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New Perspectives in
Gender Research

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2025, Volume 4

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Queering the
Cangaço: Gender
Nonconformity and
Representation in
Brazilian Film and TV



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Queering the Cangaço: Gender Nonconformity and Representation in Brazilian Film and TV

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Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag untersucht, welche Neuerzählung das *cangaço* Phänomen im Brasilianischen Film und Kino durch queere und nicht gender-konforme Charaktere erfahren hat. Bei *cangaço* handelt es sich um eine soziale Bewegung im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert in der nordostbrasilianischen Region Sertão, die dem Banditentum zuzurechnen ist. In älteren Erzählungen dieses Phänomens hatte sich eine Repräsentationsweise der *cangaceiros*, der (vornehmlich männlichen) Protagonist:innen dieser Bewegung, etabliert, die auf restriktiven Geschlechterzuschreibungen beruhte. Demnach wurden sie zu Symbolen einer gewaltbereiten Hypermaskulinität stilisiert, die tief mit den soziopolitischen Verhältnissen der Region verwoben war. Im Kontrast dazu haben zeitgenössische Filme und TV-Serien dazu beigetragen, diese Tropen und Narrative in Frage zu stellen. Durch den Einsatz genderfluider Charaktere wird in diesen Produktionen die binäre Geschlechterordnung angefochten, die in älteren Darstellungen auf den historischen Stoff des *cangaço* projiziert wurde. In der gegenwärtigen visuellen Kultur Brasiliens steht die Praxis des queering the *cangaço* im Dienste einer weitergefassten soziopolitischen Transformation. So trägt diese subversive Strategie zur Dekonstruktion eines der zentralen Gründungsmythen einer brasilianischen Nationalidentität bei.

Schlagworte

Cangaço, Queere Repräsentation, Hypermaskulinität, brasilianischer Film

Abstract

This paper examines how Brazilian cinema and television have reimagined the *cangaço* through queer and gender-nonconforming characters. The *cangaço* was a historical movement of social banditry that emerged in Brazil's northeastern Sertão region between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Traditionally, representations of *cangaceiros* have reinforced rigid gender roles, portraying them as symbols of violent hypermasculinity, deeply tied to the socio-political realities of the region. However, contemporary films and TV series have increasingly disrupted this framework by introducing characters whose gender fluidity and performative aesthetics challenge the binary logic historically ascribed to the *cangaço*. By queering the *cangaço*, contemporary Brazilian visual culture not only subverts a foundational myth of national identity but also engages with epistemologies that position gender nonconformity as a site of political and social transformation. These shifting portrayals destabilize long-standing associations between masculinity, violence, and power in the Sertão, revealing how media can serve as a critical space for rethinking gender and identity.

Keywords

Cangaço, queer representation, hypermasculinity, Brazilian cinema

1. Introduction: Queering the *Cangaço*: Gender Nonconformity and Representation in Brazilian Film and TV

This article examines how recent Brazilian films and television series queer the image of the *cangaceiros*, armed bandits who roamed Brazil's late 19th-century Northeast and stood at the center of the social banditry movement known as the *cangaço*. Historically, the *cangaço* emerged in a context of deep social inequality in the arid Sertão, the backlands of Northeast Brazil, producing conditions in which banditry, survival, and resistance to local elites overlapped. In Brazil's cultural imagination, *cangaceiros* have been repeatedly revisited in literature, visual art, and cinema as symbols of rebellion and marginality. Yet, these representations have often been structured around hypermasculine ideals that reinforce national myths of virility and domination.

This study analyses four Brazilian works: *Orgia ou o Homem que Deus Cria* (Trevisan 1970), *Bacurau* (Mendonça Filho and Dornelles de Faria Neves 2019), *O Cangaceiro do Futuro* (Gomes 2022), and *Guerreiros do Sol* (Gomes 2025), to explore how contemporary film and television reimagine the traditional figure of the *cangaceiro* through non-normative performances of gender and community. Drawing on insights from queer and decolonial approaches, it argues that the Sertão, once portrayed as a site of backwardness and violence, becomes a stage for reconfiguring gender hierarchies and envisioning new forms of belonging.

The selection of these works responds to their distinct historical and aesthetic positions within Brazilian visual culture. *Orgia ou o Homem que Deus Cria* (1970) marks an early underground challenge to cinematic conventions of gender during the military dictatorship era (1964–1985); *Bacurau* (2019) reconfigures the *cangaceiro* myth through a contemporary, queer-inflected lens of

collective resistance; *O Cangaceiro do Futuro* (2022) translates these subversions into popular, mainstream comedy; and *Guerreiros do Sol* (2025) extends them into television melodrama. Together, they illustrate how queer and non-normative expressions of gender traverse different media, genres, and political contexts, revealing a broader cultural shift in the reimagining of the *cangaço* in the 21st century. However, understanding how these reinterpretations operate requires revisiting the historical and cultural formation of the *cangaço* itself.

Scholarly interpretations vary from social-banditry frameworks, drawing on classic formulations of peasant bandits resisting structural injustice (Hobsbawm 1969), to readings emphasizing opportunism and internal violence (Santos 2018; Pericás 2010). These perspectives often hinge on how the *cangaço* is situated within broader social and political transformations in the Northeast, particularly the expanding influence of the national government.

The historical *cangaceiros* operated in a power vacuum where formal justice was weak or co-opted by local oligarchs, the *coronéis*, who exercised quasi-feudal control over rural communities (Mansur 2025). Emerging amid large-scale land concentration, chronic poverty worsened by recurring droughts, and a predatory state presence, the *cangaço* was not a unified or ideologically consistent movement (Pericás 2010; 2018). Its participants engaged in robbery, extortion, and violence that sometimes targeted the elite and, at other times, vulnerable peasants.

A crucial factor in the decline of the *cangaço* in the late 1930s was the *Estado Novo* regime under Getúlio Vargas (1930–1945), which centralised power and strengthened law enforcement, leading to the suppression of major *cangaceiro* groups (Pericás 2010, p. 193). Despite this decline, the figure of the *cangaceiro* continued to resonate in Brazilian culture, with cinema and television productions portraying

them across a spectrum from heroic rebels to violent criminals.

Early Brazilian films helped embed the *cangaço* in the national imagination. During the vanguard *Cinema Novo* movement (late 1950s – early 1970s), *cangaceiros* were often depicted as symbols of resistance to social injustice, embodying proto-revolutionary ideals that reflected the struggles of the impoverished Northeast (Xavier 2006: p. 59). Glauber Rocha's *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (1964), for example, presented them as mythic figures driven by desperation, highlighting a “tradition of bravery” and contributing to the complex legacy of figures like Corisco (Cristino Gomes da Silva Cleto), a key member of Virgulino Ferreira da Silva's band, the most famous *cangaceiro* leader, widely known as Lampião (Xavier 1983: 102).

In contrast, another cinematic current portrays *cangaceiros* as ruthless and violent outlaws, reflecting the harshness of the Sertão and emphasizing the fear and cruelty they instilled in local communities. Lima Barreto's *O Cangaceiro* (1953), which helped popularize the genre, exemplifies this approach by presenting *cangaceiros* as morally ambiguous figures dominated by vanity and introspection. The iconic characters from the 1953 movie such as *Galdino*, ostentatious and symbolized by his prominent rings, and *Teodoro*, humble and reflective, highlight the internal contrasts within the group. Their parallel deaths at the film's climax serve as “an allegory of the struggle between Good and Evil within the *cangaço* world itself” (Xavier 2006: p. 59). This nuanced portrayal distances the *cangaceiros* from heroic or revolutionary symbolism, foregrounding their moral complexity.

A consistent thread across both romanticized and brutal depictions of the *cangaceiro* is a model of masculinity, often described in Brazilian Portuguese as the *macho*, which embodies dominance, honour, courage, and patriarchal authority, particularly prevalent in the traditional rural Northeast at the time (Albuquerque Júnior 2013: p. 137). This hypermasculine ideal aligned with the social

conditions in the Sertão, where physical dominance and violence often replaced formal power. Revenge and the defence of honour, for instance, could legitimise joining the *cangaço* as a means to reclaim social recognition and assert masculine status (Costa 2021: p. 212).

At the level of national identity, the *cangaceiro* has long embodied tension. Celebrated as a rugged symbol of Brazilian resilience and the untamed countryside, he was also seen as lawless and violent, an obstacle to the nation's modernizing ambitions. Cultural depictions of the *cangaço* thus reflect broader anxieties about Brazil's identity, caught between embracing rural roots or aspiring to a more orderly, *civilized* image rooted in narrow masculine ideals.

While Brazilian cinema has long positioned the *cangaceiro* within a rigid masculine framework, contemporary films and series increasingly challenge this image, presenting gender-fluid, queer, or otherwise nonconforming figures. These works reinterpret historical characters, introduce new ones, and destabilize patriarchal structures, questioning the foundations of masculinity tied to violence and dominance. In doing so, they reframe the *cangaço* as a space for exploring gender and sexuality, enriching its cinematic legacy with more inclusive and critical perspectives on identity in contemporary Brazil.

Methodologically, this study positions itself within current debates in film and media studies about the queering of national cinemas (Rich 2013; Schoonover and Galt 2016) and the decolonisation of Latin American visual culture (Quijano 2000; Lugones 2007; Podalsky 2011). While engaging with notions such as “epistemic resistance” (Medina 2012) and “the situatedness of knowledge” (Dotson 2014), it extends these conversations to the Brazilian context, showing how reworkings of *cangaço* mythology interrogate colonial, patriarchal, and heteronormative frameworks of power and identity.

2. Shifting Representations of the *Cangaceiro* in Brazilian Cinema

The following analysis focuses on cinematic case studies that exemplify the emerging portrayal of non-normative and queer gender identities within the figure of the *cangaceiro* in contemporary Brazilian films and TV series. The discussion begins with the character *Lunga* from the critically acclaimed film *Bacurau* (2019).

Directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, *Bacurau* blends genre elements of western, science fiction, political allegory, and social critique. Set in a near-future Brazil, the narrative unfolds in the fictional, isolated village of Bacurau, located in the Northeastern Sertão. The villagers discover that their town has vanished from satellite maps and Global Positioning System (GPS), marking the beginning of a violent plot orchestrated by foreigners who arrive intending to hunt them for sport. The film is deeply grounded in Brazil's current socio-political tensions, offering a sharp commentary on neo-colonialism, class conflict, and the collective resilience of marginalized Afro-diasporic and indigenous communities.

Within this narrative, the fictional character *Lunga* emerges as a feared yet respected outlaw, residing in the hills surrounding Bacurau. Although distanced from village life, *Lunga* maintains a deep, if complex, connection to the community. Their characterization draws from the archetype of the social bandit: an outlaw regarded by state authorities as a criminal but viewed by their community as a defender or avenger of justice (Hobsbawm 1969: p. 13). This figure resonates with historical representations of Lampião, Brazil's most famous *cangaceiro*, who was even compared to another iconic social bandit, being described as a "modern Robin Hood" in a 1931 New York Times article (The New York Times 1931). While the historical *cangaceiros* were not always heroic, often engaging in extortion or serving local elites, the enduring image of the *cangaceiro* as a folk hero persists in the Brazilian Northeast.

Bacurau reinforces *Lunga*'s role as a contemporary *cangaceiro* through specific cinematic strategies. For example, the character *Pacote*, also portrayed as a resourceful protector of the village, expresses admiration for *Lunga*, emphasising their importance in defending the community and acknowledging their protective use of violence. *Lunga* is first shown in hiding at a decommissioned, dried-out dam. This setting evokes the outlaw's retreat into the wilderness, a trope that is central to Western narratives of banditry (Hobsbawm 1969: p. 17). Yet the film purposefully disrupts expectations associated with this archetype.

This disruption is evident in a scene where *Pacote* approaches *Lunga*'s hideout. From afar, he signals his arrival using a mirror, a rudimentary long-distance communication technique often seen in Westerns like *Red Sun* (1971), directed by Terence Young. *Bacurau* cuts to a close-up of *Lunga*, also gazing into a mirror, establishing a visual and symbolic connection between the two characters even before they meet. Here, *Lunga* is shown delicately tracing their eyebrows while adorned with black nail polish and several gold rings, details that sharply contrast with the rugged, hyper-masculine image typically associated with *cangaceiros*. Their soft-spoken demeanour and contemplative expression subvert expectations of brute aggression, suggesting a complex and fluid gender identity.

More than questioning traditional masculinity, *Lunga*'s portrayal in *Bacurau* unsettles the very frameworks through which gender is typically made visible and understood on screen. Although early references to *Lunga* in the film use male pronouns, such as the local elder Damiano's remark that "Lunga is worth more for the evil than for the good he can do" (01:07:35), these identifiers become less significant as the character appears more fully. Their presence resists straightforward classification, and this ambiguity is not treated as confusion or weakness, but rather as part of *Lunga*'s strength and authority.

Visually, *Lunga* challenges the conventional image of the *cangaceiro* in Brazilian cultural memory, a figure traditionally portrayed as

“dressed in a leather armour, armed with swords... winning a thousand battles and always ready to possess a thousand women” (Suassuna 1970: p. LXXI). Instead, *Lunga* appears in an open, brightly patterned shirt, long hair extensions, makeup, and jewellery, blending stylistic elements often read as both masculine and feminine. This aesthetic shift from established *cangaceiro* iconography does not diminish *Lunga*’s authority. On the contrary, it coexists with their role as a powerful and respected leader, embedded in the values of territorial defence, vengeance, and communal protection that have long defined the *cangaceiro* as a figure of resistance.

Rather than signalling a break from this tradition, *Lunga*’s appearance reconfigures it. Their gender presentation can be read as a response not only to internal identity, but to the material, symbolic, and affective conditions of the world they inhabit. Drawing from a framework that emphasises how gendered subjectivity is mediated through embodied relations to place, it becomes clear that *Lunga*’s visual and emotional expressiveness are shaped by their embeddedness in the landscape of a post-apocalyptic Sertão, marked by marginalisation, violence, and collective memory. As Aren Aizura notes, “the specifics of place mediate how [subjects] desire and identify with the cultural locations they interface with” (2010: p. 425). In this context, it is through *Lunga*’s situatedness within a world structured by resistance, exile, and survival, that their queer self-presentation becomes legible as a mode of insurgent power rather than vulnerability.

Lunga is portrayed as someone whose marginal position, outside normative gender structures and, to a degree, outside the village itself, enables a distinctive and necessary way of perceiving the world. This positionality exemplifies what has been theorized as a form of “situated knowing” (Dotson 2014: p. 120), in which social location shapes not only access to knowledge but also the forms that knowledge can take. In *Bacurau*, the diversity of the characters’ economic, cultural, and sexual

experiences produces “differing knowledges of reality” (Bergin 2002: p. 198). *Lunga*’s queerness, therefore, becomes a standpoint from which alternative epistemic resources emerge. Their perspective, shaped by exclusion, resilience, and solidarity, offers a form of understanding that is both strategic and transformative.

The film underscores this epistemic diversity as central to the village’s survival. Resistance in *Bacurau* draws on memory, intuition, oral traditions, and informal forms of coordination, knowledge systems that lie outside institutional or colonial frameworks. By foregrounding these varied ways of knowing, the film rejects the notion of a singular, superior worldview and instead affirms that survival depends on the multiplicity of perspectives. *Lunga*’s presence, then, functions as an epistemological intervention, prompting viewers to reconsider who can lead, what forms resistance may take, and how historical narratives might be reclaimed to reflect more inclusive and complex forms of subjectivity and power.

In the context of contemporary Brazilian cinema, such increasing departures from the traditionally masculine figure of the *cangaceiro* often reflect the growing academic and societal conversations on gender, sexuality, and diversity. While earlier films occasionally disrupted conventional gender norms, their approach and intent typically diverged from the more deliberate, critically engaged portrayals found in recent productions such as *Bacurau*. One notable example of this earlier tendency appears in *Orgia, ou O Homem que deu Cria* (“Orgy, or The Man Who Gave Birth”) (1970), directed by João Silvério Trevisan. This experimental work, part of Brazil’s *Udigrudi* (underground) cinema movement, briefly includes the striking image of a pregnant *cangaceiro*, a powerful subversion of the hypermasculine archetype, though presented within an allegorical framework.

The film centres on a surreal journey undertaken by a group of eccentric characters who travel on foot from Brazil’s rural interior toward an undefined urban destination. The narrative privileges the symbolic weight of the

journey itself. Among this carnivalesque procession is a pregnant *cangaceiro*, a solitary man from the Sertão who mysteriously conceives and ultimately gives birth in a cemetery, only for his child to be devoured by cannibalistic Indigenous figures.

His presence alongside a Black *travesti*¹ dressed as Carmen Miranda reciting Gonçalves Dias, a blind man, a wheelchair-bound African king holding the 1970 World Cup trophy, and other grotesque allegories, exemplifies the film's "aggressive debasement" (Bernardet 2001). Such notion refers to a deliberate aesthetic strategy that distorts and destabilizes revered cultural symbols by dragging them into the terrain of the vulgar, or the grotesque. In this context, the pregnant *cangaceiro* functions less as a direct critique of gender binaries and more as a surreal emblem, part of a larger collage that allegorizes Brazilian identity, repression under the military regime, and the legacy of cultural movements like *Tropicalismo*².

In contrast to Lunga in *Bacurau*, whose queer identity is central to the narrative and intimately tied to the film's vision of collective resistance

and solidarity, the pregnant *cangaceiro* in *Orgia, ou O Homem que deu Cria* lacks a similarly grounded narrative or political function. Their gender nonconformity is not clearly situated within a communal struggle, nor is it mobilized to critique dominant social structures in a sustained way. Instead, their symbolic excess resists straightforward interpretation.

As such, *Orgia, ou O Homem que deu Cria* represents a form of early experimentation with gender that, while provocative, differs significantly from the intentional, politically resonant representations emerging in more recent Brazilian cinema. These more recent portrayals, exemplified by *Bacurau*, not only question dominant gender norms but also embed such critiques within collective imaginaries, reframing queer identity as a source of insight, solidarity, and transformative potential.

3. Queer Cangaceiros in Contemporary Brazilian Television

Similar to *Orgia, ou O Homem que deu Cria*, the 2022 Netflix comedy series *O Cangaceiro do Futuro* (Gomes, 2022) incorporates elements of fantasy and humour to present a reimagined, diverse group of *cangaceiros*. The series follows *Virguley*, a *Lampião* impersonator living in 2021 São Paulo, in Southeast Brazil, who is unexpectedly transported back in time to 1927 Ceará, in Northeast Brazil, where he is mistaken for the legendary bandit. Seizing the opportunity, *Virguley* assembles an unconventional gang that notably includes a non-binary character named *Amaro*. While the series adopts a markedly different tone from more dramatic works like *Bacurau*, it nonetheless contributes to the ongoing disruption of traditional gender roles historically associated with the *cangaço*.

The series also foregrounds female *cangaceiras*, notably sisters *Amélia* and *Amália*, who enter the *cangaço* as a means of navigating and resisting the patriarchal constraints of 1927

¹ The term *travesti* is a Latin American term which describes a transfeminine category that subverts both normative expectations of femininity and trans politics structured around assimilation and respectability (Rizki 2019, p. 149). The term is historical, though has evolved in its usage. Giuseppe Campuzano (2006, p. 34) writes that the "concept of *travesti* (literally, "cross-dressing") was born out of the [European] colonisers' fixation with gender binaries including the imperative to dress according to one's place within a rigid gender dichotomy, in which there were two clearly defined sexes and two genders premised on these sexes. Pre-Hispanic gender was read through this lens; travestism became, within this schema, dressing across the binary" (Rizki 2019, p. 149). Today, though, "travesti identification operates as a politics, a critical mode, and an epistemology" (ibid.) which refuses this gender binary.

² *Tropicalismo* (or *Tropicália*) was a Brazilian cultural movement that emerged in the late 1960s across music, visual arts, cinema, and theatre, characterized by the deliberate juxtaposition of culturally valorized forms and those historically coded as popular or mass-cultural. Drawing on the modernist concept of *antropofagia*, it mobilized irony, pastiche, and aesthetic excess to expose and destabilize entrenched cultural hierarchies and nationalist myths under the military dictatorship (Favaretto, 1996).

Ceará. Within *Virguley's* group, they are welcomed and treated as capable and valued members, an unconventional depiction that contrasts sharply with traditional fictional portrayals in which women were often framed as subordinate or peripheral.

In early 20th century Northeast Brazil, women in the *cangaço* faced significant hardships, including violence from male *cangaceiros*, societal hostility, and the demands of survival, yet they were still able to exercise autonomy and make independent choices within the band (Moraes et al. 2023). In *O Cangaceiro do Futuro*, accordingly, *Amélia* and *Amália* are depicted as quick-witted, resilient, and active participants, demonstrating courage and intelligence in navigating the challenges of the Sertão. Their presence highlights a broader gender perspective, showing that the *cangaço* could simultaneously be a site of oppression and a space for women to resist social hierarchies.

Building on this broader reimagining of gender roles, the series also introduces *Amaro*, a non-binary character whose presence expands the spectrum of identities within *Virguley's* gang. *Amaro* is introduced in a way that immediately challenges conventional expectations, not through spectacle but through narrative ease. Their clothing and behaviour combine elements typically associated with both masculinity and femininity.

Although the series does not explicitly name their gender identity in dialogue, it is clearly conveyed through visual presentation and interactions with other characters. Importantly, *Amaro's* gender expression is not framed as a source of tension or disruption within the group. In contrast to the symbolic provocation found in *Orgia, ou O Homem que deu Cria*, *Amaro* is naturally integrated into *Virguley's* gang, and their identity is neither ridiculed nor subjected to heightened scrutiny.

This sense of normalization is especially clear in scenes that depict the gang's everyday routines and relationships. *Amaro* takes part fully in the group's activities, planning heists, facing confrontations, and enduring the

challenges of outlaw life, on equal terms with the other members. Their presence exposes a form of "beneficial epistemic friction" (Medina 2012: p. 11) within the band, a productive tension that emerges when individuals with different lived experiences and perspectives interact (ibid.). Instead of leading to conflict or exclusion, this dynamic enhances the group's capacity to think and act in more diverse and adaptive ways.

A clear example of *Amaro's* integration into the group appears in episode 2, when *Virguley* begins assembling his gang and openly welcomes them. In contrast to stereotypical portrayals that cast queer characters as comic relief or subjects of exclusion, the scene presents *Amaro's* inclusion as entirely ordinary within the story. Their gender expression, conveyed through clothing, posture, and interaction, is neither questioned nor ridiculed. Instead, *Amaro* stands alongside the other recruits as *Virguley* delivers a speech on justice and equality, affirming their place within the group. This understated approach challenges the hypermasculine norms historically linked to the *cangaço*, introducing epistemic friction not through confrontation, but through *Amaro's* active presence, full participation, and the respect they receive from others.

The humour around *Amaro* stems mainly from the series' broader anachronism, as the tension between contemporary language or attitudes and the historical setting of 1927, rather than from their gender identity. As such, *Amaro's* presence reinforces a central theme of the series: that qualities such as competence, loyalty, and belonging within a *cangaceiro* group are not contingent upon conformity to traditional models of masculinity. By positioning a character like *Amaro* at the centre of a widely accessible mainstream production, the series contributes to broadening public understandings of gender and resistance within Brazilian visual culture.

Continuing the contemporary reimagining of the *cangaço* in television formats, another notable example is the Brazilian telenovela *Guerreiros do Sol* ("Warriors of the Sun") (2025), produced by

Estúdios Globo, one of the country's most influential media networks, known internationally for its longstanding tradition of soap operas. Like *O Cangaceiro do Futuro*, which was distributed via Netflix, *Guerreiros do Sol* reaches a wide and diverse audience. As telenovelas remain a central component of Brazilian popular culture, regularly viewed by millions across different regions and social classes, they serve as a particularly powerful medium for shaping public discourse and representations of national identity (Porto 2011: p. 55).

Set in the Brazilian Northeast during the 1930s, *Guerreiros do Sol* follows a group of outlaws who form a *cangaceiros* band in response to social injustice, state violence, and land inequality. Combining historical fiction with dramatic narrative, the series explores both the political and personal dimensions of the group's struggles. Among them are *Zé do Bode* and *Cheiroso*, a same-sex male couple whose relationship unfolds amid rebellion. By centring their story within the broader context of resistance, the telenovela reimagines the *cangaço* not solely as a space of violence and survival, but as one of solidarity, emotional depth, and queer possibility.

The portrayal of a same-sex couple in a *cangaço*-themed telenovela represents a significant step toward normalizing queer identities within a genre and historical setting traditionally shaped by hypermasculinity and heteronormativity. Given the broad reach of telenovelas, the visibility of characters like *Zé do Bode* and *Cheiroso* may play an important role in

expanding public conversations around gender and sexuality.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the growing presence of queer identities in mainstream media productions requires careful examination. While these portrayals increase visibility, they may also simplify complex queer experiences to make them more acceptable or marketable. This raises important questions about the reasons behind such representations, whether they reflect a true commitment to diversity and inclusion, or are mainly motivated by goals of reaching wider audiences and achieving commercial gain. Further research is needed on a case-by-case basis, as the cultural and political effects of these portrayals can differ greatly depending on factors such as the context, the depth of the narrative, and how audiences respond.

Even within these contradictions, the incorporation of queer and non-binary figures into the symbolic terrain of the *cangaço* serves to destabilize the traditional conflation of the Sertão with monolithic masculinity and its historical associations with patriarchal violence. By reimagining who can occupy the figure of the *cangaceiro*, contemporary media productions can provoke necessary conversations about identity, historical memory, and national belonging in Brazil. These evolving portrayals ensure that the *cangaço* remains a vital site for rethinking Brazilian identity in the 21st century, one increasingly attuned to plurality, fluidity, and the complexities of representation.

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