrategie; die Rezeptionsanalysen zeigten — den Auteurismus, der auch auf die Interpretation der Filme und der deutschen Elemente schließen lässt. Der Auteurismus wurde als signifikante Lesestrategie bevorzugt. Sie war beispielsweise häufiger anzutreffen als historisch vergleichende, allegorische oder psychoanalytische Lesarten. Im Fall von *Aleluia, Gretchen!* wurde der Regisseur Sylvio Back als Autorität für das Thema angesehen, da seine Mutter eine deutsche Migrantin war. Die Darstellung des “Deutschen” im Film wurde im Allgemeinen nicht kritisiert, außer in einigen wenigen Texten über die Rezeption des Films durch das deutsche Publikum.

Während Back in Südbrasilien geboren und aufgewachsen ist und seine eigene “Heimat” gefilmt hat, sind Bodanzky, Gauer und Khouri in den Süden gereist und haben die für sie selbst fremden Eindrücke in ihre Arbeit einfließen lassen. Die Strategie der Autorschaft in der Rezeption dieser Filme führt die Filmemacher auf unterschiedliche Weise an ihre Filme heran. Bodanzky und Gauer zum Beispiel sind dafür bekannt, dass sie sich mit den Problemen Brasiliens auseinandersetzen und politisch herausfordern. Ihre Filme werden daher als kritischer Diskurs über die Gegenwart oder über politische Perspektiven verstanden. Die Aufmerksamkeit für ihren fiktional-dokumentarischen Stil und die Art und Weise, wie sie die filmische Erzählung in Verbindung mit der lokalen Kultur und den Menschen vor Ort artikulieren, prägen das Interesse an den Filmen.

Die Strategie der Autorschaft in der Rezeption von *As Filhas do Fogo* verortet den Film vor allem in der gesamten Filmografie Khouris, so dass die Analyse dieser Strategie unabdingbar ist, um die Rezeption der “deutschen” Bezüge in *As Filhas do Fogo* zu verstehen. Wollte Khouri die Innenwelt der Figuren erforschen, wäre eine psychoanalytische Betrachtung sinnvoller als eine historische. Auch in der Rezeption der anderen Filme gibt es Strategien der Autorenlesung, aber hier ist sie am stärksten ausgeprägt. Sie könnte erklären, warum die “deutschen” Bezüge und die gesellschaftspolitischen Implikationen der deutschen Kolonialisierung Südbrasilien im Film übersehen wurden.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass diese Untersuchung die Bedeutung von Lesestrategien, historischem Kontext und historischem Hintergrund für die Interpretation von Filmen durch die Menschen aufgezeigt hat. In diesem Sinne bleibt eine breite Palette von Untersuchungsmöglichkeiten offen, zum Beispiel eine Untersuchung der Rezeption der Filme auf der Grundlage zeitgenössischer Interpretationen, um zu sehen, ob es Veränderungen oder Kontinuitäten gegenüber den Interpretationen der 1970er Jahre und den verwendeten Lesestrategien gibt. Eine weitere Möglichkeit ist die Analyse der Rezeption in Deutschland im Vergleich zu einem brasilianischen Publikum. Interessant wäre auch eine Rezeptionsstudie zu neueren brasilianischen Filmen über deutsche Migrationsgeschichten. Letztlich helfen uns diese Studien zu verstehen, wie wir Filme interpretieren und wie unser historischer Kontext sowie unser kultureller Hintergrund die Art und Weise beeinflussen, wie wir Filme interpretieren und das “Andere” betrachten.

9. Erklärung zur Urheberschaft

Ich erkläre: Ich habe die vorgelegte Dissertation selbständig und nur mit den Hilfen angefertigt, die ich in der Dissertation angegeben habe. Alle Textstellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus veröffentlichten oder nicht veröffentlichten Schriften entnommen sind, und alle Angaben, die auf mündlichen Auskünften beruhen, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht.

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