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POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND CINEMA IN BRAZIL: THE MEDIA AND THE CHOICE TO NOT NOMINATE *AQUARIUS* TO REPRESENT THE COUNTRY AT THE ACADEMY AWARDS

Ideologías políticas y cine en Brasil: los medios y la no nominación de *Aquarius* para representar al país en los Oscar

Ideologias políticas e cinema no Brasil: a mídia e a não indicação de *Aquarius* para representar o país no Oscar

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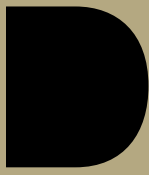
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ABSTRACT

This article presents the analyses of how online news portals dealt with the non-nomination of the film *Aquarius* (2016, Kleber Mendonça Filho) for the category of best foreign language film at the Oscars (Academy Awards) of 2017. *Aquarius* became a controversial film after its cast protested on the red carpet at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival



against the impeachment of former President Dilma Rousseff. After selecting some stories published on the day of the announcement by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture (MinC), on September 12, 2016, the texts and languages used to portray the narrative of events were analyzed. Even though the film *Little Secret* (2016, David Schurmann) was the official nominee for Brazil, *Aquarius* was the film that stood out in the main national headlines. With that, it was possible to see, from the controversy in the media involving the non-nomination of *Aquarius* for the Academy Award, how Brazilian cinema is intrinsically related to national politics.

Keywords: Brazilian cinema; Academy Awards; *Aquarius*; *Little secret*.

RESUMEN

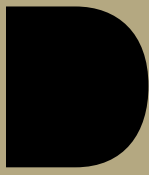
El artículo tiene como objetivo presentar el análisis de cómo los portales de periodismo digital abordaron la no-nominación de la película *Aquarius* (2016, Kleber Mendonça Filho) a la categoría de Mejor Película en Lengua Extranjera en los Oscar del 2017. *Aquarius* se convirtió en una película controvertida después de que su elenco protestara en la alfombra roja del Festival de Cannes (2016) contra el proceso de juicio político de la expresidenta Dilma Rousseff. Luego de la selección de algunos informes publicados en la fecha de convocatoria del Ministerio de Cultura de Brasil (MinC), el 12 de septiembre de 2016, se analizaron los textos y lenguajes utilizados para retratar la narrativa de los hechos. Si bien la película *Pequeño secreto* (2016, David Schurmann) fue la nominada oficial por Brasil, fue *Aquarius* la que se destacó en los principales titulares del país. Con eso se pudo ver, a partir de la polémica en los medios de comunicación por la no-nominación de *Aquarius* a los Oscar, cómo el cine brasileño está intrínsecamente relacionado con la política nacional.

Palabras clave: cine brasileño; Premios de la Academia; *Aquarius*; *Pequeño secreto*.

RESUMO

O artigo tem o objetivo de analisar a forma como os portais de jornalismo digital trataram a não indicação do filme *Aquarius* (2016, Kleber Mendonça Filho), para uma vaga na categoria de Melhor filme em língua estrangeira no Oscar do 2017. *Aquarius* se tornou um filme polêmico após seu elenco fazer um protesto no tapete vermelho no Festival de Cannes de 2016 contra o processo de impeachment da ex-presidente Dilma Rousseff. Após a seleção de algumas reportagens publicadas no dia do anúncio do Ministério da Cultura do Brasil (MinC), em 12 de setembro de 2016, foram analisados os textos e as linguagens utilizadas para retratar a narrativa de acontecimentos. Mesmo que o filme *Pequeno segredo* (2016, David Schurmann) tenha sido o indicado oficial do Brasil, foi *Aquarius* quem se destacou nas principais manchetes do país. Com isso foi possível perceber, a partir da polémica na mídia envolvendo a não indicação de *Aquarius* no Academy Award, de como o cinema brasileiro está intrinsecamente relacionado com a política nacional.

Palavras-chave: cinema brasileiro; Academy Awards; *Aquarius*; *Pequeno segredo*.



Introduction

The news, as well as film reviews, are a determinant factor for the success of an audiovisual work. The media is one of the key actors in the promotion of a film, and it is noticeable how this form of communication dialogues with modernity since many social actors are motivated to watch a film production when journalists or the media itself pay more attention to it. Movie reviews and news stories are, in themselves, a journalistic genre that has always been the subject of discussions for having more acid and popular content. Critical movie reporting starts with the creation of the industry itself at the end of the nineteenth century (Braga, 2013).

Considering that movie reviews and news can change the public narrative and perception of a work, this article examines what happened in 2016 with the premiere and acclaim of the film *Aquarius*, starring actress Sônia Braga and written and directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho. The film follows the story of Clara, played by Braga. She is a former music critic and widow who lives alone in a large blue building in Recife, which gives the film its title. The building is being sold to a construction company that intends to erect a new one on the site, and Clara is the only resident who refuses to sell her apartment. Throughout the film, she experiences a series of social pressures and harassment to vacate the place where she has lived all her life.

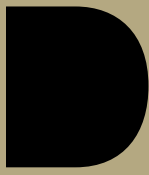
In the year it was released, the film gained international repercussion. Much was said at the time about the film perhaps being the greatest chance for Brazil to compete for the Oscar for Best foreign language film in 2017 (as of 2020, this category came to be called Best international feature film). It premiered at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, in which it competed for the festival's most prestigious award: the Palme d'Or. It was on the day of the premiere, on the red carpet, the director, Kleber Mendonça, along with the film's cast and crew, protested the impeachment of former President Dilma Rousseff. The protest caused controversy in the Brazilian media with requests to boycott the film organized by pro-impeachment groups. The distributor of the film even ironically placed a statement encouraging the boycott by journalist Reinaldo Azevedo, taken from his column in *Veja* magazine, on one of the posters for the film.

However, even though it was the favorite among specialists and despite the worldwide prominence the film was receiving, on September 12, 2016, *Little Secret* (2016, David Schurmann) was chosen by the Ministry of Culture (MinC) to run for the award; the film was not among the five finalists for the Oscar to Best foreign language film of 2017. A political crisis started in Brazilian cinema since many directors and part of the public expressed their dissatisfaction with this choice of representation.

In this context, this article presents the analyses of how online news portals treated the non-nomination of *Aquarius* to the category of Best foreign language film at the 2017 Academy Awards.

Brazilian Cinema and the Academy Awards

The Academy Awards is an annual film award ceremony that gives an Oscar to the best films of the previous year. Founded in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences was created in 1927 with the aim of rewarding and recognizing the leading professionals in the industry. The ceremony is broadcasted worldwide and has categories divided into different areas of film production. Among them is Best foreign language



film (currently called Best international feature film), which aims to give visibility to films spoken in a foreign language and produced outside the United States (Bona & Frazão, 2014).

Brazil's first appearance at the Oscars for Best foreign language film was not representing the country, but France. In 1960, the film *Black Orpheus* (1959), based on the work of Vinícius de Moraes with Brazilian actors, spoken in Portuguese, and shot in Brazil, won the award. Nevertheless, it was the French director Marcel Camus, the film's producer, who took the statuette home. So, officially, the award does not count as a win for Brazilian cinema.

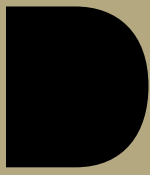
Brazil's first official nomination for the category of Best foreign language film came a few years later, in 1963, with *The Given Word* (1962), at the time distributed by Embrafilme and directed by Anselmo Duarte. It was the first Brazilian film to win a Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in France. According to Rossini (2005, p. 9), this time was characterized by films that focused on "real" stories and represented the Brazilian social scenario.

The next nomination came in 1996, during the rise of the comeback of Brazilian cinema. *O quatrilho*, by Fábio Barreto, was nominated after a discreet publicity campaign in the United States and word-of-mouth advertising because of its peculiar narrative based on a real story. Filmmaker Steven Spielberg went on to become a kind of "godfather" to the film to promote it among his colleagues. The film lost the Oscar to the Dutch film *Antonia* (1995), directed by Marleen Gorris, who was the first female director to win in this category. *O quatrilho* is about a couple's betrayal during the Italian immigration to Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The nomination of *O quatrilho* was a milestone for Brazilian cinema, especially after a period of years without film productions.

At that time [...] Brazil did not have an official commission to nominate a representative to the Oscar [...]. The producer of *O quatrilho*, Luiz Carlos Barreto, decided to form a commission to nominate the film, and the idea was successful. The inclusion among the five finalists in the category of Best foreign language film, announced on February 13, 1996, stirred Brazilian cinema. It was the first time in just over 30 years that a national film competed in this category. The nomination was an encouragement to filmmakers and producers in Brazil. (Bona & Frazão, 2014, p. 9)

The third nomination came in 1998, when Fábio Barreto's brother, Bruno Barreto, managed to ensure a nomination for *Four Days in September* (1997), a film that portrays the kidnapping of the American ambassador Charles Elbrick (Alan Arkin) by a group of guerrilla rebels in September 1969 during the military dictatorship in Brazil. Miramax, the film's distributor in the United States, invested heavily in the press to publicize the film, which had good public and critical reception. The winner was *Character* (1997, Mike van Diem), from the Netherlands.

Brazil's last nomination was in 1999 with *Central Station* (1998, Walter Salles) in the Best foreign language film category and, for the first time, Fernanda Montenegro, a Brazilian actress, was nominated for the category of Best actress in a leading role, for the same film. The international repercussion of the film was unusual for Brazilian cinema standards. All its awards and "the fact that it received several accolades under the scrutiny of critical awards associations show that *Central Station* has a trajectory that is practically unique in the recent history of Brazilian cinema" (Gatti, 2011, p. 13). The film tells the story of a former teacher who writes letters for illiterate people to be able to get in contact with family members; however, she keeps the money and does not forward the letters. One day she ends up starting a friendship with a boy whose mother died in an accident. Together, they travel to the Northeast in search of the boy's father. *Central Station* lost the Oscar to *Life is Beautiful* (1997, Roberto Benigni) from Italy, and Fernanda Montenegro lost to Gwyneth Paltrow from *Shakespeare in Love* (1998, John Madden).



Throughout the 2000s, Brazilian cinema has appeared in some Oscar categories. Among them, the following stand out: *A Soccer Story* (1998, Paulo Machline), nominated to Best short film – Live action at the 2001 Oscars, and *City of God* (2002, Fernando Meirelles), which competed for four awards in 2004, including Best director and Best adapted screenplay.

It is after this phase that the Brazilian film industry established, in the eyes of the world, the political format that is present in its most popular productions. These issues have always been present and have become one of the main characteristics of Brazilian cinema. For Lusvargui (2004), these productions “combine public and critical success among local and international audiences, getting the recognition that national productions have never achieved before” (p. 8).

A few years later, *Boy & the World* (2013, Alê Abreu) was nominated to Best animated feature film of the year in 2016, and *The Edge of Democracy* (2019, Petra Costa) was nominated to Best documentary feature in 2020.

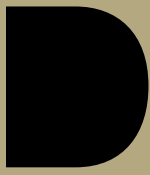
Methodological procedures

The method used was a descriptive research with a qualitative approach. The corpus consisted of stories published shortly after MinC announced the appointment of *Little Secret* to be considered for the Academy Awards nomination in 2017, on September 12, 2016. The chosen portals were Portal G1, CinePop, Veja, Rolling Stones, and Diário de Pernambuco. This sample was selected in a non-probabilistic way from observations of websites that are popular in Brazil.

The material was collected and recorded. After the stories were separated and cataloged, they were read and analyzed to identify if they had similar elements or not. The objective was to understand how each portal reported what happened since the way of reporting that *Aquarius* had not been nominated to the Oscars could be different on each website, given their ideological views.

The technique used was content analysis (Bardin, 2010), which seeks to analyze the meanings of messages and languages used in these articles and how these elements may or may not be representative when it comes to news about movies and politics in Brazil to create and further differentiate narratives about the same event from a social and different point of view. In addition to the news, these small details can reveal the language used and result in different opinions from readers since each portal embraces its narrative to deliver what it believes is important or not when reporting an event.

There is a very clear intention in each of the texts, and the analyses intend to unveil what their authors meant to say and how this is related to the ideological views of each portal. Journalism can be used as a form of political stance, even if this is not obvious in these texts. Journalists are responsible for choosing their words and know how the focus of their message can change readers’ perceptions of what they are saying. Essentially, these are political analyses within news stories that appear to be ordinary given how the surveys and choices of the central narrative are portrayed since, every year, the MinC announces the film that could represent Brazil in the most important contemporary film award ceremony.



Aquarius is a Brazilian thriller and drama film directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho. It premiered officially on May 17, 2016, while competing for the Palme d'Or in Cannes. In Brazil, it premiered on September 1 of the same year. It had a total budget of BRL 3.4 million. According to data from the website Veja (2016), the film, driven by its controversies, took a large number of people to the movie theaters in the first weeks after premiering.

Analysis of the website Portal G1

Rodrigo Ortega's news story was published on September 12, 2016, at 1:27 pm (and then updated on the same day at 8:39 pm), titled "Brazil nominates *Little Secret* to be considered for the Oscar; *Aquarius* is out," with the subtitle: "The film will compete for a spot in the Best foreign language film category. Commission says that film has 'more chance to seduce' the Oscar Academy." He begins the text explaining how the Ministry of Culture arrived at the choice and announced it at the Cinemateca Brasileira in São Paulo. It briefly contextualizes the number of films that were competing (16) and how *Aquarius* was the favorite for the nomination. Then, Ortega (2016) summarizes the film *Little Secret*, which at the time had not yet premiered:

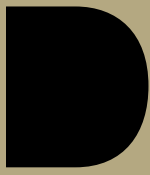
It is a fiction feature film based on a real event that happened to the Schurmann family, known for sailing around the world. The plot focuses on the little girl, Kat, the adopted daughter of Heloísa and Vilfredo Schurmann. The girl died in 2006, and the story also inspired the best-selling book *Pequeno segredo: A lição de vida de Kat para a família Schurmann* (2012), written by Heloísa. The cast features Julia Lemmertz, Maria Flor, Fionnula Flanagan, Marcello Antony, Erroll Shand, and Mariana Goulart. (Ortega, 2016)

The story also presents selected excerpts from the thank-you message posted by director David Schurmann on his Facebook page after the announcement, and a brief explanation of the steps required to validate the film chosen to represent Brazil:

According to the rules, the films selected to compete for a chance to represent Brazil at the Oscars 2017 must have been released and shown publicly for commercial purposes for at least seven consecutive days between October 1, 2015, and September 30, 2016. Proof of exhibition in commercial movie theaters is needed. The official profile of *Little Secret* informs that the premiere is scheduled for November 10, which would exclude the film from the run. However, in the announcement at the Cinemateca on Monday, the MinC commission said the feature premieres on September 22. (Ortega, 2016)

In an interview with the representatives of the commission that chose *Little Secret*, it was reaffirmed that the choice was made because the film had the potential to seduce the Academy. In addition to the selection, the choice was justified by Marcos Petrucelli, commission member, who stated:

Aquarius got all this repercussion on the United States because it has already been seen, it premiered at the Cannes festival. Coincidentally, the movie we chose has not been seen yet. But that does not mean anything. There are films that won an Oscar and did not win Cannes, and vice versa. (Portal G1, 2016)



Another detail mentioned, which explains some of the motivations for choosing this text, is in the following paragraph:

Petrucelli also said that the choice took into account the profile of the jury that chooses foreign language films at the Oscars. “They are generally older people, so a little bit more conservative,” he said. “We tried to find a film that has the characteristics of cinema ‘by the book,’” said the member of the commission. Of the 16 films registered as candidates to represent Brazil at the Oscar race, *Aquarius* was considered the favorite. Recently, two productions withdrew from consideration in support of *Aquarius*. (Portal G1, 2016)

After this brief analysis, the text goes back to the controversy in Cannes to exemplify what may have been part of the motivation for not choosing the film but, that at the time, the MinC would have stated that “these incidents should not interfere in the choice of the film that will represent Brazil” (Portal G1, 2016). Ortega’s text ends with a brief history of Brazil at the Oscars. The author also adds other films that ran for the spot in the years before *Little Secret*.

On September 12, 2016, at 4:38 pm, the portal talked about what happened again, this time based on the opinions of director Kleber Mendonça Filho, expressed in his personal Facebook profile on that same day. The story titled “Director of *Aquarius* links choice for the Oscars to the ‘political climate’ in the country” (Portal G1, 2016) presents more of the “feud” between the competitors by giving a voice to the director himself and his thoughts on the decision of the MinC:

“[The decision] is coherent and expected,” wrote the filmmaker on his Facebook profile. “In addition to institutional decisions via the Brazilian government, *Aquarius* has achieved a rare type of prestige internationally, and this includes commercial distribution in more than 60 countries while it approaches 200 thousand viewers in Brazilian theaters with a kind of popular impact that is also rare”. (G1, 2016)

With another brief description of the film, the article again details the information about the decision of the MinC in view of the details surrounding the promotion campaign among filmmakers to compete for the spot.

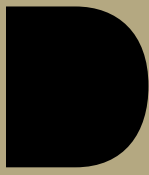
The text also emphasizes:

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Of all the websites analyzed, Portal G1 published the most in-depth analyses of the case. In addition to making their intentions clear with the text, the stories are well researched and concerned with explaining all the details involved in the controversial choice of the MinC, highlighting all the elements involved in the case.

Analysis of the website CinePop

In contrast, CinePop focused entirely on the controversy to report the case. The article written by Renato Marafon was published on September 12th at 2:27 pm (with no updates). The title is suggestive: “Controversy! *Aquarius* is not going to represent Brazil at the 2017 Oscars” (Marafon, 2016). The text deviates a little from the conventions



of journalism by breaking the lead in the first paragraph. In addition to starting with the fact, the story opens by showing a loose element of the story to evidence the impact of the news. It is a short text, not only about the fact that the film was not nominated but also about the impact of the decision in the form of criticism and with a strong tone of mockery.

It did not help that directors Anna Muylaert (*Don't Call Me Son*) and Gabriel Mascaro (*Neon Bull*) withdrew their films from consideration to the 2017 Oscar to open the way for *Aquarius*, the highly praised film by director Kleber Mendonça Filho. Despite being a favorite of critics, *Aquarius* was not chosen by the Ministry of Culture (MinC) committee to represent our country at the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences awards. (Marafon, 2016)

Another thing that should be noted is that even though *Little Secret* was chosen, *Aquarius* remained the central element of greatest interest in the news story. The text does not elaborate; in just one line, it explains the central plot of the nominated feature and immediately returns to the film by Kleber Mendonça Filho. While *Little Secret* did not even get an official synopsis in a text about its own nomination, *Aquarius* was highlighted once again as a favorite since, in addition to a one-paragraph complete synopsis and trailer, it also received brief praise from the author when he noted that the film “appears on the list of the best films of the year” (Marafon, 2016) of the CinePop staff.

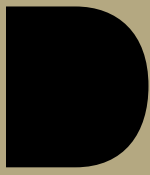
Analysis of the Website Veja

At 02:06pm (with an update at 5:32 pm), Veja published a text about the nomination of the movie *Little Secret* with the title “MinC chooses *Little Secret* to compete for an Oscar nomination.” After a short introduction with a synopsis and summary of the favoritism and selection, the text talks about the controversies with a short timeline that goes from the protests to the indicative classification and withdrawal of the other films from the competition, as the text points out: “The intention was to bring attention to *Aquarius*, which, according to them, was experiencing political retaliation” (Veja, 2016).

Actress Ingra Lyberato and filmmaker Guilherme Fiúza Zenha decided to leave the commission. “As the legitimacy of the commission has been put into question by many in our class, I withdraw out of respect for my own tribe, and I deeply regret this conflict and hope that a new commission will find legitimacy,” Ingra wrote on her Facebook profile. (Veja, 2016)

The text ends by pointing out that *Aquarius* was still not out of the race for the Oscars and that even if it had not been chosen, it could still compete in other categories, since “the Hollywood Academy allows any film that remained on the commercial circuit in the Los Angeles area for at least seven days to compete in other categories” (Veja, 2016).

Hours later, at 8 pm, journalist Raquel Carneiro (2016) published an interview with director David Schurmann titled “*Little Secret* Director: Oscar controversy overshadows the film.” Contrary to most, the story is quite complimentary and humanizing, mainly when presenting the side of David Schurmann in the narrative. This was unprecedented since the other stories focused on the fact that *Aquarius* was not nominated. Veja presented the controversy from the perspective of the nominated director:



“It was a great day. I even saw butterflies,” says *Little Secret* director David Schurmann. [...] While the director was happy and planned the next steps to publicize the film, the scenario on social media was much more bitter. (Veja, 2016)

Then, the text highlights the controversies focusing on *Aquarius*. The protest in Cannes is mentioned five times. One within the text itself —without directly citing the reasons for the protest, only that it happened— and four in quotes from David.

The text is more fluid. By personifying things and events, it follows some elements of literary journalism as well as by including a more informal narration. As, for example, in the excerpt: “*Aquarius* was considered the strongest name for the MinC nomination. But it didn’t happen. The refusal was frowned upon by those who held the title as a favorite” (Veja, 2016). Then there is an interview with David Schurmann. Most of the questions have to do with the director’s reactions and emotions about the choice of his film to represent Brazil.

On the same day, at 5:33 pm, the *Veja* website published a public poll asking whether Kleber Mendonça Filho’s political stances may have influenced the choice of the film to represent Brazil at the Oscars. This poll was published in two stories, one focused only on it and in another that featured a short story about Kléber’s post on his Facebook page. However, *Veja* did not talk about it or give it meaning, and the results were never published.

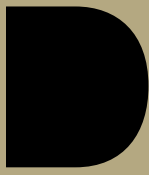
Analysis of the Website Rolling Stones

Published on September 12 at 3:28 pm by the Newsroom, the Rolling Stones story focused a bit more on *Little Secret*, although it also mentioned the favorite competitor several times. In the title “*Aquarius* is passed over, and *Little secret* is chosen to compete for an Oscar nomination for Brazil” (Rolling Stones, 2016), the favoritism is evidenced by the phrase “passed over,” which is synonymous with “rejected, despised.”

The text begins by summarizing the choice and then talks about how *Aquarius* was the favorite and competed in Cannes. This time the “potential to seduce the Academy” argument is not mentioned; it was replaced by it being “adjusted to the Academy’s thinking” (Rolling Stones, 2016). After this excerpt, there is a break in the text with links to other related stories: “[Article] *Aquarius* goes to Cannes (2016)”; “[Preview] See the upcoming theater premieres,” and “[Review] *Aquarius*, with Sônia Braga and Irandhir Santos (2016)” (Rolling Stone, 2016). Once again, evidencing all the news related to the nomination return to the original subject and the importance of *Aquarius* for national cinema in 2016.

The second section of the text, which consists of three paragraphs, delves into *Little Secret*. There is a synopsis, a description of the cast, a message from the director on his Facebook page, and the next steps of the Oscar race, very similar to what Portal G1 did. The last section, made up of four paragraphs, focuses on the controversies surrounding the trajectory of *Aquarius* in award ceremonies and the media, especially the possible boycott of the film by the MinC:

This result underscores the discourse of part of the cinematographic community that *Aquarius* is suffering a type of boycott by Michel Temer’s government. This is because, in May, at the last Cannes Festival, the cast and the director put on a protest against the impeachment of then-President Dilma Rousseff. (Rolling Stone, 2016)



Rolling Stones brings an unprecedented piece of information to the situation, revealing that the critic Marcos Petrucelli, who previously, at the opening of the 44th Gramado Film Festival, had spoken out against the protest in Cannes, was part of the selection committee of the MinC. The text ends by talking about the withdrawal of Anna Muylaert, Gabriel Mascaro, and Aly Muritiba and makes a short summary of the rules necessary for a film to be eligible to represent the country.

Even though Rolling Stones' text is more succinct, it is one of the most complete about the case. Even so, the appreciation of *Aquarius*, and not *Little Secret*, as it could be, as a central object of the narrative is still noticeable.

Analysis of the Website Diário de Pernambuco

Published at 1:57 pm and updated at 2:18 pm, by Viver/Diário, the article is called “*Aquarius* is out and *Little secret* to represent Brazil at the Oscars” (Diário de Pernambuco, 2016). The story does not differ much from the others. However, it can be noted that there is a certain tone of sadness for *Aquarius*. First, the story highlights how the director is from Pernambuco right in the first paragraph.

In the third paragraph, when talking about the fact that three films withdrew from consideration to boost the nomination of the film, the text reinforces that “its directors did not agree with the statements made about Kleber Mendonça Filho’s film by one of the members of the commission responsible for selecting the film” (Diário de Pernambuco, 2016). The text ends with a brief synopsis of the selected film and the trailer.

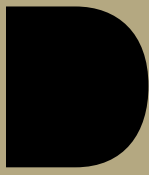
Even though it is one of the websites that said little about this issue, Diário de Pernambuco was selected because it is from the location where the film *Aquarius* was produced. Therefore, we can consider that the local media ended up reporting the news in the same way as the other websites in a very reduced way and hardly criticized the choice of the nominee.

Discussion of the Results

After analyzing the data, it was possible to see how, within all the controversy about the choice of the MinC of the film to represent the country in the category of Best foreign language film at the Oscars 2017, *Aquarius* ends up standing out within the narrative as a central element, even when the news was not necessarily about it.

Portal G1 published more comprehensive coverage on the day of the announcement. Their stories were complete and moved away from the controversy to talk about the films. They traced a wider overview of the news, explaining all the details involved in the choice of the MinC. The second story published on the same day focused on Kleber Mendonça Filho’s statements to draw parallels between Brazil’s choice and the politics at the time. They also raised other controversies, such as the fact that Marcos Petrucelli was on the committee.

In the story published on CinePop, it is possible to perceive a more obvious tone of discontent and appreciation of the controversy more than the central point of the news. The news was not about the choice of *Little Secret* to represent Brazil, but about *Aquarius* not being chosen, like most texts, but in the one published on CinePop, this rivalry is underscored. There is a tone of protest and mockery at times, such as the fact that the story does not even include a synopsis of *Little Secret* and puts *Aquarius* in evidence even more by naming it one of the best movies of the year and ending the story with its trailer. The tone of preference and favoring for the film by Mendonça Filho is quite obvious.



The opposite occurs in the stories published on the *Veja* website. It seems that there is an urgent need to favor *Little Secret* and treat *Aquarius* as the villain. The first text relies entirely on underscoring how, since the beginning of the campaign, the film went through several problems and controversies, always removing the responsibility from the MinC and putting it on the film's staff. There are very specific parts of the text that help to set this tone, such as the idea that "according to them, it was experiencing political retaliation" (Veja, 2016) or that the film was "surrounded by controversies" (Veja, 2016). However, at no time does it fail to present the full news with a summary of the events. It just alleviates the "damage" by not focusing so much on the case and trying to humanize *Little Secret*, which is even more evident from the interview with the film's director, David Schurmann, published on the same day.

Rolling Stones goes back to the view that *Aquarius* was boycotted. Right in the title, they make their favoritism clear by using the phrase "pass over" to summarize what happened. Although the intention and position of the website are clear, it does not evoke this as explicitly as *Veja* and *CinePop*. It gives its due attention to *Little Secret* and contextualizes it well. However, the focus of the story returns strongly to *Aquarius* in the last paragraphs of the text, which are entirely focused on the trajectory of the film until the day of the nomination, summarizing all the controversies and covering possible reasons that led to its boycott.

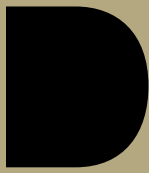
Finally, the *Diário de Pernambuco* story is equally succinct and goes straight to the point. What is noticeable is the sad tone employed by the website to report the fact that *Aquarius* was not nominated, like they almost regretted reporting the news.

Final Considerations

From the analyses and the understanding of the importance of national cinema as a social and historical instrument in the media, it is possible to see how the whole controversy involving the fact that *Aquarius* was not chosen to represent Brazil in the dispute for the Best foreign language film in the 2017 Academy Awards is a good example of how Brazilian cinema is intrinsically involved with national politics. Cinema is a social instrument and is responsible for explaining a good part of Brazilian history on and off the screen. It can be considered that journalism is really a decisive factor that creates different narratives according to the angle of a news story, and it can help to shape public perception about different films.

In Brazil, cinema has almost always been responsible for representing and preserving culture, and, for that reason, it is impossible to separate it from politics. It goes through long periods of struggle, loses strength, recovers, comes back hard, goes through difficulties but always finds a way to come back, especially considering the censorship of the military dictatorship, the end of *Embrafilme* during the Collor administration, and the disregard for *Ancine* by the current Brazilian administration. *Ancine* is one of the main public agencies that transfers resources for audiovisual productions.

Aquarius is a film about resisting, a record of culture, and of the maturity of *Sônia Braga's* career, who is one of the most important Brazilian actresses of our time. The adoration of the film speaks mainly to the way it treats *Sônia* and presents her as its central figure. *Clara* is the most complex and important character of *Sônia's* career to date, according to most film critics in the country.



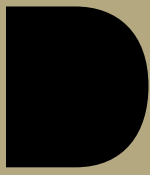
When they protested in Cannes against the impeachment of ex-president Dilma Rousseff, the film's staff really marked it as a "target" for the conservative class in power, especially considering the political crisis that was happening in Brazil at the time. This generated a snowball effect and then a series of boycotts until the ultimate choice was made. For the director of *Aquarius*, the decision really was fully in line with the political reality of Brazil.

This is clear when analyzing the stories, articles, and interviews that populated online news portals. Even the focus and glory of the nomination of *Little Secret* and its director was overshadowed by *Aquarius* at almost every moment, connecting the two films all the time. It soon became impossible to talk about *Little Secret* without mentioning *Aquarius* right afterwards and vice versa. Mendonça Filho's film was so big that it took the entire narrative for itself even though it was the "loser" of the story since the fact it was not chosen made the film grow even more and served as advertising. All these reports, by minimizing the impact of the choice of *Little Secret*, may have served as instigators for the public to go watch a film that would usually have been "snubbed."

It is possible to perceive in journalism how these narratives are constructed from a central point. Even the news portals that tried to remain impartial to the favoritism of the controversy end up falling in this same narrative line. This demonstrates how Brazilian cinema is, in a way, political. The media reinforces this, even when this matter is incessantly ignored, as was the case with the MinC's choice not to nominate *Aquarius* for the spot to run for Best foreign language film at the 2017 Oscars.

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