

## Nelson Rodrigues as Filmed by Arnaldo Jabor

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In 1972 Nelson Rodrigues, the self-proclaimed “reactionary” of Brazilian theatre, declared that “o cinema não chega a ser uma arte. Daqui a seis mil anos talvez o seja.”<sup>1</sup> Rodrigues lashed out as well at Brazilian filmmakers—notably the Cinema Novo generation—“que se faz passar por inteligente e, não raro, por gênio.” The intelligence of these young filmmakers, according to Rodrigues, is largely responsible for the immense gap that existed between their films and the public. “Acredito,” he continues, “que um pouco de burrice não faria mal nenhum a certos diretores.” When asked about adaptations of his own plays,<sup>2</sup> he responds in the same “reactionary” tone:

A palavra ‘adaptação’ diz tudo. Se foi ‘adaptada’ a obra literária passa a ser outra. Pelo mesmo motivo, não gosto de ser traduzido. ‘Traduzir’ é ser falsificado. A peça que passa a ser filme vira anti-peça. Assim, *Bonitinha Mas Ordinária*, *O Beijo no Asfalto*, *Boca de Ouro* e outras, quando transpostas para a tela, parecem-me uma caricatura de mim mesmo. Diga-se que o filme *Boca de Ouro* ainda é uma tentativa de teatro filmado.<sup>3</sup>

One must, of course, take Rodrigues’ statements with a grain of salt. By the following year, 1973, his professed attitude toward cinema, and Brazilian cinema in particular, had changed somewhat. In an interview published in the same film magazine, Rodrigues admits that he goes to the cinema frequently, that Hollywood produces the best films in the world (“é o óbvio ululante”), that French and Italian cinemas are “um conto-do-vigário” and “moedeiros falsos,” and that Brazilian cinema has finally produced something worth saving, *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* by Arnaldo Jabor, based on Rodrigues’ 1965 play of the same name. The playwright accepts *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*, while rejecting other “adaptations” of his work, because “é um filme que tem todos meus defeitos.”<sup>4</sup> The same can be said of Jabor’s subsequent adaptation of Rodrigues’ 1966 novel, *O Casamento*, in 1975.

Among Rodrigues’ “defects” as a playwright is his manipulation of certain theatrical techniques—lateral stages, the distribution of space, creative

lighting, and sound—in such a way as to approach the simultaneity and fluidity of cinema. José Lino Grunewald has, in fact, written of the “cinematic universe” of Rodrigues’ plays.<sup>5</sup> And yet before Jabor’s adaptation of *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*, filmmakers had apparently been overwhelmed by the often controversial content of his work and had paradoxically failed to develop, on film, their cinematic potential. According to Grunewald, previous adaptations of his plays were more theatrical and less cinematic than when presented on stage.

Os diretores, de hábito, cingiam-se mais diretamente aos diálogos e situações, que, em Nelson, já são, amiúde, extremamente instigantes e/ou insólitos, às vezes capavam-lhe o humor peculiar e acabavam por se esquecer da especificidade de uma outra linguagem.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of Jabor’s adaptations of Rodrigues’ work is that they draw out and recuperate the cinematic nature of that work, leading *The New York Times* critic Vincent Canby to observe that “there is nothing in his direction of the film to suggest its theatrical origins.”<sup>7</sup>

Arnaldo Jabor’s films have always focused—except in his first feature, *Pindorama*—on the conflicts of urban Brazilian society. While he has been called the “filmmaker of the middle class,” Jabor himself rejects such a title. His films do deal with the middle class, but not only with the middle class. As he says in relation to *Tudo Bem* (1978), his films are “sobre as classes sociais no



*O Casamento*, de Arnaldo Jabor, Adriana Prieto e Fregolente (Embrafilme)

Brasil, sobre as relações entre elas, sobre as dificuldades de comunicação entre as classes sociais, sobre os vários tipos de ser, de homem e mulher, que existem na medida em que há uma diferença econômica entre elas.”<sup>8</sup> But Jabor is not concerned exclusively with economic relations and class conflict. His films also deal with the dreams, frustrations, and deliriums of urban Brazilian society; its failures and successes; its foibles and absurdities; its lucidity and its madness; its sexuality and its neuroses.

Nelson Rodrigues—who claims to have written at the age of seven his first story about a cuckolded husband killing his unfaithful wife—is credited with creating modern theatre in Brazil with his *Vestido de Noiva* (1943), though significant credit is due as well to its staging under the direction of Ziembinski. His dramatic works reveal a remarkable unity in their discussion of Rio de Janeiro’s middle class, trapped by the immobility determined by the country’s “savage capitalism,” by the rigidity of antiquated values, by the pettiness of its internal struggles. His world is inhabited by people trying to hang on to the values they have never respected, to the good life they have never known, to the glory that has never existed for them, and to a romantic ideal in which they have long-since ceased to believe. As Rodrigues observes, “todo contínuo, toda balconista, toda vendedora de cigarros acha que sua própria vida é um romance.”<sup>9</sup>

Rodrigues’ universe is typically—though certainly not exclusively—that of the *carioca* suburbs, a world inhabited by a lower-middle class infused with distorted, antiquated values filtered down from higher classes. It is a world without perspectives for the future, stagnant and immobile; a world where the espoused values of “honor” and dignity cannot hide the fissures that allow moral putrefaction to seep from beneath. Nelson Rodrigues’ theatre presents a morbid—if not sordid—view of the “little vices” of the inhabitants of this universe, linked in spirit to the sensationalist headlines of Brazil’s yellow press, exemplified in the sixties and again in the eighties by the newspaper *A Luta Democrática*. He dramatizes the myths of urban society in an ultimately moralistic way as he explores the limits imposed on individuals and the psychological and social aberrations resulting from such limits. His plays trace the marginalization and impotence of human beings within capitalist society, their struggles that lead nowhere, their anguish. As critic Ronaldo Lima Lins observes, “incapazes de se transformarem e de transformarem o meio ambiente que os cerca (e que também os corrompe, num círculo vicioso cujo fim só pode ser o desespero), os personagens rodriguianos deixam-se arrastar . . . e degeneram, deterioram-se como frutos contaminados.”<sup>10</sup>

Rodrigues is concerned, ultimately, not with individuals, who often reduce to types in his plays, but rather with society. His often grotesque and sarcastic caricatures have social criticism as their final objective. He viciously attacks the myths that society has generated for its own defense (ideology), frequently taking microcosmically as his immediate subject the family unit, which is seen as a contaminated institution condemned by its incapacity for renewal. But his characters are also victims of an original sin. They struggle,

but are doomed. His is a theatre obsessed with love, death, betrayal, honor, and, in the final analysis, failure.

Ronaldo Lima Lins suggests that Rodrigues' *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*:

enquadra-se com perfeição no panorama social criado no Brasil pela forma como se processou [seu] desenvolvimento desde a Segunda Guerra Mundial. E isto porque, assim como o país cresceu e aprofundaram-se as suas contradições, assim como a industrialização acelerada do Sul criou novos conflitos sem ter antes resolvido ou, pelo menos, atenuado os velhos conflitos já existentes, da mesma forma que dolorosamente a nação se amadurece, os riscos deste tipo de evolução acabam transparecendo . . .<sup>11</sup>

The disintegration of the family unit is one result of the country's rapid and unequal development during this period, when traditional values have been revealed to be inadequate, and revered norms of behavior have become brittle and repressive.

Like Nelson Rodrigues, Arnaldo Jabor is interested in a discussion of the general through the particular. Society as such takes a back seat in *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* on the denotative level, although it remains its central connotative focus. As Jabor notes, "está na hora de se olhar para dentro das pessoas e fazer a ligação entre a realidade e a consciência."<sup>12</sup> His film is thus an attempt to relate the social and the psychological, to discuss society through an analysis of its personages. It is a refusal, as Jabor says, of "o conceitualismo, o



*Toda Nudez Será Castigada*, de Arnaldo Jabor, Paulo Porto e Darlene Glória (Embrafilme)

ideologismo, o simbolismo dedutivo que tanto se usa para nos 'defender' do fecundo e perigoso contato com a vida mesmo." In this sense the film rejects the stance of earlier Cinema Novo films of attempting to impose an intellectual model on reality. To quote Jabor once again:

Quero fazer filmes onde eu não fique do lado de fora. O artista não tem que olhar as coisas como se vivesse fora do mundo, numa espécie de helicóptero existencial, de onde ele lançaria as mensagens para as massas. Quero fazer filmes para ficar dentro da massa, viver dentro do espaço brasileiro e de dentro descobrir este novo país, no qual [estou] definitivamente inserido.<sup>13</sup>

It is perhaps this refusal to impose pre-determined models on Brazilian reality that is responsible for Arnaldo Jabor having made some of the most beautifully complex films in recent Brazilian cinema.<sup>14</sup>

For the purposes of this study *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* and *O Casamento* can be considered as a single, two-part text in which the second exacerbates and takes to an extreme elements of the first. Continuity between the two films is preserved not only through the use of a melodramatic form of representation, but also through the use of the same actor (Paulo Porto) in the male lead in both films. Sabino in *O Casamento* is merely an extension of Herculano in *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*, differing only in degree, not in kind. *O Casamento* is considerably more complex than *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* in terms of its plot structure and depth of analysis, possibly because the novel is much richer than the play in the exposition of the psychological traumas of its more numerous personages and the greater depth of their dramatic situations.<sup>15</sup> *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* and *O Casamento* take as their form the television drama, a modern-day *folhetim*, the perfect contemporary reincarnation of the melodrama. In both cases Jabor creates a rather slick but highly communicative mode of cinematic discourse. He dynamizes interiors through creative camera work, places some scenes in exteriors as a means of diminishing the theatricality inherent in his source, and orchestrates various kinds of music (tangos by Astor Piazzola, nightclub boleros, sambas, black jazz by Hurrricane Smith in the first, Mahler, Beethoven and Mendelssohn in the second).

*Toda Nudez Será Castigada*, winner of the Silver Bear in the 1973 Berlin Film Festival, is the story of Herculano, a desolate widower who lives with his good-for-nothing brother Patrício (Paulo César Pereio) and three spinster aunts. After his wife's death, Herculano promised his eighteen-year-old son Serginho that he would never again marry nor have relations with another woman, but through Patrício's connivance he meets and almost despite himself falls in love with cabaret singer/prostitute Geni (Darlene Glória). Serginho sees them making love, goes on a drunken rampage, and winds up in jail, where he is raped by a Bolivian thief. Geni and Herculano later marry—at Serginho's insistence—and Geni betrays Herculano with his son. In love with Serginho, Geni is devastated when she learns that he has left on an extended trip with the Bolivian. She kills herself after leaving a tape recording for Herculano detailing the sordidness of the whole affair.

While melodramatic in external form, Jabor's film actually treads the thin line between melodrama and tragedy. In one sense the film fits Heilman's

definition of a melodrama of defeat, in which a hero fights against external forces that ultimately defeat him, “leaving an audience to pity his distresses or admire the fortitude with which he bears them.”<sup>16</sup> And yet Herculano is not blameless as is the hero in the melodrama of defeat. He is not the sinless but sinned-against hero. Rather, he is more like a tragic hero, divided between available options and ultimately defeated by his own “tragic flaw.” But neither is Herculano a fully tragic personage. Combining elements of the melodrama of defeat and tragedy, *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* is melodrama taken to the second degree, a melodrama which is a parody and a caricature of itself. But, as Jabor says of Nelson Rodrigues, “consciente ou inconsciente, a representação sardônica e mesmo caricatural da realidade é inseparável de seu sentido trágico da vida, e das mesmas atitudes de protesto e desmistificação social assumidas pelo escritor.”<sup>17</sup>

The film preserves the play’s basic structure and divides into three distinct movements: 1) the anguished drama of Herculano, imprisoned by the family’s traditions and the antiquated moral values of his aunts, forced by his son, who is obsessed with death, into making a promise that effectively cuts him off from life, impeded from scaling the wall that exists between him and the outside world; 2) the story of Geni, who despite her profession represents all that is alive and vibrant; she falls in love with Herculano, but is eventually destroyed by his world; 3) the moral transformation of Serginho from an 18-year-old virgin obsessed with his deceased mother, to the cynical seducer of his father’s wife, and then to an assumed homosexual.

The film opens with a sequence of Herculano driving his late model convertible through the streets of Rio de Janeiro to a large old house in the Northern Zone (the play, it may be recalled, begins with Herculano entering his house and talking to his maid). Flowers in hand, he enters the house and calls for Geni. No answer (the maid has been eliminated from the film). All that awaits him is furniture covered with sheets and a tape going round and round on a recorder in an atmosphere of desolation. He rewinds the tape and listens to Geni’s voice, saying “quem te fala é uma morta. Eu morri. Me matei.”<sup>18</sup> As she tells her story, the film flashes back to illustrate. Consistent with the play’s structure, the story is told from Geni’s point of view.

This sequence capsulizes many of the film’s most important themes and especially its central opposition: Eros versus Thanatos. Love and life versus death. Herculano enters the house carrying flowers—symbolic of his love for Geni—but finds only her absence, her death. Her voice is immobilized, frozen on tape. She no longer exists. The voice is itself death giving the impression of life. The covered furniture reinforces the image of the old, the dying, the dead. As Herculano listens to her voice tell of her life, she is, unknown to him and the spectator, in the stairwell dying. When her voice dies off on the recorder, she also dies. The “death” of her voice thus corresponds to her real death, and the story is narrated, so to speak, from the dead.

As the flashback begins, Herculano is in mourning in an unspecified period after his first wife’s death. He is inert, sitting around the house all day in his briefs and contemplating the suicide pact that he almost made with his son. His spinster aunts, rigid in their Victorian values, fear that he will indeed kill himself and urge Patrício to call the priest. But Patrício, whose parasitical

existence depends on Herculano, has a better idea. He buys a bottle of scotch, gets Herculano drunk, and goads him into seeing Geni, a prostitute friend of his.

In Rodrigues' play, Patrício capsulizes all of the world's destructive forces.<sup>19</sup> For his own gain (and revenge) he pushes Herculano toward Geni, convinces Geni to tell Herculano that she will sleep with him a second time only after they are married, tells Serginho of Herculano's relationship with Geni, conspires with Serginho and convinces him to cuckold his father, and finally reveals to Geni Serginho's departure with the Bolivian thief. Although Patrício has much the same function in Jabor's film, his role is diminished, and the personages destroy themselves largely through their own flaws and inertia. Jabor has thus reduced Patrício's negative function and has distributed his destructive impulses among all of the characters as a way of eliminating what he saw as a simple, manichaeistic division between good and evil.<sup>20</sup> All characters share the guilt and responsibility for their actions, and it is in this sense that *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* tends toward tragedy. While they are to a certain extent victims of societal forces over which they have no control (a characteristic of the melodrama of defeat), at the same time they are victims of themselves and their own vices, neuroses, and complexes. Speaking of his refusal to develop the drama manichaeistically, Jabor explains that he is opposed to "um tipo de pensamento que tenta hipocriticamente provar que há homens melhores do que outros, quando na realidade o que acontece é que alguns têm mais poder do que outros."<sup>21</sup>

Jabor has also reduced the role of the spinster aunts who, in the play, serve as a veritable chorus for Herculano's actions. But their reduction is one of degree and not kind. They represent, in both the play and the film, a substitution of the repressive Father whose patriarchal authority is based on the traditional, conservative values of society. They judge and attempt to control the behavior of those who live under their authority by imposing their own moral code. They demand—although they do not always receive—a total submission to death, or at least to a form of life that approaches death in its meaninglessness and emptiness.<sup>22</sup> While they try to keep Herculano from committing suicide, they would no doubt prefer to see him die than marry a prostitute, which would offend the virgin honor of their world. They condemn Herculano and especially Geni while they defend Serginho's faithfulness to his dead mother, but after Herculano and Geni marry, two of them react almost violently when the third (the oldest) refers to Geni's profession. They deny that she had been a prostitute and insist that she had married virgin (and she does marry in white). They accuse their older sister of suffering from arteriosclerosis and of inventing the story about Geni. In short, the aunts have created a world of false values which threatens to collapse around them.

The film has also eliminated Rodrigues' priest and doctor, who in the play represent two extremes of ideology: religion versus science. Once again this elimination seems to be an attempt to avoid simplistic answers and easy solutions as well as the manichaeistic division of society into good (science) and evil (religion, in a typical Rodrigues inversion). Brazilian censors accounted for the elimination of another character of the play: the police chief who is more concerned with his lovers than with punishing the criminal who

had raped Serginho in the chief's jail. Played by Hugo Carvana, the role of the chief is a parody of Brazilian police and a critique of its corruption. The sequence has more recently been reincorporated into the film. The thief is brought to life in the film, whereas he is only mentioned in the play. In the jail scene he appears whistling the song of the Mexican revolution, "Adelita," perhaps symbolic of the "revolution" that he will cause in the lives of Serginho and the other personages. As the rape occurs, the camera focuses not on the action itself, but rather on the other prisoners, who sing Dalva de Oliveira's 1970 carnival *marcha-rancho* "Bandeira Branca" to drown out the noise ("Bandeira branca, amor/Não posso mais/Pela saudade que me invade/Eu peço paz").

Through his relationship with Geni, Herculano tries to pick up the pieces of his life and transform himself from the death-like situation of his mourning. Although goaded into going to Geni, he acts in a positive sense to attempt to reformulate the values and principles imposed on him by his aunts and society as a whole. In his drunken first night with Geni he confesses that he hated his wife and was nauseated by her varicose veins and by the fact that she washed herself in a bedpan after sex. The misogynist undertone corresponds to the frequent reduction in Rodrigues' plays of male-female relationships to a physical, grotesque level that stresses bodily functions and defects. After he sobers up, Geni tells Herculano what he had said, but he denies it vehemently, calling her a "mictório público." Herculano thus develops a love-hate relationship with Geni: while he needs her and what she represents (life, freedom), he cannot fully accept or assume the relationship due to the values that have been inculcated in him since childhood. He is fascinated by her warmth and humanity, but repulsed by her "vulgarity" and her openness about sex. He even denies—the morning after—that he had ever touched a prostitute or had relations with her. He is condescending toward her, wanting to "take her from this life," not knowing (or perhaps knowing on an unconscious level) that he will destroy her in the process. Herculano wants to own Geni as if she were a commodity, and soon takes her to live alone in his almost-abandoned house in the industrial Northern Zone of the city. He thus struggles between his antiquated values and life itself in his attempt at transformation, but he is ultimately defeated by his inability to free himself from those values.

But Geni is the central tragic figure of *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*. She is the only personage to reflect modern human values and a certain *joie-de-vivre*. And yet she is not the "whore with a heart of gold" that one finds, for example, in the novels of Jorge Amado. Though living in a degraded state—according to the definition of Herculano and his spinster aunts—she is at the same time a strong and vulnerable woman. She truly falls in love with Herculano, but her love is not limited to him. She gives up her life of freedom, which society sees as negative, and abandons her values for the values of others. In the film Jabor has softened Geni's image, transforming her from a simple prostitute into a singer—a creative being—as well.

Yet Geni herself is in a certain sense obsessed with death. She is convinced that she will contract breast cancer, destroying not only what she feels to be the prettiest part of her body but also her life. She thus identifies with



Herculano's first wife, who apparently died of breast cancer. Ultimately, her obsession is a will to self-destruction, which eventually occurs in the form of her suicide.

Cancer and sickness in general (e.g., the oldest aunt's arteriosclerosis) become symbols of a society decaying from within from the poison of its rigid, antiquated values which destroy anything that gets in their way. Society itself is afflicted with arteriosclerosis, incapable of transformation and renewal. The film is thus a critique of the stratification of values, of the rigidity of beliefs (ideology). Geni, an "outsider" so to speak, is nevertheless attracted to and destroyed by this society. She is consumed by its values in a symbolic act of urban cannibalism. Once she enters the family, she becomes, artificially, a respectable woman whose past—whose freedom, whose life—can be neither questioned nor permitted.

Serginho's obsession with fidelity to his deceased mother reflects a homosexual-incestual attraction to his father. Serginho is the degraded offspring of a decadent society and, as such, is the fuse of Geni and Herculano's destruction. He has been brought up by his spinster aunts and imbued with their values. His insistence that his father not know another woman is due not to his respect for his dead mother, but rather to jealousy of his father. He seduces Geni not out of any true attraction toward her, but out of revenge against his father, who has betrayed him with Geni. By sleeping with his father's wife he symbolically sleeps with his father. As Ronaldo Lima Lins notes,

O homossexualismo não existia latente apenas em Serginho (que não podia admitir sexo nem no casamento) ou em Herculano, que, como o filho, sentira-se sempre repugnado ante a aproximação da mulher. O homossexualismo era o móvel inconsciente que impulsionava as próprias tias em seu furor moralista e as condenara para o resto da vida a uma existência solitária.<sup>23</sup>

As one aunt says, "meu menino [Serginho] era impotente como um santo" (p. 125).

While Rodrigues' and Jabor's use of homosexuality in *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* is perhaps less than progressive, the true problem lies not in homosexuality itself, but rather in the fact that the characters are unable to admit or accept *any* form of sexuality, be it Serginho's homosexuality or Geni's prostitution. They must find a way to incorporate and neutralize Serginho's homosexuality in their own minds. The aunts thus convince themselves that he has merely gone on an extended vacation when in reality he has left the country with the Bolivian. Even Geni, who admits and accepts her own prostitution, is unable to accept Serginho's choice—perhaps as much out of jealousy as out of repulsion—and commits suicide.

*Toda Nudez Será Castigada* presents a world that contains the seeds of its own destruction: its obsessions, complexes, neuroses, its "original sin," a world that is rotting from within. The characters are victims, and yet are at the same time at least partially to blame for the victimization. The ultimate blame falls, however, not on them, but rather on the society in which they live, a society that determines neurosis to be the *sine qua non* of existence, repression to be its

guidelines, and immobility to be its reality. None of the characters are “good,” and none are “bad.” All of them carry their own contradictions and their own *taras*. They struggle for love (eros) through their obsession with death (thanatos), but are eventually and inevitably defeated in the end.

Arnaldo Jabor observes that

... vivemos num tempo em que se tenta ridiculamente, e tragicamente, reinstaurar as velhas virtudes; força-se a martelo crer que as consciências podem ser resumidas em sete pecados capitais, em dez madamentos, e que os homens podem ser divididos em bons e maus. Em toda grande obra o Bem e o Mal se juntam numa coisa só. Nada é um, tudo é dois, tudo é muitas coisas e as virtudes teológicas não são sete nem dez, mas infinitas. *Toda Nudez* possui essa ambiguidade fundamental . . .<sup>24</sup>

This fundamental ambiguity is created through the use of extremes (Geni versus the aunts, Herculano versus Patrício) and through a deliberate and sometimes caricatural exaggeration of the characters’ obsessions. Jabor’s tragic melodrama of defeat is thus tempered by a generous dosage of bad taste and the grotesque. His subsequent film takes the melodramatic, tragic and grotesque elements of *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* to an almost unbearable level of aggression.

In *O Casamento* (1975) Arnaldo Jabor continues and concludes his “Nelson Rodrigues phase,” in this case adapting to film a novel written in 1966, banned by police censorship, and finally republished in 1975 with a drawing of a scene from the film on its cover. The film inhabits the same universe as *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*, but exacerbates and takes to an extreme the first film’s pettiness, grotesqueness, and morbidity. *O Casamento* has been described by critics as a “torrential” film, constructed through succeeding and unrelenting climaxes in a tone of hysteria. It is a film that takes exaggeration to its paroxysm as a narrative and dramatic strategy and successfully drives the tragic melodrama of *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* to new levels of tension and explosiveness as it plunges into the sordid underworld of obsessions, sex, and instinct which an ostensibly “well behaved” class attempts to hide under its polished and sterile surface.

The film’s initial and final sequences give an indication of its basic focus. The credits at the beginning and end are superimposed on sepia documentary footage of the rushing waters of a flood that ravaged Rio de Janeiro in 1966: the deluvium of a world rushing to its final destruction; a society in ruins, once again due to its inability to transform itself and escape its rigid and anachronistic values. The shots of destruction correspond within the diegesis to several sequences of workers and work accidents. Sabino, the film’s protagonist, is a wealthy owner of a construction firm who is obsessed by his father’s dying wish that he be an “homem de bem” and at the same time haunted by the unsafe working conditions of his employees and the frequent work accidents that occur on the construction site. Sabino’s internal conflict between his father’s wish and his feelings of guilt for the way he maintains his wealth becomes evident through numerous subjective inserts in which Sabino imagines himself the victim of such an accident or in which his car, with him

inside, is attacked by angry crowds. *O Casamento*, unlike *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*, thus brings to the fore the economic context of its action. Although Herculano in the previous film is also apparently wealthy, we are never told precisely where his money comes from or what his economic situation is. Economics, so to speak, do not exist in *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* except on a latent, secondary level. In *O Casamento*, on the other hand, the economic base of Sabino's actions is fundamental.

The narrative of *O Casamento* takes place on two planes: the structural center concerns the 48 hours before the wedding of Sabino's daughter Glorinha (Adriana Prieto), while a series of subjective flashbacks and flashbacks-within-flashbacks reveal the past secrets and traumas of the different personages. The film is thus composed of juxtaposed—and non-linear—subjective and objective layers of time and space that resurrect the ghosts of the characters' past.

Immediately after the initial credits and the documentary footage of a flood, we see a brief shot of a work accident followed by a shot of a man on his death bed repeating the phrase "homem de bem." Only in the subsequent shot—of Sabino looking at himself in a mirror—do we realize that the previous two shots are subjectively colored from his point of view. Sabino is traumatized by his father's death and by the dying wish that he be an "homem de bem." His life is a nightmare. On the day before Glorinha's wedding he imagines himself in a car surrounded by an angry mob wanting revenge for the many work accidents on his construction sites.

Sabino is also traumatized by a childhood experience in which, after his father's death, he sees his mother masturbating. A subjective flashback shows her as a prostitute. The following objective shot shows the middle aged Sabino vomiting at the thought of what he witnessed. At the same time he harbors a secret love for his daughter Glorinha. A shot early in the film shows Sabino with a photograph of Glorinha covering his face, as if a woman's head were on a man's body. Sabino's traumas, neuroses and obsessions translate into a nauseous view of the world, transmitted effectively by numerous images of dirty bathrooms, kitchens, and filth in general. Even when he talks to a priest the conversation takes place in the church restroom.

The principal lines of the film's complex plot are the following. The day before the wedding Sabino's good friend, a gynecologist, tells him that he saw Sabino's future son-in-law kissing his male assistant and warns him to call off the wedding. The indecisive Sabino cannot bring himself to talk to his daughter, his wife, or even the priest about the situation and later becomes convinced, after the bathroom conversation, that the priest had been one of Glorinha's lovers.

Glorinha, in the meantime, visits the doctor herself, claiming that she wants him to be witness to her virginity. In fact, after he sees somewhat lustfully that she is not a virgin, she explains that she had lost her virginity not with her fiance, but rather with the doctor's son, Antônio Carlos, a psychopathic macho who had killed himself in a car accident when Glorinha rejected him after their one-night affair. Like her father, Glorinha is thus also obsessed with death. The doctor, in turn, is obsessed with feelings of guilt since he had argued with and slapped Antônio Carlos on the day of his death.

As already noted, Sabino is haunted by the contradictions of his capitalist activities in relation to his father's dying wish, and yet he is incapable of taking steps to change the situation. He is indeed perceived as an "homem de bem," yet his wealth and respectability derive from less than honorable practices. At the same time, he apparently enjoys humiliating his secretary, Noêmia, whom he berates for such minor things as dialing the phone with a pencil instead of with her finger. Despite such an attitude toward the "inferior" Noêmia, Sabino cynically asks her to meet him for an afternoon affair the day before the wedding, but later rejects and fires her (only to rehire her before she can leave the building). After the affair with Sabino, Noêmia rejects her lover Xavier because he refuses to leave his wife, who has leprosy. Once again disease takes on symbolic meaning. In a fit of rage the night before Glorinha's wedding, Xavier kills Noêmia, who is working late in Sabino's office, then returns home and kills his wife—"atirou no meio de sorriso," says the novel—before killing himself.

The film's most powerful moment, however, comes before these events. Glorinha appears in her father's office and asks him to take her for a ride in his car. As they drive through the streets of Rio toward an outlying beach, Glorinha involves him in a provocative conversation that makes him think that his secret love for his daughter is corresponded. She begins by saying that she "is in love with a person she cannot love" and not with her fiancé. She knows and doesn't care that her fiancé is homosexual. She accuses her mother of having kissed her as if she were a man and swears that she hates her mother, her sisters, and her fiancé. At her insistence Sabino says that he feels only pity, not love, for his wife, and admits that she had betrayed him with another man while at the same time denying that she could possibly have a lesbian relationship with her own daughter. But Glorinha continues with her story that she loves the person she cannot love, and as she gets closer to her father, he grabs her and kisses her lustfully. She runs off horrified—the "person she cannot love" is not her father, as Sabino imagines, but rather Antônio Carlos, who is dead.

Despite all of this, the wedding must go on. While Glorinha dresses for the ceremony, she tells her mother that her father had tried to rape her. At the same time, news of Noêmia's murder reaches the family. But the wedding must go on, and the family appears at the church as if nothing had happened, with Sabino repeating to himself the priest's admonition to "assumir sua lepra." At the end of the ceremony, Sabino's latent madness overcomes him and he rushes out of the reception, assuming responsibility for Noêmia's murder in a sort of transferral of guilt. While he did not kill her, he does feel responsible for the deaths of workers at his construction sites. He is carried away in handcuffs by the police as the wedding march is repeated on the soundtrack.

*O Casamento* is a veritable procession of pathology. Sabino is obsessed not only with his father's dying wish that he be an "homem de bem," but also with the *act* of his father's death. Traumatized by his mother, he is also repulsed by the world's filth. He is barely able to keep beneath the surface his unconscious knowledge that the real filth is within. Underneath his respectable appearance of a wealthy, benevolent man of good will, he hides his secret incestual love for his daughter and an immense amount of guilt. He is driven

to madness by his inability to reconcile these traumas and contradictions, his inability to "assume his leprosy."

As in *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*, all of the characters of *O Casamento* carry with them their own contradictions, and, despite appearances, most of them have been attenuated or softened by Jabor's interpretation. In the novel Sabino hides the fact that he had raped a niece while she was having an epileptic fit. Glorinha not only has an affair with Antônio Carlos—her best friend's lover in both works—but also has a lesbian relationship with her best friend. Glorinha has been raised to be a model daughter, to marry, in a state of purity, a respectable young man, and to preserve the family's status and "dignity." Under the surface, however, she is just as cynical as her father. She flaunts herself before the doctor, provokes her father sexually, and knowingly marries a homosexual. Deviation is the only outlet for human beings trapped by the antiquated values and expectations of a society more interested in appearance than human warmth and fulfillment. Such deviations are often sexual (incest, homosexuality, fetichism) and are developed in grotesque terms with an insistence on bodily functions (it is thus no coincidence that the doctor is a gynecologist). The conflict, as in *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*, is between Eros and Thanatos. Love against death, or more often, love through death. The revolt against the father once again translates into an inverted form of sexual attraction. The Oedipal/Electra drama becomes more complex in *O Casamento*. It becomes, so to speak, polymorphously perverse.

Finally, *O Casamento* is a film of social and esthetic demystification which develops through a dialectic of construction and destruction. Sabino is the owner of a large construction company. His wealth and respectability derive, on a microcosmic level, from a business which symbolizes the construction of Brazil. And yet, paradoxically, this construction is based ultimately on destruction. The initial sequence of the film, it may be remembered, is of the devastating waters of a flood. Sabino's success is partially based on the exploitation, through unsafe working conditions, of a lower social class. His firm is thus based on destruction and death. On a personal level, as Sabino has become wealthy, he has released the negative forces within himself. His construction is simultaneously his destruction.

Esthetically, the film is pervaded with subjective sequences and inserts from various personages' point of view. It is as if, in the sequences dealing with the protagonist, Sabino himself were creating the narrative through his subjectivity. This narrative composition outlines, ultimately, Sabino's decomposition as a human being. The construction/destruction dialectic of the film's story thus funds resonance in its form. While extremely aggressive, *O Casamento* has actually been referred to as a mixture of tragedy and *opéra bouffe*. Jabor exacerbates to such an extent the structures of his drama that the form begins to call attention to itself, deconstructing itself in the very act of construction. Both *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* and *O Casamento* are close enough to realism to make the spectator feel uncomfortable, and yet are exaggerated to such a degree as to create a critical consciousness in the spectator, causing him or her to question not only the "story" transmitted, but also the form in which it is transmitted.<sup>25</sup>

## Notes

1. In "Escritores em Depoimento," *Filme Cultura*, VI, no. 20 (May-June 1972), p. 16. The subsequent two quotes are from the same source.
2. Nelson Rodrigues has had more works—novels and plays—adapted to film than any other Brazilian writer. They include: *Meu Destino é Pecar* (Manuel Peluffo, 1952), *Boca de Ouro* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1962), *Bonitinha Mas Ordinária* (J. P. de Carvalho, 1963), *Asfalto Selvagem* (J. B. Tanko, 1963), *O Beijo no Asfalto* (Flávio Tambellini, 1965), *A Falecida* (Leon Hirszman, 1965), *Engraçadinha Depois dos Trinta* (J. B. Tanko, 1966), *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* (Arnaldo Jabor, 1973), *O Casamento* (Arnaldo Jabor, 1975), *A Dama do Lotação* (script by Nelson Rodrigues, directed by Neville d'Almeida, 1978), *Os Sete Gatinhos* (Neville d'Almeida, 1980), *Engraçadinha, Seus Amores e Seus Pecados* (Haroldo Marinho Barbosa, 1981), and remakes of *Bonitinha Mas Ordinária* (Braz Chediak, 1981) and *O Beijo no Asfalto* (Bruno Barreto, 1981). In production are *Mulher sem Pecado* (Afrânio Vital) and *Album de Família* (Roberto Benevides and Waltmor Chagas). See "O cinema, segundo Nelson," *Opinião*, no. 169 (30 January 1976), p. 18, and "A serpente acariciada," *Veja* (12 March 1980), pp. 46-47.
3. "Escritores em Depoimento," *op. cit.*
4. José Lino Grunewald, "Confissões de um Cinéfilo Relutante," *Filme Cultura*, VII, no. 24 (1973), p. 49.
5. See José Lino Grunewald, "O Universo Cinematográfico de Nelson Rodrigues," *Filme Cultura*, VII, no. 24 (1973), 45-47.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
7. Vincent Canby, "All Nudity Shall Be Punished," *The New York Times*, 1 April 1974.
8. *Jornal do Brasil*, 20 January 1979.
9. *O Globo*, 11 March 1973.
10. Ronaldo Lima Lins, *O Teatro de Nelson Rodrigues: Uma Realidade em Agonia* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Francisco Alves Editora, 1979), pp. 216-217.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
12. Quoted by Orlando L. Fassoni, "Toda Nudez, uma ópera tragicômica," *Folha de São Paulo* (26 April 1973).
13. Quoted by Sérgio Augusto, "O Último Tango em Botafogo," *Opinião* (26 March 1973).
14. Arnaldo Jabor is the leading figure in the "second wave" of Cinema Novo. His filmography includes the documentaries *O Circo* (1965) and *Opinião Pública* (1966) and the features *Pindorama* (1970), *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* (1973), *O Casamento* (1975), *Tudo Bem* (1978), and *Eu te Amo* (1981).
15. In his *Film and Theatre* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1936), Allardyce Nicoll argues that "material from novels really forms a better basis for a film than material from plays. The scope of that material is more extended and usually there is so much of it that choice may be made of this section or that" (p. 30). Nicoll's statement needs further study and consideration before it can be totally accepted.
16. Robert Bechtold Heilman, *Tragedy and Melodrama* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 56.
17. From the press book to *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*.
18. Nelson Rodrigues, *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, n.d.), p. 17. Subsequent references given in text.
19. See Ronaldo Lima Lins, p. 139; also "Procura de novos caminhos," *Folha de São Paulo* (26 April 1973).
20. "Procura de novos caminhos."
21. From the press book to *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*.
22. Ronaldo Lima Lins, p. 134.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
24. From the press book to *Toda Nudez Será Castigada*.
25. Photographs in the article courtesy of Embrafilme.