

Rio favelas in musical comedy films: from cradle of samba to public problem¹

As favelas cariocas nas chanchadas: de berço do samba a problema público

Rafael de Luna Freire²

Leticia de Luna Freire³

Abstract: *This article draws a timeline of the representation of Rio's favelas in Brazilian musical comedy films, known as chanchadas, from 30s to early 60s. With rare exceptions like the film Favela dos meus amores (1935), we point out to the most constant presence of the favela as a staged scenario in the studios in musical performances of films released until the mid-50s. Taking as a milestone the film Depois eu conto (1956), favela representation is increasingly politicized in the genre until the end of the decade. Surrounded by controversy about the removal of favelas and the social activity of Catholic Church in transforming this type of popular housing into a "public problem", we analyse Três colegas de batina (1961), in which a favela acquired great importance for its plot, but with an ideological discourse distinct from the best-known films of the Cinema Novo movement.*

Keywords: *chanchada; favela; church; samba; cinema.*

Resumo: *Este artigo traça um panorama histórico da representação das favelas cariocas nas comédias musicais cinematográficas brasileiras, conhecidas como chanchadas, dos anos 1930 ao início da década de 1960. Com raras*

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2 Universidade Federal Fluminense. Niterói, RJ, Brazil.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4739-0603> E-mail: rafaeldeluna@hotmail.com

3 Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3762-3386> E-mail: leluna2005@yahoo.com.br

exceções, como a do filme *Favela dos meus amores* (1935), apontamos a presença mais constante da favela como cenário reproduzido em estúdio em números musicais das chanchadas lançadas até meados dos anos 1950. Tomando como marco o filme *Depois eu conto* (1956), a representação da favela passa a ser cada vez mais politizada no gênero. Em meio às polêmicas sobre as remoções das favelas e a atuação social da Igreja católica na transformação desse tipo de habitação popular em “problema público”, analisamos *Três colegas de batina* (1961), em que uma favela adquire grande importância na trama, mas com um discurso ideológico distinto dos mais conhecidos filmes dos diretores do Cinema Novo.

Palavras-chave: chanchada; favela; Igreja; samba; cinema.

Introduction

This article draws a timeline of representation of Rio's favelas in musical comedy films, known as *chanchadas*, from the 30's to early 60's. We are aware of possible market limitations of studies of representation in film, as the risk of essentialism or the moral demand for positive images (STAM, 2003, p. 303-304). In our case, we seek to have a careful look towards cinema as an artistic creation, but also as a social practice historically localized. Avoiding an a-historicism when analyzing the different forms of portrait of the favelas in a wide set of Brazilian films released between three decades, we drive our attention towards the historic instabilities of representations and for the different voices at stake. As Robert Stam (2003, p. 305) indicates: "It is not enough to say that art is built. We have to ask: built for whom and in conjunction with which ideology and discourse?"

In this trajectory, the starting point is to point out how the favela was approached by the Brazilian cinema, in general, and by *chanchadas*, specifically, through performers that did not belong to those communities. But even in these movies, marked by an outside look, there are significant differences, even if it is possible to point patterns and tendencies. Thus, with rare exceptions, as the film *Favela dos meus amores* (1935), we point towards the most constant presence of the favela as a staged scenario in musical performances in films released until mid-50's. Taking as a milestone the film *Depois eu conto* (1956), we indicate the alteration in the favela representation, which becomes increasingly politicized in the genre. Surrounded by controversy about the removal of favelas and the social action of the catholic church in the transformation of this type of popular housing into a "public problem", we analyze in detail *Três colegas de batina* (1961). In this *chanchada*, a favela acquires great importance in the story, but with a different ideologic discourse from the most known movies from directors of the Cinema Novo movement.⁴

4 Confronting the favela representation in contemporary Brazilian cinema and films from the 1950's and 1960's, the researcher Ivana Bentes (2007, p. 203) practically restricts her comparison to films of the Cinema Novo movement and the French production *Orfeu no Carnaval* (Marcel Camus, 1959), saying that "chanchadas explored the wealthiest parts of Rio de Janeiro:

Favela as a cradle of samba

In the 30's, with the consolidation of sound film, the Brazilian fictional cinematographic production was, to a great extent, confined within cinema studios, concentrated in Rio de Janeiro for technical, aesthetic and economic reasons, drastically decreasing the number of scenes shot in external locations (FREIRE, 2016). In addition to that, the novelty of voice, sound and music synchronized to images took the popularization of *Carnaval* musical films - later known as *chanchadas* -, which explored the increasing commercial success of popular music throughout the vigorous development of the music and radio industry.

Musical films produced by Rio's main studios at the time prioritized filming in interiors recreated in studio, but a production in particular seek to film scenes in real locations in a favela. Although it was portrayed in a more realistic way in *Favela dos meus amores* (Humberto Mauro, 1935), like other movies at the time, favelas were basically associated to samba, music genre with increasing commercial success.

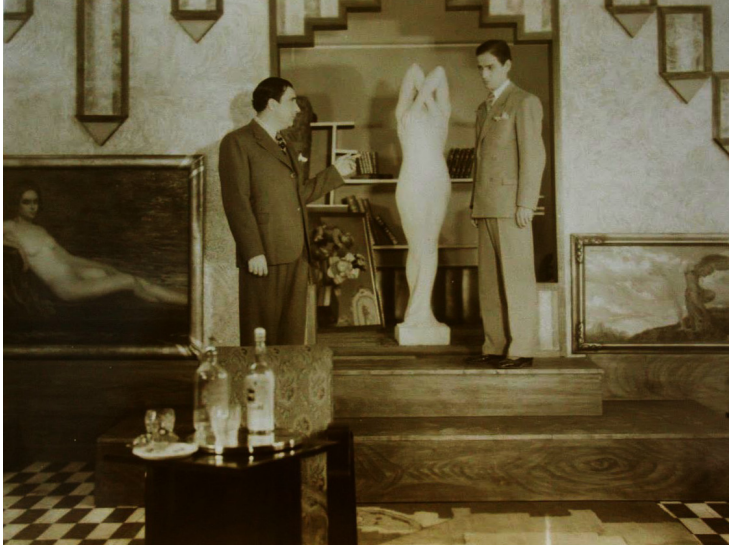
Favela dos meus amores unfortunately integrates the group of disappeared Brazilian movies, being mythicized by historians like Alex Vianny as a pioneer in critical realism through idealizations about filming in real locations of favela of Providência, in the central area of the city, and its story, which defended Rio's favelas as authentic cradle of samba (its provisional name was *Alma do Samba - Soul of Samba*).⁵ However, analyzing documents of the movie in attention to the cinematographic context of the time, we can say that *Favela dos meus amores* was a musical romance that was not that different from contemporary movies that, fortunately, survived, such as *Bonequinha de Seda* (Oduvaldo Viana,

Copacabana Palace, Quitandinha, nightclubs and places considered chic, places of social chronicles". This study wants to evidence that this is a simplistic view about the genre.

- 5 Hernani Heffner (2007) pointed out how Alex Vianny highlighted the supposed power and authenticity in the use of the place in sequences of films like *Favela dos meus amores*, perceiving this practice as a deviation in relation to the dominant tendency to the studio. In the path of Vianny, Napolitano (2009) questioned whether *Favela dos meus amores* was a part of a possible tradition within *chanchada* - aborted tradition, in his opinion - marked by a critic realism and a certain discourse about social issues that would bring us to Nelson Pereira dos Santos films in the 1950's.

1936) or *Maridinho de Luxo* (Luiz de Barros, 1938), with their luxurious scenarios, mise-en-scène of studio and pretention of super-production (Image 1).

Image 1 - Mayer and Costa in *Favela dos meus amores*.



Source: Arquivo Geral da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro (AGCRJ - General Archive of Rio de Janeiro).

The plot of Humberto Mauro's movie was about two "bon-vivant" friends played by Jayme Costa and Rodolfo Mayer. Recently arrived from Paris, but without any money on their pocket, the duo decided to open a nightclub in the favela, appealing to the exotic as a compensation for the absence of luxury. In the picturesque scenario of the favela, Rodolfo Mayer's character would fall in love for Rosinha, a naïve teacher played by the star and producer of the movie Carmen Santos.

Through scenic photos of *Favela dos meus amores*, we can perceive that Rosinha's "house" in the favela was reproduced in studio and, as the outside as it is inside, looks very different from the usual wooden houses of the favelas at the time, being modest much more by comparison with other luxurious spaces of the film where the characters walked by (Images 2 and 3). As scenario for dialogued scenes, naturally, the

character's house would hardly be filmed in a location for technical reasons. In addition to that, it wasn't Carmen Santos's style, as an actress and a producer, to bring poverty as a theme in her movies. The actress would be criticized because her character Rosinha would use, in an implausible way, "sophisticated dresses and expensive jewelry" when she is only "a teacher in the favela" (NAPOLITANO, 2009, p. 149-150; FREIRE, 2011, p. 269-270).

Image 2 - *Favela dos meus amores*.



Source: AGCRJ.

Image 3 - *Favela dos meus amores*.

Source: ACCRJ.

According to the criticism at the time, the singularity of *Favela dos meus amores* would lie specially in their aesthetic and poetic approach of a scenario unexplored by the Brazilian cinema and, despite going through a process of cultural valorization due to the popularization of samba, it was still strongly socially stigmatized. Despite this stigmatization, it is also by the 1920's that samba became popular in favelas, attracting a new look to what was produced there (OLIVEIRA and MARCIER, 1998). In the referred movie, characters would build a cabaret in the favela precisely to attend tourists and residents of Rio “looking for new sensations” (FREIRE, 2011, p. 269).

A lot of journalists highlighted Mauro's talent as a director, pointing as a highlight of the film the final scene, when they announce the death of Samba musician Nonô (Armando Louzada), inspired in the popular songwriter Sinhô. For a more distanced view, however, it is important to quote a posterior critic, signed by Jonald, pseudonym of Oswaldo Marques de Oliveira, about the 10-year anniversary of the release. The critic highlighted Mauro's talent for the “plastic cinema” but was clear that the biggest highlight was the scene of Nonô's funeral, while the film in

itself was more of a “mixture of musical and comedy” (JONALD, 1947). According to the critic, the acting of this final scene was similar to the “Russian film style”, referring not only to the more elaborate use of editing, but the probable filming in authentic locations marked by the real poverty of scenery and the black population filmed in loco. The own style of text seems to imitate the supposed style of the film sequence, with descriptive shots articulated with its combination: “The series of colored individuals in Nonô’s funeral were put in different shots. The exit of the coffin. The steps outside on the street. The shadow movement. The coffin, exposed in the edge of the slum, beside the little church (JONALD, 1947). On the other hand, the same church nearby the hill where Nonô’s funeral happened was also the background for Mayer and Carmen’s character love. In addition, the film advertisement, as the title gives away, highlighted the favela mainly as an exotic and uncommon scenario for a romance between two white characters, original from the middle class, whose destinies crossed in the slum by coincidence.

Despite being only one scene, the famous scene of Nonô’s funeral became an iconic scene in the representation of favela in Brazilian cinema in the first half of the 20th century, to the extent we perceive the evident quotation made in the scene of the musical “Lata d’água” in the film *Tudo azul* (Moacyr Fenelon, 1951), partially filmed in real locations of the Providência hill. In both movies, we see the same church beside the hill with very similar framing (Images 4 and 5).⁶

6 Napolitano (2009) locates the scene of *Favela dos meus amores* in the Providência hill, while Melo (2017) transcribes criticism indicating that the sequence of *Tudo azul* was shot on Pinto hill. The proximity of these favelas, both on the port region, would explain the confusion. According to Valladares (2005), the occupation of Providência hill, which happened in 1897, would have concentrated all attention after the violent campaign against tenements, commonly evoked as the first favela in the city.

Image 4 - Favela dos meus amores.



Source: AGCRJ.

Image 5 - Frame of the film *Tudo azul*.

Source: Reproduction.

However, we can say that a more realistic image of the favela as scenario, putting in display the poverty of the houses and the black population that majorly inhabited these places, happened shortly in *Favela dos meus amores*, even then constituting an exception in the cinematographic context of the 30's. The rule was the romanticized, stylized representation of favela as a type of "cradle of samba", in reference not to the origin of the musical genre, but to spaces where it grew and spread. As Hermano Vianna (1995) and Carlos Sandroni (2001) showed us, Rio's urban samba went through, precisely in this period, a process of transformation in symbol of national identity, in an effort of legitimacy that implied negotiation and, eventually, idealization or appropriation of its popular characteristics and origins.

Thus, the main tendency in Brazilian musical films is the presence of favela as a staged scenario for samba musical performances played, mostly, by white singers to white audiences. We can quote numerous examples of films that fortunately have preserved copies. It is what we see in the musical performance "Molha o pano", lyrics by Getúlio Marinho and Cândido Vasconcellos sang by Aurora Miranda in *Alô, alô carnaval* (Adhemar Gonzaga e Wallace Downey, 1936). As in the rest of the film, the background of the favela is also insinuated through drawings filling the background of the stage - signed by the elegant trace of J. Carlos -, creating the imaginary space for the samba sang by a white singer (Carmen Miranda's sister), despite being dressed as a person of the favela. And in numbers presented for white, rich audiences, dressing properly, as it was the casino Mosca Azul from *Alô, Alô, Carnaval*, created resembling the popular Cassino of Urca. Under the same practice given in the favela reproduced in the shooting set of musical number "Luar do morro" (Walfrido Silva e Sinval Silva), played by Odete Amaral as part of the film within the film of *O Samba da Vida* (Luiz de Barros, 1937). In this studio favela, all supposedly representative iconography about Rio's favela, with the samba choir, malandros wearing striped shirts, *baianas* selling candies and bars serving cachaça.

Beyond these two productions of Cinédia, if we progress to the following decades, we can quote the first *chanchada* in the Atlântida studios, *Tristezas não pagam dívidas* (Ruy Costa, 1944). In this film, we also have the decoration of wooden houses and the moon in the sky framing Silvio Caldas' performance for "Laura" (Ataulfo Alves) in the stage of the luxurious nightclub where Ítala Ferreira, Jayme Costa and Oscarito's characters go, wanting to spend all their inheritance money on a *Carnaval* party. We can go until another production of Atlântida, but already under Luiz Severiano Ribeiro's control: *Vamos com calma* (Carlos Manga, 1956), in which a group of musicians of a samba school play "Fala, mulato" (Alcebiades Nogueira e Ataulfo Alves) surrounded by scenic sheds and banana trees as an attraction for guests of a rich people's party.

In all of these movies, favela was imagined as the place for samba, and, therefore, an appropriate scenario for musical performances, maybe because it already was, in that period, a recurring theme in a big part of samba lyrics (OLIVEIRA e MARCIER, 1998). However, favela was a mere decoration in stages of elegant nightclubs or luxurious restaurants where sambas were sung amidst fake favela houses, scenic banana trees and an artificial moon. Favela residents, also considered decorative elements of this scenario, appeared only as a choir to follow singers and dancers dressed as *malandros*, *cabrochas* or *lavadeiras* to present for an exclusive white audience wearing smoking and long dresses, as it probably happened in real stages of the city. Scenes filmed in authentic locations in Rio's favelas occurred only occasionally, as in *Berlim na Batucada* (Luiz de Barros, 1944) or in *Tudo Azul* - and always, equally, associated with samba.

Favela and class warfare

The film we consider a landmark in the change of favela representation in Brazilian *chanchadas* is *Depois eu conto* (José Carlos Burle, 1956). In this musical comedy, favela enters the story, without being an occasional scenario for musical performances and being invoked as a symbolic territory that evidences Rio de Janeiro as a city radically socially divided.

The film tells the story of Zé da Bomba (Anselmo Duarte), a man that, during the day, works in a gas station in the neighborhood of Engenho de Dentro with Veludo (Grande Otelo), dating Sônia Canabrava (Eliana Macedo) and fighting her aunt, Ofélia Canabrava (Dercy Gonçalves), a suburban spinster. During the night, however, Zé da Bomba takes off his uniform and dresses a suit to be disguised as the rich man José Pires e Camargo. The con artist goes to the luxurious nightclub Astral, in Copacabana, showing off cars of clients of the gas station and dating the socialite Marilu Biscainha (Ilka Soares).

While Zé da Bomba is discovered and, still, gets some advantage, Ofélia tries to pursue the artistic career. When she discovers that her old and poor fiancée, Armindo (Zé Trindade), now is an artistic director of the nightclub, she gets to be hired to star a musical performance. But Ofélia is sabotaged by the directors of Astral and her dramatic interpretation is mocked by the rich audience.

It is in that moment where we have a turning point in the movie, when the old enemies Zé da Bomba and Ofélia decide to unite. In a reconciliation based in class solidarity (and in a shared opposition to the rich people who despise them), Zé finds Ofélia in the backstage after she leaves the stage humiliated and praises her performance as an actress. They have a dialogue that deserve to be analyzed in detail:

Zé: Your mistake is to think you're a dramatic actress, you are one of the most overreacting actresses I've ever seen.

Ofélia: The clown Bofélia, isn't it?

Zé: Another mistake. Artists can make someone cry or laugh. And you can make people laugh! What you need is a place to do it. [...] Here, the only people that matters are celebrities or foreign.

The dialogue of *Depois eu conto* clearly echoes another discourse present in the previous film of the same director, the famous *Carnaval Atlântida* (José Carlos Burle, 1952). In this manifesto, according to the classic analysis of João Luiz Vieira (1987), an opposition is articulated between popular culture and elite culture, represented in the

confrontation between joy and vivaciousness of an authentically national popular expression and the pretension of a heavy, imported culture, with a fake seriousness, by a supposedly colonized intellectual elite. In both films, therefore, we perceive the influence of a popular national ideology, generally associated to the so called independent cinema from the 50's.⁷ If in *Carnaval Atlântida*, bringing cinema as an object, the national content would be based in the defense of a Rio *chanchada* before super productions of São Paulo's industrial cinema, in *Depois eu conto*, through music and performance, they express the opposition, localized in Rio, between suburban workers and the wealth of Zona Sul.

Continuing the dialogue, Sônia is still skeptical about the regeneration of Zé, but Ofélia, apparently convinced she also has value, questions her niece's old boyfriend about what she could do:

Zé: React! Fight! Let's create our own nightclub, with our personality, 100% ours.

Ofélia: But to do that we need a lot of money [...].

Zé: We don't need to spend too much. Instead of luxury, originality. Have you ever thought about taking these rich people to a nightclub at the favela, in a shed furnished with stools, barrels, tins and boxes? [...] Let's show them what is a *batucada* with *agogôs*, *cuícas*, *pandeiros*, *tamborins*... Let's bring to stage that simple people from the favela, who sings from the soul because they have samba in their hearts.

Zé assures Ofélia they can bring rich people to their nightclub with the help of Reneé Dorê (Teófilo de Vasconcelos), famous social columnist that, in fact, is Pinga-fogo, his childhood friend of the suburbs, when they studied together in a public school and played with other children from the favela. In other words, it would be possible to use the same circuits of production (nightclub performance) and communication

7 Galvão e Bernardet (1983, p. 70) analisaram as características desse nacional popular em textos de cineastas ligados ao Partido Comunista Brasileiro do início dos anos 1950: "O filme nacional e popular que se opõe ao filme cosmopolita de uma burguesia aliada ao imperialismo não é apenas diferente, não é apenas popular, mas, para Nelson [Pereira dos Santos], ele é antiburguês".

(social column) they already had, but to stage and show another cultural production, truly national and authentic.

The following scene is a shoot made in a location, showing Zé da Bomba in a window of a modest apartment beside the hill overlooking a favela (probably, Providência) - the first shown in *Depois eu conto* (Image 6). This image clearly translates the strategy drafted in the previous dialogue, in which Zé da Bomba and Ofélia play the role of middle-men between authentic popular culture (“a batucada de agogôs, cuícas”) and the economic elite represented by the rich people of Zona Sul. These people - symbols of a possible middle-class - would be the ones capable of creating the conditions for the expression of a popular culture and truly national culture.

In the last scene of *Depois eu conto*, we see the success of the nightclub Favela é grande, but the owners of Astral, infuriated with the competition, hire some men to make a mess. Seeing the possible problem, Zé goes out to ask for the help of black samba musicians, his childhood friends, to defend him. Going beyond Carnaval Atlântida, the film shows an almost literal representation of class warfare: mobilized by these “middle-class intellectuals”, black workers and favela residents fight against white professional rioters working for the elite. But everything is solved with humor, and, above all, with music. In the happy ending, we have, at Favela nightclub, a musical apotheosis with a very nationalist character: the song played by Eliana, dressed as a baiana, says: “I sang in São Paulo/I sang in Pará/I drank chimarrão, I ate vatapá”.

Image 6 - *Depois eu conto*.

Source: Reproduction.

Amongst the critics at the time, the one from José Sanz, at O Globo, was what best perceived, for displeasure of the critic himself, the ideologic discourse present in *Depois eu conto*: “There is, still, in this film, a great subversion of moral values, making it related to social communist concepts consubstantiated with the tape *Rio 40 Graus*, whose director was awarded in a festival behind the iron curtain.” (SANZ, 1956).⁸

Pointing in *Depois eu conto* the evident Manicheism between characters of different social status, as we see in the film of Nelson Pereira dos Santos, the critic denounced: “It is the communist thesis in its wide signification: we can never forgive the bourgeoisie, while everything is allowed to the proletariat as self-defense against the class that historically oppresses them” (SANZ, 1956).

We see that, under the protection of the popular nationalism, the class warfare invaded *chanchadas* with *Depois eu conto*, although with adaptations of genre conventions, as the climax of the generalized fight,

8 The filmmaker Nelson Pereira dos Santos had traveled to Czechoslovakia to join the Karlovy-Vary festival in 1956, with *Rio 40 graus*.

the white stars like Hollywood and a conciliatory ending based in cultural nationalism. The evaluation made from Anselmo Duarte himself (actor, screenwriter and producer) also considers *depois eu conto* as a conventional *chanchada* with the pretension of something new: “This film gave us the experience that it was possible to coexist a critical plot with a popular story” (SINGH JR., 1993, p. 61). What especially interests us to highlight is how the favelas appear, in *Depois eu conto*, again as an authentic birthplace of samba, but in a movement that is not to take the scenic favela to rich nightclubs, but to bring the rich audience to a supposedly authentic performance at a favela. *Zé da Bomba* fills the same role that Nelson Pereira dos Santos would give to the white middle-class musician Moacyr (Paulo Goulart) in his second film *Rio Zona Norte* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1958): the person who shows the real popular culture. In both movies, the structure of cultural industry is not really questioned: the racial issue is recovered by the national issue and paternalistic posture of the intellectual is naturalized (AUTRAN, 2010).

Depois eu conto, therefore, represents the introduction of the favela as a symbol of an authentic popular culture oppressed in the *chanchadas*, marking the beginning of a new phase of the genre. Ceasing to be an occasional scenario for musical performances, the favela begins to be invoked as symbolic territory that evidences the opposition between the national and the foreign, the authentic and the imported, the people and the elite. Since then, under different ideologic spectrums, the *chanchadas*, as other Brazilian movies that does not inscribe in the genre, are going to increasingly incorporate the favela, real or scenic, to their narratives, following their consolidation, in the 1950's as a “public problem” (FREIRE, GONÇALVES e SIMÕES, 2010).⁹

9 Like these authors, we consider “public problem” in the sense attributed by the sociologist Joseph Gusfield (1981), therefore, a social situation that becomes a theme for debate, controversy or conflict in the public space, requiring to be treated by the action of public powers, institutions and/or social movements.

Favelas and the catholic church

Present in Rio's landscape since late 19th century, the favelas soon were considered as a problem to be solved, initially uniting voices of journalists, doctors and engineers, worried about the future of the city and its population (VALLADARES, 2005). After World War Two, the return of economic growth accelerated the urbanization in Brazil and in Latin America, and the flow of rural migrants towards the cities also intensified the growth of the favelas, escalating the issue of housing for popular classes. On the other hand, in its developmental and modernizing project, Rio de Janeiro - Federal District at the time - needed to fight against favelas to the extent that it represented the delay and the past they wanted to overcome.

Before the development of great public policies geared toward this issue, the catholic Church was already present in the favelas since the 1940's, almost monopolizing the actions in these locations in the 1950's (FREIRE, GONÇALVES e SIMÕES, 2010).¹⁰ Despite developing different forms of intervention, these catholic initiatives expressed the urgency of acting on these spaces and its populations, even if morally, creating a terrain so that the State could take over, in the next decade, the action and control over the problem, implanting a radical policy of favela removal. Only between 1962 and 1974, throughout the administration of the governors Carlos Lacerda, Negrão de Lima and Chagas Freitas, 80 favelas were extinct from the city, mainly in the South area, dislocating approximately 140 thousand people over to the peripheral areas (MELLO et al., 2012).

Among the different *chanchadas* that have favelas as a scenario in the second half of the 1950's, the film *Vai que é mole* (J. B. Tanko, 1960) deals precisely with the controversy of the removals, in addition to highlighting the strong presence of the catholic church. The story begins with

10 Even though the 1937's Código de Obras would condemn favelas, attributing the responsibility of extinguishing them to the city council, replacing them for "minimum housing nucleus" not much happened in fact until mayor Henrique Dodsworth releases the program Provisional Proletariat Parks in 1942. The only three proletariat parks built in this period - at Gávea, Leblon/praias do Pinto and Caju - ended up becoming permanente housing, and the residents were never relocated to their old favelas (VALLADARES, 2005).

the liberation of Mácio (Ankito), Brancura (Grande Otelo) and Bolinha (Jô Soares), which returned to their shed after serving time in jail. “Good hearted thieves”, they have the vigilance of the vicar to stay on a good path. Played by Renato Restier, actor that alternated dramatic and comedic roles in numberless *chanchadas*, the neighborhood vicar of the favela is represented as a sympathetic, and above all, modern religious man, that does not reject the invitation of playing football with the kids of the favela or stealing a bike in an emergency situation. In a scene of *Vai que é mole*, the vicar visits the mansion of commander Ferreira (Armando Ferreira) to ask a donation for the church, having the following dialogue:

Commander: I have my principles. I think that first we should end the favelas.

Vicar: Yeah, you are right. These people really need...

Commander: (Interrupting) Mainly because of the tourists. Yeah, because with that mess of sheds...

Vicar: Why? Only because of that?

Commander: When the horse race happens, the cars of more sophisticated people have to go through the Lagoa. It even gives me a headache.

Vicar: And what do you contribute to end this situation?

Commander: We can't do everything! Everything is so expensive nowadays. Sir, the price of the whisky is over 250 cruzeiros!

It is interesting to see in the film the dialogue about the favelas, a current and controversial theme (at that time), working to reinforce the nature of the characters. After all, the scene confirmed the commander as a stingy and arrogant character, following the frequent stereotype of egotistical and cold millionaires. With his strong Portuguese accent, the character played by Armando Ferreira aligned more specifically to the *chanchada* tradition of the negative caricature of the rich and cheap Portuguese man, usually working in trade, in the lineage of type routinely played in the theater and the cinema by actors like Oscar Soares and

Manoel Pêra. On the other hand, the scene also reinforced the good judgement of Restier's vicar, whose comments were counterposed to the elitist and reactionary view of the commander about the issue of favela removal. The perception about this social issue as a mere "aesthetic leper", to be hidden away from the tourists and rich people's gaze, would become reason for mockery in the film.

This association between a sympathetic and modern religious character and a more humanist view over the "problem of favelas" would not be a unique case, gaining center stage in a later *chanchada*, *Três colegas de batina* (Darcy Evangelista, 1961), which deserve a more detailed analysis.

"A chanchada with religious touches"

Since its first images, the film *Três colegas de batina* visually builds the idea of a city divided between the bourgeoisie in the South area and the favelas. Still in the opening credits, the camera frames, in a general frame, the tower of a church with a beach in the background. Then, in a panoramic movement of almost 180°, it reveals, in the extreme opposite, the favela of Cantagalo. In the soundtrack, we listen to the theme song, written by Ary Barroso specially for the film, "Assim na terra como no céu", which also gives the tone of the story with its sacred content (with a choir and organ) and humanist lyrics.

Três colegas de batina is starred by Eliana, playing Celina, a religious lady member of the church Nossa Senhora da Paz, in Ipanema, where the priests Matheus, Jeremias and Rafael (Gilvan, Edinho e João, Musicians of the Trio Irakitan), coming from Bahia, do their internship. Celina acts on social charities in the favela of Cantagalo led by the charitable friar Martinho (Edmundo Maia), which, for his good intentions, wins the immediate collaboration of three young friars.

In the first part of *Três colegas de batina*, friar Martinho tries to raise resources for his project of urbanization of the favela (including the construction of a hospital and a school), which the religious himself defines as a "social revolution, in a good way". This sentence is said when friar Martinho, along with Celina, asks for donations to Mr. Machado (the

same Armando Ferreira from *Vai que é mole*). He tries to get a donation of the millionaire arguing that his social works will improve the conditions of life of the poor, warning that it will not imply in any structural change in the division of social class. Unlike *Depois eu conto*, the film seems to assume this posture without any trace of irony, once this sentence goes out of the good old fella that is friar Martinho.

Beyond being the owner of the terrain where the sheds are, Mr. Machado is father of Aluísio (Herval Rossano), bon vivant who flirts with Celina. But like *Vai que é mole*, the millionaire of *Três colegas de batina* is not sensitive for the situation of the favela residents, and, thus, the three priests decide to help friar Martinho to collect funds for his social work. Going door to door, they find businessmen and bureaucrats who also refuse to help, showing again the lack of sensitivity of the elites and the government. One of these visits, however, is especially interesting as an example of how some *chanchadas* also approached social themes with a different discourse of contemporary films aligned with a leftist ideology. In *Três colegas de batina*, the priest Jeremias (Edinho) knocks on a door of an apartment and is received by an Italian Brazilian character (Zeloni), to whom he asks for contribution for the constructions in the favela of Cantagalo. The man shows no interest - "I don't live in the favela, I don't have children" - and asks if the religious man have already visited the Vatican and asked money to the pope, who was richer than him, or even to the United States.

It is necessary some attention to perceive, in the background of the apartment, a symbol of hammer and sickle in the wall, which evidences even more the critic to the communists (Image 7). Putting the guilt of all evil of the world in the hateful "North American imperialism", the ridiculed communist character, as the other people received by the friars, also does nothing for the poor, showing his hypocrisy and egotism. Different situation of the catholic religious people, that are shown literally getting their hands dirty on social works at the favela (teaching in school, building a wall of bricks, etc.), in scenes shot in the hill of Cantagalo, even though it has a paternalistic and moralizing tone towards the favela residents, seen as "needing help, understanding and love" (Image 8).

Image 7 - Três colegas de batina.



Source: Reproduction.

Image 8 - Três colegas de batina.



Source: Reproduction.

It is interesting to think that one of the reasons for the catholic church actions in the favelas in the 50, particularly the Fundação Leão XIII, was to impede the growth of the influence of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) in these spaces. It is worth mentioning that PCB was the fourth most voted party in the 1945 elections and that many councilmen acted in favelas until this party was considered illegal, in 1947, the same year of creation of the Fundação Leão XIII. Not fortuitously, the motto behind the actions of this catholic association was: "It is necessary to go up the hill before the Communists descend from there" (SAGMACS, 1960).

This preoccupation was justified if we think about, for instance, in movies where the cast, integrated by young leftist intellectuals, including members of PCB, go to the favela to show a critical portrayal of the Brazilian social reality, such as *Rio 40 graus* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1955) or *Cinco vezes favela* (Carlos Diegues, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Leon Hirszman, Miguel Borges e Marcos Farias, 1962). They are films that defend structural changes in society as a solution for the social and economic inequality. Out of these movies, an ideal of future is based in the solidarity of class by workers and in the opposition between elite and proletariat. *Três colegas de batina*, in turn, would propose paternalistic solutions for the problems of the poor through the perspective of a humanitarian Christianity sustained by charity and voluntary contribution - in other words, by individual alternatives based in moral choices. That gets clear through the final redemption of Aluísio's character, son of a capitalist, which happens through the cliché of love bringing redemption - in this case, love for Celina. Without forgetting its anti-communist tone, we perceive that, in *Três colegas de batina*, the final union of the two characters - the white, young, well-educated couple - celebrates a possibility of a future project, uniting the catholic church and a more humanitarian nationalist bourgeoisie.

Still, after we see these differences, in common among the most known movies identified with Cinema novo and *chanchadas* like *Depois eu conto* or *Três colegas de batina*, we see the presence of favela as an icon of an unjust society and revealing the social abyss present in Rio de Janeiro.

Final Considerations

In this article, we approach the representation of Rio favelas in *chanchadas* in the 1930 to 1950's, highlighting the constant staged reproduction of favela in studio as scenario for musical performances in luxurious nightclubs. Being an exception or not, the film *Favela dos meus amores* certainly confirmed the rule.

We identify a change in this tradition of representation after the movie *Depois eu conto*, in which the favela is shown as one of the most important urban and political problems of the capital, gaining relevance in the story as a symbol of social inequality in Rio de Janeiro. We highlight how *chanchadas* turned to directly dialogue with the context of crescent politization and polarization of the time, emphasizing how some movies of the genre deal particularly with the relationship between the Catholic church and favelas in a moment of crescent and heated discussions about the policies of removal of these popular neighborhoods by the State.

In this sense, we analyzed in detail the film *Três colegas de batina*, in which the favela is highlighted as theme and scenario. In this *chanchada*, in which characters linked to the catholic church assume the role of lead characters, we notice a radically different discourse about the favelas than that adopted by contemporary movies identified with Cinema Novo. Discussing *chanchadas*, we evidenced how the treatment of favelas by the Brazilian cinema has a variety of discourses, including discourses with an anti-communist and conservative bias. We conclude, therefore, that the favelas were such a heated issue in the 60's that not even the Brazilian musical comedies - considered by the critics at the time as a mere alienated and alienating entertainment - failed to address and discuss it.

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About the authors

Rafael de Luna Freire – Professor at the Cinema and Video Department and at the Post-Graduate Program in Cinema and Audiovisual Arts (PPGCine) at Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF). Coordinator at the University Lab for Audiovisual Preservation (LUPA-UFF).

Letícia de Luna Freire – Professor at the Social Sciences and Education Department (DCSE) and at the Post-Graduate Program in Education, Culture and Communication in Urban Peripheries (PPGECC-FEBF) at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Uerj). Researcher at the Metropolitan Ethnography Lab (LeMetro-IFCS/UFRJ), at the National Institute of Studies in Institutional Administration of Conflicts (InEAC-UFF) and at the Study Group on Peripheries (Nespe-FEBF/Uerj).

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