

Myths, Categories, and Crystals: Revisiting the Classics on the Brazilian Homosexual Movement¹

*Mitos, categorias e cristais: revisitando os
clássicos do movimento homossexual brasileiro*

Rita de Cassia Colaço-Rodrigues*

ABSTRACT

This paper revisits the classic literature on the Brazilian Homosexual Movement (Movimento Homossexual Brasileiro, MHB). It discusses the inherent difficulties of the social movement category and demonstrates how the dissemination and incorporation of the founding myth and the idea that the artisanal gay press, except for *Snob* and *Gente Gay*, contained only gossip and parodies. Lastly, it proposes a methodology for examining the constitution of social movements whose actors are marked by disqualification dynamics (LGBTI+ people, blacks, indigenous peoples, women, prostitutes) which, in addition to being procedural, contemplates the consistent challenge in overcoming the introjection of the deteriorated identity. Its theoretical approach is based on Maria da Glória Gohn, E. P. Thompson, Peter Burke, Howard Becker, and Michel de Certeau.
Keywords: Brazilian Homosexual Movement; Theoretical Paradigms; Subjectivities.

RESUMO

Este artigo revisita a literatura clássica sobre o movimento homossexual brasileiro (MHB). Discute as dificuldades inerentes à categoria movimento social e demonstra como se deu a divulgação e a incorporação do mito fundador e da noção de que a imprensa gay artesanal, à exceção de *Snob* e *Gente Gay*, apenas conteria paródias e fofocas. Ao final, propõe uma metodologia para o exame da constituição de movimentos sociais cujos atores são marcados por dinâmicas de desqualificação (pessoas LGBTI+, negros, povos originários, mulheres, prostitutas), a qual, ademais de processual, contemple o esforço adicional para superar a identidade deteriorada. Apóia-se em Maria da Glória Gohn, E. P. Thompson, Peter Burke, Howard Becker, Pierre Bourdieu e Michel de Certeau.
Palavras-chave: Movimento Homossexual Brasileiro; paradigmas teóricos; subjetividades.

* Bajubá Museum, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil. rita.colaco.br@gmail.com <orcid.org/0000-0003-2784-3342>

INTRODUCTION

In academic literature, the reading of the Brazilian Homosexual Movement has been based on the idea of a founding event² – O Grupo Somos/SP. The idea that its historiography is complete has also crystallized, even though several groups that emerged in the same context still need to be researched³. Regarding the previous generation, particularly its artisanal press, which has only been partially examined, a disqualifying interpretation has become fixed, unlike when similar actions undertaken by activists in the USA are interpreted⁴.

There is historical research on homosexual sociability in Rio and São Paulo in the late twentieth century, as well as ethnographic studies in the social sciences on the structuring of sexual practices among men, and on the group Somos/SP; the Corsa and activist NGOs of the 1990s. The authors, mostly former members of Somos/SP, neglected the processual aspect, such as participant objectification, in Bourdieu's terms. Without proceeding to the "rupture of the deepest and most unconscious adherences and adhesions", and without controlling their own projections, they ended up influenced by the tendency to use the academic field strategies to validate the native vision (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 51-8) – an unquestioned and unresearched reading, even by historians (myself included until my master's degree, cf. Rodrigues, 2006b). This perspective, however, is starting to be problematized (Ferreira, 2019).

In my doctoral research, I acknowledged this mythical bias. However, without material conditions to deepen the research and to reflect more thoroughly, I classified previous actions as "protoactivism" although I did address the processual aspect and highlighted, with Certeau (1995) and Bourdieu (2001; 2007), some phases and some challenges implied in the process of construction of the Brazilian Homosexual Movement (Rodrigues, 2012). In this article, I rectify my previous misunderstanding and propose a research methodology.

Before discussing the interpretations of these classic works, I emphasize that I do not intend to reignite old tensions between fields of knowledge (Burke, 2002, pp. 12-4; Reis, 2010, pp. 24-5). By problematizing them, I do not diminish their importance or that of the established event. They were and still are significant, contributing to the understanding of some of the facts that took the MHB to another level.

I seek, in addition to highlighting the processual character of the changes, to emphasize the inherent challenges in the constitution of a political move-

ment, whose actors have been historically stigmatized, and to problematize analyses based on productivism inherent to capitalism, which relegate to oblivion the “dead ends, lost causes, and the losers themselves” (Thompson, 2004, p. 13). I am driven by a commitment to honor the activists and their pioneering actions, both those hindered by state repression and those overlooked due to disqualification, “from the immense superior airs of condescension of posterity” (Thompson, 2004, p. 13), in addition to demonstrate their conscious contributions to the historical process. In short, my goal is to honor the debt to the deceased by freeing them from oblivion (Certeau, 2017, *passim*), and not to join the “triumphal procession of the dominant, who march over those who lie in the ground today” (Benjamin, 2020, p. 74).

HARDSHIPS OF THE ANALYTICAL CATEGORY

One of the difficulties in examining the process of the constitution of the MHB, in my perception, arises from the instabilities within the social movement category itself – shrouded in a variety of theories and paradigms, urged to account for diverse political actions and processes, involving different actors and sociocultural contexts in different times and sociopolitical realities (Doimo, 1995, pp. 39-51; Gohn, 2008, p. 242). Although many of these works do not explicitly state the notion of social movement they operate with (including my thesis, cf. Rodrigues, 2012), it is possible to infer that they only consider successful actions, as if the process of building changes unfolded in a rectilinear dynamic (Becker, 2007; Burke, 2002). Regarding the various definitions of social movement proposed by the Social Sciences, one observes the under-dimensioning and/or the disregard of the historical task to overcome the weight of the inferiorizing notions based on religious, moral, legal, and medical concepts. This task is only accomplished over time, demanding, for its understanding, the examination of this process (Thompson, 2004; Certeau, 1995; Gohn, 2008 [1997], pp. 249-250).

When discussing theories and paradigms of social movements in a classic book, sociologist Maria da Glória Gohn highlights the existing heterogeneity of theoretical definitions (Gohn, 2008, pp. 23-240, 242-4) and points out the permanence, at that moment, of five major gaps or problems in academic production on the concept (Gohn, 2008, p. 11). I can mention two: the very concept of “social movement” – what effectively constitutes a social movement, and the distinctive elements that differentiate it from other collective actions or civil associations, such as NGOs.

After denying the recognition, “*a priori*, of a general, unique, and universal definition or conceptualization”, Gohn outlines her own understanding, emphasizing subjectivities and the historical process. As a first characteristic to be observed, she highlights the fact that social movements refer to “the action of men in history,” action that implies “a doing – through a set of procedures – and a thinking through a set of ideas that motivate and underpin the action” (Gohn, 2008, p. 247). While placing thinking after doing, she further highlights the “subjective dimensions of social action” in the so-called “new social movements” and highlights the contributions of three texts by four authors (Moore Jr, Castoriadis, Benedict, and Thompson) “to the grounding of the category of movements by drawing attention to this subjective dimension, which is constructed through a historical process of struggle in which the shared experience of socially common values is a fundamental factor” (Gohn, 2008, p. 249). She further explains the conversion of “needs” into “demands”, which can be transformed into claims through collective action”. And she clarifies: “The whole of this process is a constitutive part of the formation of a social movement” (Gohn, 2008, p. 250). However, in formulating her definition, she fails to adequately emphasize the subjective aspect and refers superficially to the historical process involved:

Social movements are sociopolitical actions built by collective social actors [...], articulated in certain scenarios [...], creating a political field of social force [...]. The actions are structured from repertoires created on issues and problems in conflicts [...]. The actions develop a social and political-cultural process that creates a collective identity for the movement, based on common interests [...]. This identity is forged through the strength of the principle of solidarity and built from the referential foundation (Gohn, 2008, pp. 251-2).

And when presenting her methodological proposal, although she frequently references the historical process involved in the constitution of the social movement, she fails to consider the additional challenge implied when it comes to actors marked by disqualification, as is the case of LGBTI+, women, prostitutes, black people, and indigenous peoples.

In her discussion, Gohn refers to two perspectives from which social movements should be considered: internally, focusing on the construction and organization of the repertoire of demands, the organization of action strategies, i.e., the repertoires of collective actions that generate ideology, project, organization, and practice; and externally, considering the socio-political

and cultural context, opponents, the articulations and networks. She acknowledges the struggles fought on the symbolic and value level (ethnicity, nationality, religion, generation, gender, etc.) emphasizing that repertoires are constructed through collective action. She clarifies that “social force” “is obtained from the analysis of the setting of the broader political process in which the movement takes place”, and that, “in the field of Social Sciences, it is useful when historicized and politicized” (Gohn, 2008, p. 258). Regarding “ideology”, she explains that it “is captured through the analysis of leaders’ speeches, messages, and the overall material and symbolic production of the movements”, mentioning that “many movements struggle [...] for the creation or alteration of cultural meanings”, such as the “black movement, the women’s movement, the homosexual movement, etc.” However, Gohn does not mention the additional task required of these actors in constructing collective consciousness, political discourse, the agenda of demands, and the repertoire of actions, as they must first overcome the stigma and negative identity (Goffman, 1988).

Then she addresses the “political culture” of the movement, highlighting its construction “along the way” (Gohn, 2008, p. 259). Once again, she cites Thompson’s contribution, among others, in recognizing that the movement’s political culture emerges from “political and cultural processes”. When dealing with “practices”, she mentions that “unorganized” practices derive from “more radical” movements or those “in an early stage of organization” (Gohn, 2008, p. 259). It is noteworthy that she appropriately considers as social movement even those “in an early stage of organization”.

When discussing the “phases of a social movement”, it seems elusive how Gohn devotes to the historical process in an overly schematic sequence. The author lists, as stage number one, an ambiguous “situation of need or ideas and a set of goals and values to be achieved” (Gohn, 2008, p. 266); stage number two deals with the “formulation of demands by a small number of people” (Gohn, 2008, p. 266). When fixing the categories of movements, she includes under the second stage groups that originated “from the characteristics of human nature: sex, age, race, and color”, without referring to the additional challenge of overcoming stigmatized self-image in the construction of political consciousness and collective identity (Gohn, 2008, p. 269). Furthermore, she acknowledges that Brazilian researchers, including herself, have neglected to look for the national specificity, explaining our reality based on foreign categories and contexts, resulting in errors in understanding women’s participation (Gohn, 2008, pp. 292-3).

Gohn recognizes Thompson’s contributions as “brilliant”, since he ad-

dressed” aspects that had been insufficiently studied up to that time” (Gohn, 2008, p. 203), such as his central use of the category “experience” derived from historical materialism (encompassing the entire cultural universe: ideas, feelings, values, consciousness, beliefs, customs, etc.), and the understanding that consciousness, identity, and resistance mechanisms are constituted in the struggle, that is, in a manner it is contextualized, relational, and in-process. However, to me, the definition she proposes does not seem to adequately consider these aspects (Gohn, 2008, pp. 204-5).

The same difficulty is presented by the category social movement, both in the aspects pointed out by Gohn and in its lack of relevance to cases involving actors heavily marked by disqualification processes, can also be observed in the hesitations present in classical interpretations of the Brazilian homosexual movement. These analyses sometimes some of the political actions from the generation before Somos/SP are sometimes recognized, while other times they are disqualified or downplayed. In all of them, however, the perspective of the founding myth prevails. Although the interpretations presented do not explicitly state which definition of social movement they are working with, one can see in the interpretations presented the influence of the productivist/utilitarian logic intrinsic to capitalism, as they only recognize the actions “that succeeded, not the ones that failed” – a view already criticized by Howard Becker (2007, p. 14) in *Segredos e truques de pesquisa (Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You’re Doing It)*, in which “dead ends, lost causes, and the losers themselves are forgotten”, as highlighted by Thompson (2004, p. 12) in *A formação da classe operária inglesa (Making of the English Working Class)*.

Based on the analysis presented, they seem to understand that only when the repertoires of action are constituted and operating can the political actions be called social movement, neglecting the whole process, and on a collision course with what is proposed by Gohn, who expressly recognizes that both the “social force” and the “repertoire of actions” are constructed, and that this construction process is integral to the social movement. They fail to consider the additional historical task required for actors who are intensely marked by disqualification, as they strive to establish themselves as legitimate claimants in relation to the State and society. They end up producing a reading similar to the model of social change presented by the English sociologist Herbert Spencer, which, according to Burke, “makes little reference to the mechanics of change”, which engenders “the false premise of unilinearity, giving the process of change the ap-

pearance of a smooth and practically automatic sequence of stages, as if all a society had to do was climb an escalator” (Burke, 2002, p. 194).

Below, I will demonstrate how, in those works that exerted decisive influence on the field of studies on the MHB, the establishment and repetition of the founding myth and the underlying productivist/utilitarian perspective are accompanied, step by step, by attempts to acknowledge that the process of constituting the homosexual movement precedes the Grupo Somos/SP. Despite the sources pointing out this fact, the analytical category’s difficulty – expressed in its lack of explicitness and the latent productivist/utilitarian notion –, combined with the authors’ association with the founding event, the limited attention dedicated to the historical process and the challenge of overcoming a deteriorated identity, prevent them from recognizing it.

WHAT IS HOMOSEXUALITY

In 1983, the anthropologist Peter Fry and the psychologist Edward MacRae, who had a master’s degree in Latin American sociology and was then a doctoral student in anthropology, published *O que é homossexualidade* in the collection “Primeiros Passos” by Editora Brasiliense⁵. On pages 22 and 24, the authors establish the foundational milestones of the Brazilian homosexual movement, which were subsequently repeated in the following academic works: “This year of 1978 also saw the [...] emergence of the first nuclei of the homosexual movement in Brazil. Soon after the emergence of the *Lampião* newspaper, a group of artists, intellectuals, and liberal professionals [...], began to meet weekly in São Paulo.” They also mention “the peculiarity of the *first* groups of the homosexual movement...” (emphasize). However, neither of them conducted research specifically aimed at investigating the historical constitution of the political consciousness that gave rise not only to the militants of Somos/SP and the subsequent groups but also to the readers of *Lampião da Esquina*. MacRae was conducting ethnographic research on Somos, while Fry had researched the structuring of sexual practices among men in Brazil (1982, pp. 87-115).

They argue that the process of “change” began in the 1960s with the emergence of an egalitarian structuring in homophilic affective-sexual practices of both sexes, based on an “understood” identity (Fry; MacRae, 1983, pp. 22-4). However, they do not consider this fact as an integral part of the process of constitution of the political movement.

FROM HIERARCHY TO EQUALITY: THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN BRAZIL

In this study, Peter Fry attributes the emergence of the egalitarian model as intrinsic to the identity of the “understood”, which he places “around the end of the 1960s, in the middle classes of the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo,” based on the ethnography conducted by Carmen Dora Guimarães, even though the network she examined was from the 1970s (Fry, 1982, p. 93; Guimarães, 2004)⁶. He further states:

The emergence of this new system is documented by Carmen Dora Guimarães, who studied a social network of upper middle class “homosexuals” in Rio de Janeiro, and [...] describes how this group of young men moved from the hierarchical model [...] to the symmetrical model. [...] Ten years earlier, the members of this social network would have adhered to the hierarchical model, but this was not the case in the early 1970s (Fry, 1982, pp. 94-5).

Right at the beginning of his essay, Fry points out that male sexuality in Brazil varies “from region to region, from class to social class, and, above all, from one historical moment to another”, with its forms of social perception “often being contradictory and conflicting”, and notes that such systems of knowledge (structuring) “are not produced in a social vacuum”; that is, “to understand the form and content of systems of representations about sexuality, it is essential to recognize that they are produced within a broader political context”, which “leads inevitably to the study of Brazilian society as a whole.” Three pages later, he acknowledges that the hierarchical model is not unique to Belém but is present “throughout Brazilian society, *coexisting and sometimes competing with other systems*” (Fry, 1982, pp. 88 and 91. Emphasis added).

In the path of “discovering the social and political roots of the identity of *entendido*” (meaning someone who is aware their own sexuality, in Portuguese) in Brazil (Fry, 1982, p. 95), Fry draws upon European studies in which transsexuality is considered a form of homosexuality, without problematizing them. He quotes John Marshall (1981): “in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s”, psychiatrists and psychologists “gradually diminished the importance of the distinction between ‘activity’ and ‘passivity’ [...] and developed a new identity of the ‘homosexual’ based on an individual’s sexual orientation.” Despite this “radical change of perspective” which was not accepted by Brazilian physicians, as Fry points out, he intends to demonstrate the origin of the “*enten-*

dido” in Brazil without providing representative empirical data to support his claim (Fry, 1982, pp. 102-3).

Although in the beginning of his text Fry called attention to the variations in practices according to class and contexts, he fails to consider that the changes observed in the network studied by Guimarães occurred as a result of social mobility achieved by its members and the constant dynamics and variability within it. This aspect has led to “modifications in the homosexual lifestyle, thought, and practice[,] as well as in the symbolic system as a whole,” as highlighted by Guimarães herself right at the beginning of her work (Guimarães, 2004, pp. 24-5).

James Green attributes the origin of the “*entendido*” in Brazil to the 1940s, “or even earlier, as indicated by the letters published in Jaime Jorge’s book *Homossexualismo masculino* (Green, 2000, p. 308). Sociologist José Fábio Barbosa da Silva, in his study of a group “of middle-class homosexuals” in São Paulo between 1958 and 1959, identified egalitarian forms of affective and sexual interaction where “the pair represents both male and female roles” (Silva, 2005, pp. 87-8, 127-142).

However, as mentioned earlier, in *O que é homossexualidade*, Fry and MacRae established that the egalitarian model emerged in the 1960s, with the identity of the “*entendido*” observed within the network examined by Guimarães in the 1970s. Subsequent works have also reiterated this viewpoint.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF EQUALITY

In his doctoral thesis in anthropology, defended in 1986, Edward MacRae conducted a “participant observation” on the group Somos/SP. In his thesis book, initially published in 1987, he does not explicitly clarify the concepts of social movement and political militancy he is working with (MacRae, 2018). Perhaps this, along with his association with Somos/SP, may explain the questionable interpretation produced. There, he stated that “since mid-1979, there have existed in Brazil, with varying levels of activity, groups dedicated to changing the prejudiced way in which homosexuals are viewed and to combat their marginalization” (MacRae, 2018, p. 67). Further on, he notes that in 1979, “the political aspects” present in the homosexual subculture of Europe and the US would have “arrived” in Brazil (2018, pp. 107-109), leading to the emergence of groups dedicated to changing the perception of homosexuality and giving rise to the Brazilian homosexual movement.

When addressing the artisanal periodicals produced by homosexuals,

MacRae repeats, without critically examining it, the dismissive statement made by two of his most prominent editors (Anuar Farah and Agildo Guimarães): they were “naive works” (2018, p. 137). However, later on, after “highlighting the differences in the style of homosexual performance”, he acknowledges that the groups formed around these publications “also had an embryonic political role, such as the creation of the Brazilian Association of Gay Press, which existed between 1962 and 1964, and which, as Farah says (apud Miccolis, 1980, pp. 6-7), had the ideal of fighting to show ‘that we were normal people’ [...]”. In her transcription of Farah’s interview with Leila Miccolis, MacRae adds that Farah recognizes that their generation before *Lampião* was also successful in gaining visibility, “one of [their] greatest contributions” (MacRae, 2018, p. 139). However, MacRae does not critically analyze these contradictory views and concludes this section of the book with Peter Fry’s statement in *Lampião*, defending these actions and acknowledging that “the important thing is that he[they] did something for their own liberation and for the liberation of others.”

Opening the chapter on Somos/SP, MacRae states that “the formation of homosexual groups is nothing new [in Brazil] and has been happening for many decades.” However, he claims that the “sole objective” of these groups prior to Somos was “entertainment and its critical aspects”, and that they “were limited to light-hearted parodies of high society’s mundane events.” In the following paragraph, however, he points out their “great novelty”: “the emergence of a new attitude which, leaving aside a certain sense of guilt that was common even among the most prominent homosexuals, began to reclaim a space of public respectability for homosexuality” (MacRae, 2018, p. 165). On the next page, he states that “Starting in 1978, groups of individuals willing to publicly declare themselves as homosexuals began to emerge, refusing to be labeled as ‘marginal’ or ‘sick’, began to claim ‘discriminated’ status, while seeking political alliances with similarly situated sectors” (MacRae, 2018, p. 166). In the following paragraph, he mentions that “there are reports considered apocryphal by some, but significant as indicators of the emergence of new ideas, of two attempts to convene a Congress of Homosexuals in Rio de Janeiro in 1976 and 1977” – information passed on to him by João Antônio Mascarenhas (2018, p. 166 and n. 1). He also mentions the initiatives of writer João Silvério Trevisan in the creation of a “homosexual discussion group”⁷, treating them, however, as “attempts”, “prehistory”⁸, rather than as political actions and integral parts of the process of the Brazilian homosexual movement’s formation.

At the end of the Epilogue, MacRae concludes, “The effectiveness of homosexual groups is unquestionable in several ways. Perhaps main one has been the building of sociability networks, uniting – and also promoting –, a new type of homosexual who is not dominated by feelings of guilt and does not consider themselves sick or abnormal” (2018, p. 368). Because he did not research the homosexual alternative press beyond the two periodicals edited by Anuar Farah and Agildo Guimarães, and did not delve into the discussion in *Lampião* itself, MacRae neglects both the actions taken and the process involved and fails to recognize that these same attributes were present in the collectives organized around those periodicals⁹.

MacRae fails to consider that even within the members of Somos/SP, the level of uncertainties and disagreements was high, and the group spent almost a year discussing its mode of action, its name, and even if this was a valid political struggle¹⁰ (MacRae, 2018, pp. 170-2, 174-7). Additionally, it is forgotten that those who wrote and edited the periodicals prior to *Lampião* were part of informal collectives formed around them. Even those who were just looking for fun also read the bulletins and activist texts present there – such as the journal *Baby* (1969, pp. 5, 2, and 6). The participation of homosexuals advocating for their own rights during the *Semana do Movimento da Convergência Socialista* (Socialist Convergence Movement Week) in São Paulo he reads as an action “even before the establishment of the homosexual movement.” Although he claims this event as “the first time in public” that “the idea was raised [...] that the efforts of homosexuals to obtain a better position within society were legitimately part of the broader struggle for a democratic and socialist society,” and considers such actors as activists, at the very beginning of the next paragraph, he immediately notes the existence of “a certain difficulty in the relationship between activists advocating for black rights and those advocating for homosexual rights” (MacRae, 2018, p. 170).

BEYOND CARNIVAL

James Green, a Brazilian historian who came from the same founding myth, is the author of the equally classic book *Além do Carnaval: a homossexualidade masculina no Brasil do século XX* (2000). Result of his doctorate, the research aimed, according to Green, to demonstrate the existence of a homosexual male subculture in the urban centers of Rio and São Paulo, a task greatly benefited by João Silvério Trevisan’s pioneering work in *Devassos no Paraíso*, from 1986 (Green, 2000, p. 33). However, Green acknowledges himself as a

tributary only to the research of John D’Emilio, in *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, which, in turn, was influenced by E. P. Thompson. In this work, D’Emilio deals with the formation of a homosexual minority in the U.S. between 1940 and 1970, also focusing on pre-Stonewall activism (Green, 2000, pp. 39-40).

Throughout the book, Green attempts to analyze the process of political consciousness formation, citing sources such as Rogéria’s interview (Green, 2000, p. 418), and some of the handmade periodicals of the gay press (Green, 2000, pp. 253; 297-328; 421-426). However, he only examines *Snob* and *Gente Gay*. He identifies the beginning of this process as established by Peter Fry: the emergence of the “*entendido*” identity, but he places it in 1966, within the pages of the handmade publication *Snob* (Green, 2000, p. 306). Overall, however, his interpretation of what he finds in the sources also becomes uncertain. In his case, I attribute this more to difficulties in building the necessary critical distance, given his association with Somos/SP, than to an underlying notion of a social movement that only considers it as such when it is endowed with a “repertoire of actions”. Another aspect that seems problematic to me is the assertion of an event as inaugural – also present in MacRae’s work, as we have seen –, without sufficient research to support such claims. Let us examine this in detail.

Still in the Introduction, Green clarifies that his study “took as its reference” his own participation “in the events surrounding the founding and activities of the politicized gay movement in the [19]70s” (Green, 2000, p. 38, emphasis added). He considers that “At the time I lived in São Paulo, from 1977 to 1981, my role as an activist and leader of the progressive wing of the movement, in its controversial formative years, placed me in the center of the hurricane” (Green, 2000, p. 38, emphasized), that is, he establishes as *a priori* historical fact that the founding of the “gay movement” took place with Somos/SP, without research to support it. Regarding the internal disputes within the group, it promotes a self-centered and disregarding interpretation of the socio-historical context and the political views of the other group of activists. Similar to the feminists, this faction understood the personal as political and drew inspiration from anarchism and the beat generation, advocating for a libertarian, supportive, and affectionate praxis without hierarchies or political party-type representation (Facchini, 2005, pp. 56-57; Rodrigues, 2012, *passim*; Rodrigues, 2006a, *passim*; Rodrigues, 2006b, p. 130).

On the next page, Green states that his study “began with an examination

of the dynamics that led to the emergence of a politicized gay and lesbian movement in the late 1970s. However, “it soon became evident that any analysis of activism by homosexuals under the military dictatorship required a broader investigation into the formation of complex urban subcultures intertwined throughout the twentieth century” (Green, 2000, pp. 39-40). As a result, “rather than attempt to cover an overly broad topic, I chose to focus on the erotic, romantic, and sexual interactions between men” (Green, 2000, p. 40). As clarified by the Brazilian historian in a 2021 interview, he did not have the ideal research conditions and had to divide his time with a side job to sustain himself – a reality that unfortunately affects many researchers in Brazil as well, which reflects in the final product presented¹¹.

In James’ examination of these dynamics, we can see the continuity of his comings and goings of the movement’s foundational landmarks: while in the introduction he suggests that the movement emerges in the late 1970s (Somos/SP), he soon recognizes the need for a broader research; on page 314, he establishes the beginning of the MHB in 1976, coinciding with the emergence of the artisanal publication *Gente Gay*, “the first of a wave of new publications that marked the beginning of a politicized movement of gays and lesbians in the country” (emphasis added) – that is, the appearance of *Gente Gay* in 1976 is part of the early stages of the politicized movement of gays and lesbians, implying that all previous actions and publications were not considered political.

The essayist then states that “the foundations for the construction of a gay movement” were set in 1978, with *Lampião da Esquina* and the Grupo Somos/SP.

Like the feminists, homosexuals took advantage of the same “space of opportunity” in order to lay the foundations for the construction of a gay movement. In 1978, a small group of intellectuals from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo founded the *Lampião da Esquina* [...]. Many months later, a group of men in São Paulo formed Somos, the first¹² gay rights organization in the country (Green, 2000, p. 395).

In a note, Green refers to “different interpretations of the Brazilian gay movement,” including other texts of his own, João Silvério Trevisan’s seminal work *Devassos no paraíso* (1986), and MacRae’s research (2018, pp. 395, 437, note 14). He echoes Fry and MacRae’s understanding that modifications “in sexual and social behavior *foreshadowed* the emergence of a politicized gay movement in Brazil – the second main point he emphasizes in this chapter – and such emergence “was also the result of the consolidation of a new “*entendido*” identity” (Green, 2000, p. 396, emphasis added).

Further on, when discussing the gay artisanal press, he mentions the dissemination, “around the 1970s”, of a new identity in the “homosexual subculture in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo” (the “*entendido*” identity) but considers that the process began in the 1950s and 1960s (Green, 2000, p. 424). He mentions the importance of the gay artisanal press, as well as “plays and literary works” that addressed homosexuality (Green, 2000, p. 424). Nevertheless, he concludes by delimiting the “emergence” in the late 1970s – “this paper ends with the emergence of a Brazilian gay and lesbian rights movement in the late 1970s” (Green, 2000, p. 454) –, pointing out, immediately after, that “some publications in the early 1970s managed to write about ‘Gay Power’ and suggest paths to political organization for homosexuals” (Green, 2000, p. 455).

ALPHABET SOUP

Another classic in the literature on the MHB is Regina Facchini’s book “*Sopa de letrinhas?*” (2005), which is the result of her dissertation in anthropology. With a background in sociology and politics and a PhD in social sciences, Facchini conducted “participant observation”, similar to MacRae’s. Between 1997 and 2008, she conducted research on the group *Cidadania, Orgulho, Respeito, Solidariedade e Amor* (Corsa) in Campinas, aiming to understand the internal dynamics of the homosexual movement (Facchini, 2005, pp. 21-7). In the introduction of her research topic, she highlights the production of identity as a central issue “for understanding the internal dynamics of a social movement.” She agrees with its centrality in examining that dynamic and notes that it is an issue that is present in research on the so-called alternative or libertarian movements, such as MacRae’s study on homosexuality (Facchini, 2005, pp. 27; 70-1).

Facchini draws on three of the previously mentioned books, namely Fry & MacRae (1983), MacRae (2018), and Green (2000), although she also comments on others, such as those by Trevisan and historian Cláudio Roberto da Silva, who works with oral history. However, she chooses not to confront the question of the historical process, the previous experiences, even if ephemeral, the motto of libertarian movements and studies that “the personal is political.” She simply repeats the founding myth established in the literature: “[the] Somos group [is] recognized as the first organization of the Brazilian homosexual movement”; “the founding of the first group recognized in the bibliography as having a proposal to politicize the issue of homosexuality, the Somos, from São Paulo, occurred in 1978” (Facchini, 2005, p. 27).

According to her perception, the political actions of the Somos/SP generation would not qualify as a social movement, given the lack of a formal organization to coordinate and guide them (Facchini, 2005, p. 25). However, to the extent that its participants recognize themselves and are recognized as such, she adopts the nomenclature.

I understand that what is conventionally called “homosexual movement” is a division in a network of social relations in which individuals and organizations of the “civil society” are involved, distinguishable by the fact that they act and share a common general objective regarding the issue of “homosexuality”: the “emancipation” or the achievement of “full citizenship” for “homosexuals” or other sexual identities that are the focus of the movement. I use the idea of network of relations because there is no formal organization that brings together and guides the actions of all the groups, NGOs, associations and independent activists who recognize themselves or are recognized as part of the MHB and because, despite the instability of the groups and the departure or passing of several militants, this movement has remained and surpassed the twenty-year mark of existence.” (Facchini, 2005, p. 25).

She defines “network” as a category for examining and describing “social processes involving connections that cross the boundaries of the homosexual movement itself, that is, it fulfills the role of identifying which actors make up the field, even if they are not recognized as militants” (Facchini, 2005, p. 72).

Moving on to the theoretical debate on social movements and NGOs, Facchini mentions the diversity of classifications and characterizations present in the twenty years of national studies that attempted to explain the extreme variety in the forms of collective action (diverse objectives, actors, contexts, etc.): “popular movements, urban social movements, new social movements, contemporary social movements, old social movements, movements based on class struggle, alternative movements, libertarian movements, civil associations, NGOs, social movement networks, ethical-political fields” (Facchini, 2005, p. 47). She disagrees that in Brazil “concepts and approaches” from Europe have been simply “imported”, understanding that they would not have been applicable if the conditions did not exist in our socio-cultural reality (Facchini, 2005, p. 49). She mentions the transformation in theory with the arrival of different social actors in post-1968 Europe, bringing demands and conflicts not included, exclusively or directly, in the class struggle, which collapsed the prevailing differentiation, which saw as “political movements”

those organized around political parties and/or class entities, and as “pre-political,” the collective actions that did not present this model of intermediation (Facchini, 2005, p. 49-50). She refers to the “myth of origin” only to highlight the existence of various dates in the literature regarding the emergence of a new nomenclature for associativism, namely non-governmental organizations (the non-profit civil associations, according to the legislation of the time), the NGOs – “1970s, 1960s and even 1950s, depending on the author and the approach” (Facchini, 2005, p. 53).

Facchini points out that one of the defining characteristics of “alternative movements” (those that did not keep a necessary relation with the class struggle, i.e., the feminist and the homosexual, notably) was the notion that “the personal is political” (Facchini, 2005, p. 57), idea that served as a form of protest, demonstrating how issues considered personal and private (sexuality, gender domination, the structuring of the heterosexual family, etc.) were actually established and structured politically and culturally. However, as already pointed out, she does not problematize the fact that MacRae and Green did not apply this notion in their analyses, despite its incorporation in studies on these social movements.

Right at the beginning of the chapter “Movimento homossexual: recompondo um histórico”, the author reiterates the established view: “The homosexual movement emerged in Brazil in the late 1970s, defining its project of politicizing the issue of homosexuality in contrast to the alternatives present ‘in the ghetto’ and in some existing organizations in the period before its emergence” (Facchini, 2005, p. 88). She argues that “these associations, despite gathering homosexuals, had a performance qualified by militants as ‘non-politicized’ by activists, as they were exclusively focused on ‘sociability’. These *early* forms of homosexual associations” – she continues – “particularly the newspaper *O Snob* [sic] (1963-1969) and the Brazilian Association of Gay Press (1967-1968), are mentioned in the works of MacRae (1985) and Green (1998 and 2000)” (Facchini, 2005, p. 88, emphasis added). Without problematizing how much this is an interpretation marked by the authors’ belonging to the facts they examine. When highlighting the rich research material brought by James Green, she fails to mention that much of it had already been presented in the pioneering works of Trevisan (1986) and Peter Fry (1982), already mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, she argues that the process of constituting political consciousness and identity in the 1960s and early 1970s means “a homosexual

movement [...] including a dispute between identities [...] and the movement only emerges in the late 1970s” (Facchini, 2005, p. 92).

THE LGBTI MOVEMENT IN BRAZIL

Although his works are not included in the publications considered classic for the study of the MHB, Sérgio Carrara, who holds a degree in social sciences and a master's and PhD in anthropology, argues in a recent article that in 2019 the “40 years of the Brazilian [homosexual] movement and the 50 years of the international movement” were celebrated (Carrara, 2019, p. 3). He reiterates that in Brazil, the movement began in 1978 with Somos/SP, when the struggle against prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression “started among us,” and, in the world, with the Stonewall uprising (Carrara, 2019, p. 3. emphasis added). Such milestones, which he refers to as “ephemerides,” are the result of “social choices and conventions [...] that define [...] what should or should not be considered ‘political’” (Carrara, 2019, p. 3).

Carrara also did not research the artisanal gay press, focusing instead on the backgrounds of the groups *Outra Coisa* and *Triângulo Rosa*, according to his references. He also did not consider the previous actions documented by Luiz Morando's research (2018), which were presented in my thesis, where Carrara served as a member of the defense committee in 2012. This reading of his work may be influenced by his generational ties – coming from a practicing Catholic family, he described the impact he experienced at the age of 19, when he was a student at Unicamp and had his first glimpses of being “out of the closet” and attended the march organized by Somos/SP against delegate Wilson Richetti in São Paulo in 1978¹³.

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated, the idea of the founding myth (Grupo Somos/SP) prevails in the literature on the Brazilian Homosexual Movement. It is instituted with Peter Fry (1982), reiterated by Fry and MacRae (1983) and reaffirmed by MacRae himself (2018 [1986]), continuing to be repeated in subsequent works. However, none of these authors took the initiative to investigate the process of political consciousness and collective identity formation, nor did they delve into the study of artisanal periodicals beyond *Gente Gay* and *Snob*.

MacRae and Green strive to demarcate the Grupo Somos/SP, with which they are biographically linked, as a founding myth, even when their sources insist on showing them otherwise – for example, Green’s comment about the periodical mentioned by José Fábio Barbosa da Silva (a figure present in a network of relationships in late 1950s São Paulo): “The publication reflected a significant development in the organization of this minority” (Green, 2000, p. 325, n. 115 in fine), and “the idea of holding the First Congress of Enlightened Journalists” publicized in *Snob* in 1967 (Green, 2000, p. 308). As, also, the records of the frustrated homosexual congresses during the military dictatorship, referred to by Edward MacRae. Besides the idea of the founding myth, they bring along the productive/utilitarian notion inherent to capitalism, which considers as components of the social movement only the political actions that were not aborted, either by the government system or by the very force of the internalized stigmatization imposed on these actors. Thus, they neglect both the historical process and the subjective aspect.

Gohn (2008), in her conceptual proposal for social movements, highlights that they are political actions built by collective agents and articulated within a specific context, generating social force. These actions contribute to the formation of a collective identity and are structured through repertoires that are established from conflicting themes and issues. She does not state or propose that only after institutionalization, when they already have action repertoires and a well-defined agenda, when the collective identity is already consolidated, should these actions be considered as social movements. Although her proposition does not explicitly address the additional effort placed on actors marked by stigmatization, her formulation and proposed methodology clearly emphasize the importance of the subjective dimension in defining the category. Drawing on the works of Moore Jr., Castoriadis, Benedict, and Thompson, besides highlighting the presence of the subjective aspect throughout the historical process of struggle, Gohn emphasizes that the entirety of this process is an integral part of a social movement.

Thus, relying on the methodology proposed by Gohn and Certeau, as applied to the French May of 1968 (1995), as well as Thompson’s research, I propose an analytical methodology that: (1) contemplates the historical process; (2) includes the subjective dimension with an examination of the effort to overcome internalized feelings of inferiority (Thompson, 2004, p. 16; Rodrigues, 2006b; Colaço-Rodrigues, 2023); (3) considers the stages and challenges involved in the construction of political consciousness and collective identity, discourse, agenda of demands, repertoire of actions, and social

strength (Certeau, 1995; Rodrigues, 2006b), throughout the entire historical process, in short, with its fluctuations, uncertainties, and contradictions, as “a constitutive part of the formation of a social movement” (Gohn, 2008, p. 250; Colaço-Rodrigues, 2023); and finally, (4) integrates the “failed” actions into the process, as advocated by Becker and Thompson (Rodrigues, 2006b).

If the construction of working-class identity (based on experience and consciousness) initially had to deal with the introjected idea that workers were not entitled to demand their rights (Thompson, 2004, p. 16), then why should the formation of political consciousness and collective identity of actors historically labeled as sick, immoral, criminal, and sinful occur in a short time, with a single event and/or supposedly through the automatic incorporation of a given American experience?

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NOTES

¹ I started this research in 2018. It resulted in two articles and several minicourses. I would like to thank my colleagues who read, socialized sources and articles – Carlos Humberto Ferreira Silva-Júnior, Luiz Morando, Remon Bortollozi, Santiago Joaquín Insausti, Thiago Soliva, Vinícius Ferreira. I am, however, solely responsible the content of this work.

² The same occurred with the international movement. Stonewall was considered to be the catalyst for the movement worldwide, making all previous activism invisible, both in the US and during the North German Confederation.

³ In 1983, a total of 25 groups were listed. Among them, three in Pará, one in DF, one in MG, one in PB, and three in PE (Colaço, 1984, p. 64).

⁴ Aspects worked out in *Mitos, problemas e sinais: a imprensa gay, a provisoriidade da história e o ativismo antes de 1978* (2023).

⁵ I thank Thiago Soliva for reminding me of the importance of this publication for the formation of the field.

⁶ He also notes that the actions of Ulrichs and Hirschfeld were seen as “the beginnings of the homosexual liberation movements of our day.” However, he states that “the establishment of homosexual liberation movements in the United States and Europe [took place] in

the late 1960s.” Regarding Brazil, he refers to “movements” in the plural, and, on page 110, in the singular. On 108, he positions himself contrary to the diffusionist idea, and mentions that “much of the activities of these movements [in Brazil] focused on internal discussions about “homosexual identity” in the so-called “identification groups,” that is, on confronting internalized stigmatization (1982, pp. 104-6, 108, 110).

⁷ One of these attempts occurred sometime in 1976 and had lasted about three weeks; the other was “at the end of 1976”, when “between five and ten” participants, “for a certain time”, studied “an article about male chauvinism”, however, “after a few weeks, the group dissolved”. Trevisan himself, in *Devassos no Paraíso* (1986), in his interviews and, recently, in the virtual course he conducted, states that it would have been just an experiment before Somos. He also highlights only the “successful initiatives”. Neither MacRae nor Trevisan mention how many people participated in these meetings and continued afterwards in Somos/SP. I obtained this information from Trevisan, by e-mail, during my doctoral studies. Although he persisted in disqualifying ephemeral actions with little or no public result, Trevisan mentioned two individuals that were part of both groups. Only one responded to my attempt to contact him: the sanitary Dr. Paulo Roberto Teixeira, a significant figure in the policy of combating HIV years later, including in the UN (Rodrigues, 2012, p. 162).

⁸ *Afirmção da identidade homossexual: seus períodos e sua importância*, originally published in Tronca (1987) and republished in MacRae (2018, p. 67).

⁹ I analyze these aspects in detail in the aforementioned unpublished article.

¹⁰ Difficulties highlighted in the manifesto of the Somos/SP group, published in the newspaper *Lampião da Esquina* (1979, p. 2), which were addressed by Fry in 1982, as already mentioned.

¹¹ This is also the case of the author and results from the productivist logic implemented in Brazilian postgraduation institutions, reducing deadlines for completion of courses and a reduced number of scholarships, which, moreover, are inaccessible to those who are employed. Interview granted in 2021, to historians Augusta da Silveira and Rhanielly Pereira, in an event of the Network of LGBTQI Historians (2021). During the interview, Green also clarified that he had not read E. P. Thompson.

¹² I reiterate the difficulty in addressing inaugural actions, without research with such a scope. And, of the artisanal periodicals, Green denotes having researched only *Snob* and *Gente Gay*.

¹³ In a lecture at the State Panel Seminar *Diálogos e Respostas Intersetoriais sobre Violência contra a População LGBTI+*: *Fortalecendo a Rede de Proteção Social no Rio de Janeiro*, promoted by the National LGBTI+ Alliance (2020; Carrara, 2019).