

# New forms of visibility: audiovisual gender and race representations in Goiás<sup>1</sup>

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**Ceição Ferreira<sup>1</sup>**

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0625-6923>

**Clarissa Carvalho<sup>1</sup>**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8128-097X>

<sup>1</sup>(Universidade Estadual de Goiás, Curso de Cinema e Audiovisual. Goiânia – GO, Brasil).

## Abstract

Although a white and male point of view still predominates in Brazilian cinema, the production of short films in regional contexts has given rise to different voices and perspectives. An example of this is the performance of three young black filmmakers in Goiás: Vanessa Goveia, Tothi Cardoso and Raphael Gustavo da Silva and their respective short films (*Viúva Negra*, *A Câmera de João* and *A Piscina de Caíque*), from which we investigated the intersection of gender and race in the audiovisual sector in the state of Goiás. Based on the production context and the methodology of film analysis, we identified new forms of black visibility on the screens and behind the cameras.

**Keywords:** Young black filmmakers. Audiovisual in the state of Goiás. Visibility. Representation. Gender and race.

## Introduction

Seeking to investigate diversity in Brazilian cinema, both on screen and backstage, the IESP-UERJ's Multidisciplinary Affirmative Action Study Group (GEMAA) carried out a quantitative analysis of the highest grossing national films between 2002 and 2012, which add up to 218 fiction feature films, 226 directors, 412 screenwriters and 939 actresses and actors. The study found a tiny black participation, given that only 14% of actors and 4% of actresses (black and brown) are in the total of main casts, whereas white actresses and actors participation account for, respectively, 36% and 44%; in the scope of production, white males predominate in the script and direction of the films (respectively 84% and 68%), while white women correspond to only 13% and 24% of professionals in these functions; and black men are only 2% of the directors and 4% of the screenwriters (CANDIDO; MORATELLI;

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1 This article brings the results of the scientific initiation research (PIBIC/UEG) “*Por novas formas de visibilidade: gênero e raça na cinematografia goiana*”, carried out from August 2017 to July 2018, in the research project *A branquitude como ideal estético audiovisual*. Initial discussions were presented at the III SEJA - *Gênero e Sexualidade no Audiovisual*, held from 22 to 24 November 2017 in Goiânia (GO), in the work *A mostra Filmes de Preto e o protagonismo negro no audiovisual goiano*”.

DAFLON; FERES JÚNIOR, 2014, CANDIDO; TOSTE, 2014). The racial asymmetry is even more accentuated when it is linked to the gender factor, point out these authors, as they found that no film was directed or scripted by a black woman in the studied period. This further confirms that the exclusion patterns present on television (ARAÚJO, 2008, CAMPOS; FERES JÚNIOR, 2015) persist in Brazilian commercial cinema and confirm race as a form of social classification, which hierarchizes individuals' acceptance and recognition levels from the phenotype, as indicated by Guimarães (2011).

This panorama of disparities was also found in a study by the National Agency of Cinema (ANCINE), published in January 2018, which considered the 142 feature films commercially released in Brazilian theaters in 2016. Of this total, 75.4 % were directed by white men, 19.7% by white women, and 2.1% by black men – and again, no black woman worked as a screenwriter or director (BRASIL, 2018). Such data indicate the need to have black men and women in the various functions of film production (direction, script, photography, among others) in order to question the monopoly of those who build audiovisual representations and also as a possibility for changing the way narratives and Black characters are predominantly conceived. “When a screenwriter for a film is black, the chance of another black actor or actress in the cast increases by 52.5%. When it comes to the director, that number reaches 65.8%” (BRASIL, 2018, p. 19).

In this sense, it is worth mentioning the *Dogma Feijoada* movement, created in 2000 (during the São Paulo International Short Film Festival) by filmmakers Noel Carvalho, Jeferson De, Joel Zito Araújo, Lilian Solá Santiago, and Luiz Antonio Pillar, as well as actors, actresses and other black professionals, who presented demands for insertion in the audiovisual market as a political exercise of assuming the construction of such narratives and reversing limited views. Thus, having a black director and a black protagonist, the theme of the film being related to Brazilian black culture, as well as banning stereotyped characters and avoiding superheroes or outlaws, and highlighting the common Brazilian black man/woman are some of the commandments of this manifesto entitled Genesis of the Brazilian black cinema (CARVALHO, 2005).

Also seeking to take the lead in this area, black women from various regions of the country have gained prominence in the short film cinema, with participation in national and international festivals and exhibitions. As a counterpoint to the intersection of gender and race that operates processes of exclusion in the social context and also in national cinema production, as already mentioned, these young directors are inspired by the pioneering performance of Adélia Sampaio (the first Brazilian black filmmaker, who began her career in the 1970s and continues to make films) to architect an audiovisual production characterized by a diversity of formats, practices and forms of representation (FERREIRA; SOUZA, 2017).

Thus, despite the little diversified scenario in the production of feature films, still centered on the Rio-São Paulo axis, there were other initiatives within the local productions of each state in recent decades, especially in the short-film cinema. An example of this is the *Filmes de Preto* festival, held in Goiânia for the launch of the short films *Viúva Negra*,

*A Câmera de João* and *A Piscina de Caíque*, directed by Vanessa Goveia, Tothi Cardoso and Raphael Gustavo da Silva, respectively. From this festival and these three young black directors' productions, we propose to discuss the audiovisual production in Goiás, and mainly, to analyze gender and race representations, seeking to identify continuities and possible innovations in the forms of visibility for the black population.

### The *Filmes de Preto* festival and the audiovisual in Goiás

In line with such discussions in the national context, Raphael Gustavo da Silva, Vanessa Goveia and Tothi Cardoso organized the *Filmes de Preto* festival (Figure 1) for the release of their short films, respectively *Viúva Negra*, *A Câmera de João* and *A Piscina de Caíque*. This event was held on May 7, 2017, at Cine Cultura in Goiânia and adds these three young filmmakers' desire to think about black protagonism in the Goiás audiovisual production.

**Figure 1** – Online Disclosure material for the festival and photo of the directors with movie posters



Source: FILMES de PRETO event and *Viúva Negra* Facebook page (Photo: Ricardo Alvez)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Image available at: [www.facebook.com/viuvanegrafilme/photos/a.625351327612915/802853393196040](http://www.facebook.com/viuvanegrafilme/photos/a.625351327612915/802853393196040). Accessed on: Apr. 2, 2019.

This first film exhibition was conceived by the three as a movement born within the circuit of cinema productions in Goiás, in which they propose to talk about how the hierarchies existing within the sets influence the construction of black characters. In an interview with the newspaper *O Popular*, Vanessa highlights:

“It is almost always apparent that, during a film set, blacks occupy menial or lower positions. We fight for visibility”, points out Vanessa Gouveia, director of the short film *Viúva Negra*, of Estratosfilmes, sponsored by the Audiovisual Secretariat. According to the filmmaker, it is necessary to be aware and strong against prejudice, even in cultural areas, such as in cinema. “In my specific case, for example, I still have to overcome the fact that I am a 23-year-old young woman, and place myself as an audiovisual director”, she reiterates. (FERREIRA, 2017b, s/p)<sup>3</sup>.

Thinking about the production and representation scopes, it is worth mentioning that the short films *Viúva Negra*, by Vanessa Goveia, and *A Piscina de Caique*, by Raphael Gustavo da Silva were included in the public notice Curta Afirmativo (Affirmative short film 2014: protagonism of afro-Brazilian filmmakers in national audiovisual production), which selected 21 short film proposals from several Brazilian states. This was the second edition of this notice created in 2012 by the Audiovisual Secretariat of the Ministry of Culture in partnership with the Secretariat of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality of the Presidency of the Republic (SEPPIR), aimed at supporting the production of new national works directed by young black people, by offering prizes of up to 80 thousand *reais* for the production of 21 short films, which could be fictional or documentary and of free theme (CURTA..., 2015).

After these two editions, the Curta Afirmativo notice was discontinued, as well as the Carmen Santos Award – Cinema by Women. Despite the end of these two important affirmative actions, the research carried out by Ancine on gender and race led to the approval, in 2018, of quotas for women and black and indigenous people in the feature films production notice (APROVADAS..., 2018). However, the beginning of President Jair Bolsonaro’s government in 2019 created an unfavorable context for the audiovisual sector and affirmative actions, since the extinction of the Ministry of Culture (which came to be a Secretariat under the Ministry of Citizenship), the prospect of significant cuts in future investments for the sector, the risk of censorship, and a period of paralysis of Ancine funds (between April and May) generated instability that still lingers in 2020 among professionals in the field (RISTOW, 2019).

Despite this current national situation, it is worth mentioning the transformations that have taken place in audiovisual production in Goiás in recent years. The creation, in 1999, of

<sup>3</sup> Rei Souza, a black filmmaker from the city of Anápolis who is part of the *Filme de Preto* movement and was also interviewed in this report, highlights this desire for visibility as a fundamental aspect of his production (FERREIRA, 2017b).

the International Environmental Film and Video Festival (FICA), held until 2018<sup>4</sup>, with two award categories for State films; the exhibition of the Brazilian Association of Documentarists (ABD-Seção Goiás), created in 2003 within FICA's programming; and the Goiânia Mostra Curtas Festival, which reached its 19th edition in 2019, were for a long time the main exhibition windows of Goiás productions<sup>5</sup> (SILVA, 2019, LEÃO, 1999). However, it is with professional training that this local production starts to gain more strength and recognition. The State University of Goiás (UEG) created the Social Communication program in 2006, with qualification in Audiovisual, that in 2014 it was renamed Cinema and Audiovisual. The three young filmmakers we highlight here are graduates from this program (Vanessa and Tothi, from the undergraduate program; and Raphael, from the graduate course in Cinema and Audiovisual: Languages and Processes of Realization, created in 2016). This trio was joined by Thais Oliveira (one of the first professionals in the sound field in the State and today a professor at the program), Ludielma Laurentino, Benedito Ferreira, Getúlio Ribeiro, Larissa Fernandes and Jarleo Barbosa, among other professionals who share the training and, in some cases, also the creation of their own production companies. In 2015, in the city of Goiás the Bachelor of Film and Audiovisual Degree of the Federal Institute of Goiás (IFG) was created, as well a three-year Technical Course in Audio and Video Production Integrated to High School (PRADO, 2019).

This recent higher education in Goiás and in the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, in which the programs respectively started operating in 2018 (at UFMT) and in 2019 (at UFMS) (AULA..., 2018, TONHATI, 2018), as well as the existence of only a Bachelor's degree in Cinema and Audiovisual in the North Region, created in 2010 at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA)<sup>6</sup>, allows us to think about the regional exclusion that still exists in the country. According to Ramos (2010), at the public university, the first cinema programs were created in the 1960s, first at the University of Brasília (UnB)<sup>7</sup>, later at the University of São Paulo (USP) and at the Federal Fluminense University (UFF). In addition, according to a 2012 survey, the Southeast Region has a total of sixteen programs in Cinema and Audiovisual, of which nine are only in the State of São Paulo (SILVA, 2012).

Returning to the local context, the production of short films still predominates in Goiás, and is mainly supported by two financing mechanisms: the Goyazes Law (Lei Estadual de Incentivo à Cultura, No. 13,613, of 2000 and regulated in 2001) and the Municipal Culture Incentive Law (Law No. 8,666 of 06/21/1993, of the Municipality of Goiânia), which work

4 Due to the cuts in resources for culture in the State, in 2019, the XXI edition of the festival was not held.

5 Two festivals should also be mentioned: Festcine Goiânia, created in 2004 by the Municipality and whose 9th Edition was in September 2019, with the exhibition of 22 films (ten feature films and 12 short films) at Cine Goiânia Ouro; and the Festival de Documentários Brasileiros – PirenópolisDoc, carried out by Violeta Filmes, from 2015 and 2018. However, its fifth edition could not be held given the suspension of the State Cultural and Art Fund notices in May 2019.

6 According to information from the UFPA Film and Audiovisual Course Blog. Available at: [http://cinemaufpa.blogspot.com/p/apresentacao\\_23.html](http://cinemaufpa.blogspot.com/p/apresentacao_23.html). Accessed on: Aug. 19, 2020.

7 The creation of the UnB cinema program brought together important names such as Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Paulo Emílio Sales Gomes, Jean Claude Bernardet and Dib Luft, who also served as professors. But this experience was interrupted by the Military Regime (SILVA, 2012). Currently at the Faculty of Communication (FAC), the following course are offered: Audiovisual, Journalism, Organizational Communication and Advertising and Propaganda.

through tax waivers (PRADO, 2019, GOIÁS..., 2017). However, the early 2019 was marked by the release of six feature films: *Alaska*, by Pedro Novaes; *Dias Vazios*, by Robney Bruno Almeida; *Hélio Nunes: Do módulo lunar ao fotojornalismo*, by Ranulfo Borges; *Hotel Mundial*, by Jarleo Barbosa; *Parque Oeste*, by Fabiana Assis, and *Vermelha*, by Getúlio Ribeiro<sup>8</sup>. This is a moment of cinematographic effervescence in Goiás, especially due to the performance of young filmmakers (NOLETO, 2019, O RENASCIMENTO, 2016, FERREIRA, 2017a).

According to GoFilmes (Association of Cine & TV Producers in Goiás), in 2018 there were 28 feature films and 26 TV series in production in the State, which confirms Goiás as one of the most important centers of film and TV production in Brazil<sup>9</sup>. This expansion of the sector may be related to the creation of the Goiás Art and Culture Fund, launched in 2013, which constitutes “[...] the main artistic dynamization action in the state, with a volume that reached 33 million in 2017, of whose audiovisual budget is highlighted for being a more expensive activity that employs artists and technicians from different areas”, stresses Prado (2019, p. 252). Thus, observing this regional context and its relations with the national context, we propose the analysis of the short films *Viúva Negra*, *A Câmara de João* and *A Piscina de Caique* from the theoretical and methodological references that we present below.

## To analyze films, to question representations

Bearing in mind the relevance of representation practices in the production and circulation of meanings, and especially for the construction of identities, researcher Nilma Lino Gomes (2003, p. 43) emphasizes that “building a positive black identity in a society that has historically taught blacks, from a very early age, that to be accepted it is necessary to deny oneself, is a challenge faced by black men and women in Brazil”. In this sense, Araújo (2008) emphasizes the whiteness as an aesthetic ideal in the Brazilian television and cinema, which is expressed in the limited black participation and naturalization of these professionals in subordinate or stereotyped roles, as slaves and servants, without psychological density, limited to inferior spaces, while white characters have the reins of action, gaze and desire; and off-screen they are considered models of beauty and success.

Hall (2016) highlights stereotypes as a significant practice integrated with the maintenance of social and symbolic order, which is characterized by reducing, naturalizing and fixing physical difference; for implementing a strategy of symbolic exclusion of everything that does not fall within the established limits; and operates where there is inequality of power. Considering such aspects, cinematographic production cannot be disconnected from the sphere of social dialogue, given its central role in the diffusion of social, racial and

<sup>8</sup> *Parque Oeste* and *Vermelha* won the biggest awards at the 22nd Tiradentes Cinema Exhibition. The former received and took the Carlos Reichenbach Trophy, awarded by the Young Jury to the best title of the Festival Olhos Livres; and the second was chosen as the best of the Aurora Festival by the Critics Jury and winner of the Baroque Trophy.

<sup>9</sup> Data released in the Association’s institutional video, broadcast on June 27, 2019 on its Facebook page. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/associacaogofilmes/videos/2494824637269439/>. Accessed on Jul. 1, 2019.

gender asymmetries that characterize the Brazilian inter-racial coexistence, historically anchored in the valorization of miscegenation and a white aesthetic model.

The representations imposed on the black population and mainly, the monopoly of those who have the power to create them has been a constant theme of several discussions and manifestations, such as, in the early 2020s, criticism from the black community, especially from cinema professionals, of the choice of a white man (filmmaker José Padilha) and a white woman (screenwriter Antonia Pellegrino) for the direction and script of a Globo Play series about the black city councilor and activist Marielle Franco, murdered in 2018 (CASTRO, 2020)<sup>10</sup>; and the campaign “I could be in the telenovela *O Segundo Sol*” launched on Facebook by the page Trick Tudo, in the year 2018. As a protest to the absence of black men and women in this production of Rede Globo, set in Salvador/BA, the page indicated several black actors and actresses who could be part of the cast of this telenovela (AUSÊNCIA..., 2018). However, it is also worth noting that, in recent years, still in a timid way, more diverse representations have emerged in advertising and in media narratives in general (such as the scene of a telenovela), “[...] which feature a positive presence of black individuals in leading roles, as well as the family representation in their scripts”, emphasize Batista and Leite (2017, p. 24). For this reason, they are considered counterintuitive, that is, capable of challenging pre-established views in common sense, updating or even displacing the senses of traditional stereotypes and undertaking the construction of counter-narratives, thus configuring “[...] “a new/another” proposal of visibility, in the advertising field, to social minorities” (LEITE, 2011, p. 231).

Such aspects confirm the pertinence of developing a filmic analysis of three short films directed by young black filmmakers. For this, we used Vanoye and Goliot-Lété’s (1994) contributions to analyze the meaning relations constructed by the elements of the cinematographic language (such as frames, characters, disposition in the filmic space, lighting and soundtrack, among others); and also, the theoretical-methodological tools indicated by Stam and Shohat (2006) for the study of the discourses and hierarchies conveyed by cinematographic fictions.

Cinema translates correlations of social power into foreground and background records, from inside the screen and outside the screen, silence and discourse. To talk about the “image” of a social group, we need to ask precise questions about images and sounds: How much space do the different characters occupy in the shot? Which characters are active and dynamic, and which characters are just decorative supports? Does the line of sight make us identify with one look instead of another? Whose looks are matched? Which ones are ignored? How do body language, posture and facial expression communicate attitudes

<sup>10</sup> In the face of criticism of the choice of such professionals and also of the racist statements made by screenwriter Antonia Pellegrino in an attempt to justify the choice of José Padilha to direct the series, Rede Globo and the producer Antifa Filmes decided to cast black directors and screenwriters for that production.

rooted in social hierarchies, attitudes of arrogance, servility, resentment, pride? Whose music dictates the emotional response? What homologues give shape to the artistic and ethnic-political representation? (SHOHAT; STAM, 2006, p. 303).

From a perspective that recognizes the interactive dynamics between gender and race (and other social markers) as distinct axes of power that structure the exclusion of the black population in representations and affect social recognition processes (GONZALEZ, 1984, CRENSHAW, 2002), such an analytical exercise focuses on the investigation of fragments of each film, seeking to observe how gender and race are manifested in the narrative construction, in characters' characterization and the production scope. Based on these elements, we seek to identify ambiguities, flows, ruptures and continuities in relation to national cinematography and our cultural/social imaginary, still deeply marked by colonial, slave and patriarchal experience.

### **Photography, the gaze and *A Câmera de João***

The short film *A Câmera de João*<sup>11</sup> (John's camera), directed and scripted by Tothi Cardoso, is a fiction set in the Campinas neighborhood in Goiânia that addresses the relationship of the protagonist João (Lucas Romão) with his grandparents Zeca and Sônia (played by Adilson Magalhães<sup>12</sup> and Neuza Borges<sup>13</sup>), especially with his grandfather, a photographer who collects city records. By sharing his old photos and affective memories of the neighborhood, Grandpa Zeca teaches his grandson to build his own camera and make his own photos.

The film begins with images that run through the city streets, compose a smaller frame, appear aged and are accompanied by music that seems to indicate a trip to the past. Then we see that it is the point of view of João, who, concentrated, through the car window, looks at everything through the viewfinder of his camera. Off screen we hear the voice of his mother saying that he will stay at his grandparents'; she urges him to do his homework, since, in a complaining tone, she points out that "since your grandpa gave you this camera, you have a one-track mind". This mother's speech sounds quietly, effectively distant from that magical world of photography that the boy is fascinated with, as we can see by his image reflected in the rear-view mirror.

11 Available at the producer Dafuk Filmes' channel: <https://vimeo.com/202317652>. Accessed on: Aug 22, 2020.

12 Deceased in 2016, Minas Gerais actor Adilson Magalhães also known as Adilson Maghá, acted in the telenovelas *Araguaia* and *Velho Chico*, shown by Rede Globo; and in cinema he participated in several films, such as *Batismo de Sangue* (Helvécio Ratton, 2007), *Oração do Amor Selvagem* (Chico Faganello, 2015) and *Vazante* (Daniela Thomas, 2017).

13 Actress Neuza Borges is one of the black pioneering actresses in Brazilian cinema and dramaturgy. She performed in Brazilian telenovelas such as *Dancin' Days*, *A Indomada*, *O Clone* and *Salve Jorge*; and the films *A deusa negra* (Ola Balogun, 1978), *Polaróides Urbanas* (Miguel Falabella, 2008) and *As Mães de Chico Xavier* (Glauber Filho and Halder Gomes, 2011).



The boy is left by his mother at his grandparents'; he rushes in, gets a kiss from his grandma and goes to Grandpa Zeca's room, to whom he hands some materials and is curious to know what it is about, but it's time to go to school. When João returns it is already lunchtime, prepared by the grandmother, who affectionately serves it and again the boy looks forward.

Subsequently, João goes to meet his grandfather in the back room and the careful way in which the boy touches things gives us indications of the discoveries to come. Grandpa Zeca asks him to take a wooden box on top of an old cabinet and with the object in hand, we have a long shot, which seems to reflect the importance of that moment, when the old man gropes the box, opens it and undoes the tie that holds some photographs. Meanwhile, João remains sitting on the floor following this sort of reunion of his grandfather with the past, as these are old photos of Campinas, or *Velha Campininha das Flores*, as Grandpa Zeca and several old residents still call this neighborhood, one of the oldest in the state of Goiás, where the construction of what would become the capital Goiânia had begun. At that moment, there is the listening of a soundscape that goes back and shows the construction of the affective memory of that place: the use of sounds such as the church bells and that of a loudspeaker announcing the game at the Antônio Accioly Stadium. But these photos, now shown in a super close-up of João's hand, have an even more special meaning: they were the first photos that Grandpa Zeca took, as he reports, recalling his craft as a photographer, often exercised with a camera borrowed from a friend.

Enthusiastic about his grandfather's work, the next day João takes the old photos and fails to go to class just to walk the streets of Campinas. With his small Polaroid, he presents us with his view of these places (Figure 2), such as *Avenida 24 de Outubro*, an important commercial center; the *Coreto* square; the Mother Church of Campinas; the Antônio Accioly stadium of *Atlético Clube Goianiense*, one of the most traditional teams in the capital; and the Palace Hotel, which is now the Municipal Library Cora Coralina; the score indicates the boy's journey in discovering the neighborhood and adds to the noise of cars and people walking on the streets. About the sound noises that appear with the images, according to Caixeta and Oliveira (2015, p. 3) such sound effects are known through the term foley "[...] and their objective is to lead us to believe that we are part of the action". By articulating the score, the old photos and the boy's clicks, the film presents past and present, relates the grandfather's affective memories with the current representation of the urban space and allows us to get closer to that place, to that daily life under the young photographer's gaze.

**Figure 2** – Photography, the past and the present

Source: Film *A Camera de João* (Tothi Cardoso, 2016).

After a long day walking the neighborhood's streets and these various spaces, João goes back home and even in the face of his grandparents' concern about his delay, he talks about his experience, comparing what the neighborhood was like in the past, when his grandfather used to photograph it and the changes that occurred in that time interval, showing the photos he took during the tour. His grandparents attentively listen to him and are delighted to see the records he made (Figure 3).

**Figure 3** – João showing his photographs to his grandparents

Source: Film *A Camera de João* (Tothi Cardoso, 2016).

Given João's interest in photography, Grandpa Zeca eventually decides to use the materials his grandson had given him at the beginning of the movie. He talks again about his past, remembering that when he couldn't borrow a camera, he used a can camera and thus teaches the little photographer how to build his own can camera, a pinhole<sup>14</sup>. In the following scenes, he guides the whole process of creating the object and, together with the images, the music accentuates the creativity of this doing performed by the hands of a child.

Once it is ready, Grandpa Zeca gets the camera and with his own hands, teaches his grandson to photograph. In a while, João takes a picture of grandma watering the plants and,

14 Also known as dark camera, a pinhole camera is one that uses a completely closed box, where light is captured through a small hole on one side and the image is projected inverted onto the piece of film or photo paper on the opposite side.

back to the back room that now serves as a photo lab, again follows his grandpa's directions to carry out the development process. In the following scenes, which constitute the final sequence of the movie, João hands the photo over to Zeca, who feels it with his fingers and, emotionally, expresses his contentment by stroking his grandson's face affectionately (Figure 4). This scene reveals the power of photography, as light that creates an image in the can camera and, above all, as an affective memory that allows the grandfather, even without seeing, to transmit the photographic gaze and making to the little boy.

**Figure 4** – Grandpa Zeca, João and photography



Source: Film *A Camera de João* (Tothi Cardoso, 2016).

Through the passion for photography, which unites grandfather and grandson, this short film by Tothi Cardoso explores in the audiovisual narrative something very pertinent to the black population, which is the place of subject in the history of photography, where a white and enslaved imagination still prevails, because, just like cinema, it is also crossed by racial asymmetries, even in its technical dimension, given that Kodac used the white female body in the 1940s to standardize the skin tones of photographic prints (VELASCO, 2016).

Another important aspect is how the film proposes to problematize this power of photography. In the pinhole technique “[...] there is a total breakdown of the search for photographic objectivity, the unpredictable is the most important thing. The result will always be a surprise and that is where one of the greatest powers of the pinhole lies: chance”, as highlighted by Migliavacca (2009, p. 57). In this way, Grandpa Zeca allows little João not only to create his own camera, but also to subvert the search for representation of traditional

photography, encouraging the boy to have another interpretation of photographic making, another look at reality.

### ***A Piscina de Caíque* and the exercise of playing**

Exploring the children's universe too, the short film *A Piscina de Caíque*<sup>15</sup> (Caíque's pool), directed by Raphael Gustavo da Silva (who also serves as a screenwriter, director and executive producer) was filmed at Conjunto Vera Cruz, on the outskirts of Goiânia and carried out in collaboration with neighborhood residents. The fiction tells the story of Caíque (Lucas Orsida), who, after his mother (Eliana Santos) leaves to work, prepares the outside area of the house for a refreshing game with a friend: splash water on each other and slide on the wet and soapy floor (Figure 5). Also alluding to toy sounds, the music highlights this playful and fun moment of the two boys, who are watched with affection by their grandfather (Antonio Pitanga<sup>16</sup>).

**Figure 5** – Sliding game



Source: Film *A Piscina de Caíque* (Raphael Gustavo da Silva, 2017).

15 Available at Nosso Vera Jornal's channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K83LMpjpENk>. Accessed on: Aug. 19, 2020.

16 Antonio Pitanga is one of the most important black Brazilian actors. He began his career in the 1960s, acting in films such as *Bahia de todos santos* (Trigueirinho Neto, 1960), *O pagador de promesas* (Anselmo Duarte, 1962), *Barravento* (Glauber Rocha, 1962), *A grande feira* (Roberto Pires, 1966). He directed the feature *Na boca do mundo*, in 1978) and in the 1980s, he acted in *Quilombo* (Cacá Diegues, 1984) and most recently he participated in the film *Eu receberia as piores notícias dos seus lindos lábios* (Beto Brant, 2011). In 2016, the documentary *Pitanga*, directed by Beto Brant and Camila Pitanga (daughter of the actor), was launched, which investigates his aesthetic, political and existential trajectory.

The opening credits of the movie are reinforced with the noisy sounds of a child jumping into a pool, also showing water as an element that will be present throughout the narrative. As there is a recurrent lack of water in the region and the family does not have a water tank, this child's play ends up becoming a problem. Upon returning from work and seeing that the water storage containers are empty, Caíque's mother rages and hits the boy. He goes to seek solace with his grandfather, who promises to give him a pool. However, after calming the situation down and Caique falling asleep (Figure 6), the grandfather has a heart attack and dies.

**Figure 6** – Caíque falls asleep after being comforted by his grandfather



Source: Film *A Piscina de Caíque* (Raphael Gustavo da Silva, 2017).

In the following sequence, which adds a temporal advance in the narrative, the protagonist and his friend find the money left by their grandfather and go to a building supply store, where we imagine that they are going to buy an inflatable pool. The narrative explores this expectation in this scene and in the next, in which the two boys talk and the friend asks if they did the right thing. Caíque emphatically replies: “Sure! Sliding on the floor is much better. The two hug and laugh; then the camera moves to show that, instead of a swimming pool, Caíque has bought a water tank (Figure 7), something that will be useful for his family and guarantees the continuity of the game. Music highlights these two friends’ prank with our expectations; in the final shot, flying over the neighborhood, we see the rooftops and Caíque’s swimming pool.

**Figure 7** – Caíque’s swimming pool

Source: Film *A Piscina de Caíque* (Raphael Gustavo da Silva, 2017).

Since they were released, *A câmera de João* and *A Piscina de Caíque* have been shown at various festivals and events in several Brazilian states; and also, in schools, which allows an approximation between the child audience and such audiovisual representations. In this sense, it is worth noting that such short films feature black children in leading roles, and especially in everyday situations, such as the practice of photography or even the playing exercise, thus offering a counterpoint to the predominant representations on TV and national cinema, in which, as Horta (2018) points out, black children are commonly limited to situations of racism or poverty and crime.

### **The black woman as protagonist in the short film *Viúva Negra***

The third short film that was part of the *Filmes de Preto* festival was directed by filmmaker Vanessa Goveia, who also co-scripted it with Gabriel Newton, another graduate from the Cinema and Audiovisual program at UEG. *Viúva Negra*<sup>17</sup> (Black Widow) is a fiction that highlights the protagonist Olivia (played by actress Débora Carolyne), a young, sensual and mysterious woman, who lives up to the title of “Black Widow”, used in the popular

17 Available at the producer Estratos Filmes’s channel: <https://vimeo.com/204914408>. Access on: Aug 22, 2020.

imagination to designate women who kill their partners after a sexual relation, an allusion to female spiders of the genus *Latrodectus*, which kill the males of the species after mating.

The opening scenes are of Olivia's romantic dinner with Miguel (Adreane Lima), when she demonstrates the special feeling she has for him but is also hesitant, given that she had never been emotionally involved with her victims before. The cut to a set of fast-moving images that show Olivia putting on makeup (in super close-up, which highlights her face), pictures of men with a negative effect suggestive of a kind of erasure, objects such as a camera, scissors and a bed build the backdrop for the film's title and also give clues about the protagonist; the music reverberates a characteristic atmosphere of mystery and suspense.

In the first sequence, Olivia is walking and passes by a group of four lads; she knows that she is being watched and one of them comments "This one looks like she swallows it up". The camera now positioned in a frontal position to the female character, with the boys in the background, shows that she is not intimidated and comes back staring at the sassy one and challenges him saying, "want to check?" (Figure 8) and asking the other guy for a pen, with which she writes her phone number on the lad's neck and emphasizes "Don't you lose it, right?", disconcerting him. The other guys make fun of him as Olivia calmly continues her walk.

**Figure 8** – Olivia's audacious stance



Source: Film *Viúva Negra* (Vanessa Gouveia, 2017).

This positioning of the protagonist is reinforced in the seduction strategies that she uses to win over different men. She does not care when one says he is married and she has no shame to take her panties off and give them to another, along with her phone number. Such daring actions intersect the dinner sequence, in which she again hesitates, tries to resist Miguel's advances, but finally surrenders. The sexual relation displays the pleasure of this female character, who takes a picture of Miguel the next day and places it with the others on the wall. Stating "I didn't want you to be here at dawn", Olivia kills him with a stab in the back and faces the camera with a sadistic expression (Figure 9).

**Figure 9** – Olivia kills Miguel and looks at the camera



Source: Film *Viúva Negra* (Vanessa Goveia, 2017).

Cut to the credits that again have Olivia's sensuality as a background, putting on makeup, then strolling alone at night (the music shows the idea of strength and haughtiness); pictures of men on the mural and the protagonist's legs in a low-cut skirt are also framed). Such images could be considered the final scenes of the short film, but after the credits there is one more scene, through which the narrative tells us that the black widow continues her saga, seducing and photographing her victims (Figure 10). This last image, with Olivia highlighted in the center of the frame and in a power position by sexual dominance, and mainly because she holds the camera can be considered as a metaphor of the director's own desire to build new representations for black women in cinema.



Figure 10 – Olivia's saga continues



Source: Film *Viúva Negra* (Vanessa Gouveia, 2017).

The mastery that this female character has of herself and her sexuality is shown throughout the narrative and emphasized when Olivia kills Miguel and looks at the camera, an action that confirms this character's self-awareness, which breaks the distance between the film and the audience, thus questioning the cinematographic language itself. In addition, the construction of this female character offers elements to think about a possible displacement in gender territories. She assumes a posture commonly associated with the masculine, since

men enjoy greater sexual freedom and from an early age they are allowed sexual adventures within a heteronormative standard (LOURO, 1999), which also imposes more incisive limits on female sexuality, previously only in marriage and still today restricted to certain behaviors.

The representation of female sexuality in cinema also reproduces such inequalities. In this sense, Kaplan (1995, p. 23) highlights how the figure of *femme fatale* in *noir* films (of the 1940s) assumes her sexuality and seduces men to achieve her own interests. That is why she is seen as evil, which gives man the moral right to destroy her, to punish her with death and thus “the revolver or knife takes the place of the phallus which must, by eliminating her, dominate her”. On the other hand, this feminist theory points out changes after the 1960s and the profound cultural transformations that occurred and enabled the representation of women in the exercise of their sexuality. Relating such reflections to the film *Viúva Negra*, especially the final scenes (Figure 10), it can be considered that the outcome given to the protagonist Olivia indicates that she resists male domination, by using her sexuality as a seduction strategy and also by assuming the phallus (in this case represented by the knife) to kill her lovers, who are punished for falling into the trap, while she keeps going, walking alone at night looking for the next victim.

In this discussion on gender and sexuality, it is essential to call attention to racial belonging. For if female sexuality has been historically repressed in cinema representations, this refers mainly to white women, who are models of femininity and beauty and take central roles, while black women are predominantly relegated to peripheral characters without psychological density (YOUNG, 1996). Therefore, about the Olivia’s leading role in this short film, the director Vanessa Goveia points out:

It is a production that talks about the black female gaze and, above all, in the way of putting and exposing social and emotional relations in relation to representativeness. Black people are almost always seen as the employee, the waiter, the caricature, the humorous character or the outlaw. Always behind the focus (FERREIRA, 2017b, n/p).

In line with this statement, Candido and Feres Júnior (2019) note the maintenance of a racialized and gendered regime of representation in Brazilian cinema between 2002 and 2014, indicated by the recurrence of stereotypes such as the “maid” and the “mulatto”, which associate black women with subservience and hypersexualization. The persistence of such stereotypes leads us to the studies of Gonzalez (1984), who, as early as in the 1970s, questioned how the naturalization of “mulatto” and maid roles was decisive for the social recognition of black women.

Lélia Gonzalez brings the spatial dimension of racial, gender and social relations. We can apprehend that the female “mulatto” would be in the public space an expression corresponding to that which is attributed to the maid in

the private sphere. [...] She recognizes remote aspects that are resumed and updated to keep the black female body as the target of fixed, repeated public images, almost always of inferiority, negative (RATTS; RIOS, 2016, p. 397).

This emphasis on the black female gaze, highlighted by the young filmmaker, allows us to think of the short film *Viúva Negra* as a counterpoint to the subordinate treatment that is generally given to black and brown women in Brazilian feature films released in the last twenty years (1995 to 2014), in which “[...] only 1.4% of non-white actresses are protagonists” (CANDIDO *et al.*, 2016, p. 15). Thus, although sexuality is the main element explored in this character, as we do not know anything else about her, the fact of being the protagonist, of being the master of her desire and of her body, makes this place of mere sexual object complex, indicating flows, ambiguities and polysemies capable of breaking the trend of imprisonment of black female characters (SOARES, 2009, SILVA, 2016). Thus, it can be considered that Vanessa as well as other filmmakers have undertaken a Black Cinema in the Feminine, which “[...] enables black directors to recreate the space-territory silenced by racism and heteronormativity, [...] thus building plural forms of approaching diversity. That is why it is a symbol of black female empowerment (FERREIRA; SOUZA, 2017, p. 176).

This crossing of gender and race that structures the construction of the character Olivia has been discussed in festivals and events in which the film is shown, such as at the 1st Feminist Cinema Festival in Quinta; and in the debate of the Cineclube Teresa de Benguela, both held in Vitória, ES, respectively, in June 2017 and March 2018; and it also allows us to think about the scope of audiovisual production in Goiás, especially in the direction function. According to a mapping of Goiás directors from 2013 to 2018, of the total of 22 women, only two were black: Vanessa Goveia and Larissa Fernandes, Silva (2019) notes.

In addition to the intersection of gender and race asymmetries, regional exclusion can also be considered as a factor that affects the exclusion of women in the Brazilian film production. Although this aspect was not analyzed in the study “Gender and Race Diversity in Brazilian Feature Films Launched in Movie Theaters 2016” (BRASIL, 2018), we observe that, of the 142 feature films that make up the survey’s universe, 115 films were produced by producers in the Southeast Region, only four are from producers in the Midwest Region and there is no film by producers in the North Region. This confirms regional inequalities and the need to implement public policies that encourage decentralization and regionalization of the audiovisual sector, thus enabling the emergence of new voices, landscapes, narratives and representations.

## Final considerations

The shorts films *A camera de João* and *A Piscina de Caíque* star black children and focus on the family environment and its particularities, such as the father’s absence and the

mother's role as head of the family. However, the joy, the play and the children's point of view stand out and also show the relationships of affection that João and Caíque have with their elderly grandparents, portrayed differently from the situation of poverty, abandonment and subservience that are recurrent representations of the black population in *telenovelas* and national films.

Also, in this sense, it can be considered that if black women are historically placed in an object condition (in everyday life and in representations) due to a stereotyped view of their sexuality, it is possible, in the short *Viúva Negra* with the protagonist Olivia, to observe an inverse attempt to give her protagonism in the narrative construction and in the filmic image precisely because she is the master of her body and desire. These aspects, together with the proposal of the cinematographic festival/movement *Filmes de Preto*, are important for the identification and politicization processes of the image that these productions can bring about in festivals and discussion forums, such as feminist events, as mentioned.

Therefore, these three young filmmakers problematize racial, social and gender issues in their audiovisual narratives; emphasize the need for black filmmakers and professionals, because they understand the importance of creating new forms of visibility and thus explore new symbolic and imaginary territories of affections, children's games and black female protagonism.

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### Ceição Ferreira

PhD in Communication from Universidade de Brasília (UnB). Professor and researcher of the Cinema and Audiovisual program at Universidade Estadual de Goiás (UEG), where she carries out teaching, research and extension activities in the areas of communication and culture, cinema, race and gender. E-mail: [ceicaferreira@gmail.com](mailto:ceicaferreira@gmail.com).

### Clarissa Carvalho

Bachelor in Cinema and Audiovisual from Universidade Estadual de Goiás (UEG). E-mail: [clarissacrvlh@gmail.com](mailto:clarissacrvlh@gmail.com).

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