Article

Religion and Cinema as Subversive Memories: A Possible Relationship in the Brazilian Context

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Abstract: Brazil has been defined as a country without memory. On the other hand, Brazilian cinematography is rich in dealing with the theme of memory. In this scenario, Brazilians gather weekly in religious services to celebrate the memory of the Easter of Christ in the Eucharist, to remember the deeds of God in time and space, and to celebrate the memory of the Gospel embodied in the culture and memory of the Brazilian people. This article intends, therefore, to establish a relation between the lack of critical and political memories and the memory present in the narratives of Brazilian films as spaces of resistance, and the religious and subversive memory in the Christian liturgy. The methodology adopted will be, firstly, descriptive and analytical, focusing on the facts of the Brazilian reality. Secondly, memory and liturgical memory will be treated in the liturgy, ascertaining the role of this paschal memory not only as an exercise of memory, but also as a subverting and political memory in the past, present, and future. Here, relations between liturgy and Brazilian cinema will be established.

Keywords: memory; religion; liturgy; cinema; Brazil

1. Introduction

This article intends to establish a relationship between religion and cinema as spaces for the construction of social and political memory, in a context marked by an apparent lack of memory such as Brazil. The study establishes a relation between the neglected context of critical and political memory and forgotten and neglected memories. At the same time, this paper reflects on the memory present in the narratives of Brazilian films, as spaces of memory resistance. From this reality, it establishes relations with the liturgical memory, the subversive memory of the resurrection, and the anamnesis in the regular worship of the community as a memory loaded with political density, identity persistence, narrative resistance.

An introductory approach to memory is presented, choosing to focus on cultural memory (Candau; Assmann), memory as a process of social struggle (Pollack), and the memory of suffering (Ricoeur) as specific understandings to establish a relationship with both cinema as well as with Christian worship.

The structure will be, in the first section, descriptive and analytical, focusing on facts of the Brazilian reality, mainly regarding the loss and lack of social, cultural, and identity memories, taking as sources of analysis Brazilian films that deal with themes related to memory. In a second section we will deal with the concept of memory and the liturgical memory present in the liturgy, especially in the service of a historical protestant church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brazil, ascertaining the role of this paschal memory not only as an exercise of memory, but also as a subverting and political memory in the past, present, and future. In the last section, a relation will be made with Brazilian films which deal with subversive memories, reflecting on how to use this resource in the Christian worship service.
2. Brazil: A Country without Memory?

Brazil has been defined as a country without memory. In the last presidential election (2018), the lack of memory regarding the military dictatorship of 1964 was evident. Brutal cases of violence, especially against vulnerable people, routinely fall into oblivion and impunity. The country lacks memory of slavery, the genocide of indigenous peoples, as well as minorities who are victims of violence. The lack of memory can be perceived as the neglect of the preservation of the country’s historical heritage. Real estate greed destroys houses, buildings, squares, and spaces to build new modern buildings.

Studies have sought to confirm the hypothesis that the country has no memory (Benninghoff-Lühl and Leibing 2001). There would be many ways of approaching the lack of memory in the Brazilian context. In this article, we are opting especially for the absence of memory of the vulnerable groups, mainly the black and indigenous populations, the poor, the imprisoned, the persecuted, tortured, and killed during the military dictatorship, and women victims of domestic abuse and violence. It intends to focus on the lack of memory or on the deconstruction of the memory of the subjugated groups, those made invisible and silenced, groups that continue in the logic of slavery, which to this day is still not resolved in the country (Souza 2017).

According to the study of Benninghoff-Lühl and Leibing, the memory of those who suffer was not only taken away, but the whole people of Brazil suffer from a type of historical-mythological amnesia:

This enormous economic and geographic Brazil—differently from European, Asiatic, African or even, Latin American countries—does not have any collective tradition, nor any untarnished tradition, and in this sense, neither does it have a common cultural good which one could remember. Also lacking are cultural techniques which could make possible something like a common memory. [...] Because the inhabitants of Brazil preferred living the now. They permitted themselves to have nostalgia, the longing diffused by a temporal and spatial distance, but their national memory, intermediated by dates and monuments, was underdeveloped. (Benninghoff-Lühl and Leibing 2001, p. 11)

The country lacks memory of tragic events of its history as an identity resource (Candau 2018, p. 151). One perceives this in the few official narratives of happenings, in the forgetting of people, and in the lack of notable places for the vulnerable population. The lack of memory, especially of tragic situations, can be perceived in the lack of memorials and museums of the military dictatorship, of African slavery, of the indigenous genocide, of popular uprisings such as the Canudos Uprising in the north, or the War of the Contestado in the south. The Canudos Uprising (Vargas Llosa 1981), which occurred in the 19th century, led by the devout Antônio Conselheiro, is quite illustrative to perceive how popular memories were treated. The uprising is not only rarely remembered in the country, but just recently the place called Arraial de Canudos, where the events happened, was submerged by a hydroelectric dam to generate energy.

Personalities remembered in names of parks and streets many times are names of personalities of the economic, political, or military elite, and rarely express the popular memory. That is, the memory that is saved is, many times, for the memory of the elites of the political with social and economic power, not the memory of the victims (Souza 2017). A good example of this is the Castelo Branco Avenue, in Porto Alegre, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The avenue is one of the main accesses to the city and receives the name of one of the presidents of the military dictatorship, General Castelo Branco. Movements and parties in recent years have managed to change the name of the avenue to Avenue of Democracy and of Legality, a clear act of deconstructing a memory of the exaltation of the dictatorship and the recovery of another memory, the memory of the struggles for democracy and for legality. In 2018, however, a city councilwoman representing conservative sectors managed to retract the change and once again name the avenue after the name of the dictator. Another emblematic case involving a person is the street sign in memory of the assassinated city councilwoman, Marielle Franco, in the city of
Rio de Janeiro. During the political campaigns in 2018, representatives of the conservative branch of politics, in a public act, destroyed the sign made to remember the councilwoman assassinated by militias of the city. Marielle Franco synthesizes in herself, as a black, lesbian woman from the periphery, the many forgotten memories of the country. It is worth noting here that the Bolsonaro government especially worked very strategically to preserve a certain memory, the nostalgic and positive memory of the military dictatorship, and against the preservation of the memories of people and groups that represent an inclusive memory of alternative segments to the official memory. Not infrequently, the Bolsonaro government used religious-evangelical elements as a way of legitimizing the maintenance of official memory (Py 2020).

Besides this, we can think of the lack of memory for the innumerable cases of violence which mark the news of the larger Brazilian media every day: assassinations related to drug trafficking, urban and police violence, and femicides. The memory of the deaths and of the dead lasts during the fleeting time of the media, and soon are forgotten or are maintained only in the private and family sphere of the people affected by the losses. This would be an important chapter to be investigated: the memory of the victims of violence and the role of the media in making them invisible through the sensationalism of passing news. Part of this study has been carried out by the author in the studies of Romarias da Terra, as a liturgical pilgrimage combined with elements of social movements as a memory space for groups in social vulnerability such as the landless, indigenous, and quilombolas (Adam 2005). This study also points to the participation, even if minority, of people linked to the Lutheran church in movements fighting to rescue the memories of vulnerable and impoverished groups linked to agriculture and land (Py and Pedlowski 2018).

All of this leads to the question about the spaces of memories. Which spaces and events permit that these Brazilian memories surface in segments, groups, populations, spaces, edifications, etc. especially those marginalized, vulnerable, and made invisible? Certainly, the different forms of art in Brazil are a form of resistance and of preservation of memory. The art of memory finds expression in culture such as music, painting, carnival, and movies. In the carnival (2019), the winning samba school of the main parades of Rio de Janeiro, the Estaçãô Primeira de Mangueira, had as its theme history which is not found in the official history books of the country, the history of indigenous peoples, blacks, women, and the LGBT+ population.

Certainly, religion is a space of the preservation of memory. Perhaps the main places of remembrance are still Catholic churches and shrines, or Protestant temples and cemeteries and the liturgies celebrated there, as we will seek to show in this article. It is not enough just to guarantee memory, one must think of the role of memory. To what measure do the spaces of memory of the church, especially of worship and of liturgy, the subversive memory of Christ, permit the exercise of a critical remembering, a memory of the victims and of the forgotten groups in history and in society. To what measure can liturgical memory be subversive?

3. Memory

Memory is a human mechanism of maintaining identity. It is a way of accessing the past to give meaning to the present and the future. Memory is a continually updated social construction and reconstruction, more than a faithful reconstitution of the same. It is more of a framing rather than a content, a goal, or a set of strategies for the construction and maintenance of the identity (Candau 2018, p. 9). It is a way of remaining aware in the midst of changes, crises, and ruptures. Memory shapes us, and at the same time, it is shaped by us (Candau 2018, p. 16). Memory is identity in action (Candau 2018, p. 18).

Collective memory fits well into these definitions. It is a representation, which Candau calls metamemory, a statement which members of a group are going to produce with respect to a memory which is supposedly common to all the members of this group (Candau 2018, p. 24). According to Pollack, the construction of memory always takes place in processes of negotiation and disputes between collective or official memory and individual
or underground memories, sometimes silenced memories, even “prohibited”, as a way not only of overlapping official memories, but also mainly as a way of protecting individuals and groups (Pollack 1989). Pollack, based on Henry Rousseau, speaks of framing memories as a way of maintaining internal cohesion and defending the boundaries of what a group has in common. In this sense, we can understand memory as processes of construction through complex games of power of institutions, groups and people, as a way of preserving a necessary identity.

The theme of memory has become more relevant in the last decades due to the disappearance of references, dilution of identities, identity tensions, loss of great organizing memories, the regression of strong memories, and an exacerbated fixation on the present (Candau 2018, p. 10), besides the phenomenon of mediatization. In a reality such as the Brazilian one, where the preservations of determined memories were not established or where determined memories are ignored and forgotten, to reflect on the role of memories in times of immediacies becomes even more urgent. As Candau would say: “Not satisfying the duty of memory is to expose oneself to the risk of disappearing” (Candau 2018, p. 125).

Memories need means and spaces to become viable as practices, representations, remembrances, narratives, knowledge, inheritance, myths, rites, beliefs, writings, images, monuments, and places. According to Halbwachs “A truth, to become fixed in the memory of the group, needs to be presented in the concrete form of an event, a person, a place” (Assmann 2000, p. 38). The collective memory needs to be communicated to exist (Assmann 2000, p. 37). Based on Halbwachs, Assmann differentiates memory into four areas: mimetic memory, related to actions and rites; the memory of things, related to places and things; communicative memory which is present in the interaction and in communication; and cultural memory, which, according to the author, gathers together all the other memories (Assmann 2000, p. 19). For him, cultural memory is formed in a dynamic and constant process between past and present, tradition, political memory, and imagination (Assmann 2000, p. 23).

In this study, we adopted the understanding of memory as cultural memory (Assmann), not as something given and stagnant, but as a dynamic process triggered by a game of forces and interests of the groups involved, including individual and collective silences (Pollack). In the case of cinema, specifically, cultural memory happens mainly through communicative processes, where games of interest are involved. With regard to Christian worship service, with its rites, spaces and calendars, its liturgy, its hymns, its communication, and its contents, represents a very explicit form of construction of collective and cultural memory. Based on Assmann, one can say that the worship service makes possible the combination of fused memory (original and ancestral) with biographical memory (recent past, experiences) (Assmann 2000, pp. 51–52). The worship service as collective memory takes place in the combination between original memories, the remembrances of today, and social interaction. Aside from the differences, cinema, through its narratives, also reconstructs collective memories through combining memories.

3.1. Memory of the Suffering

Considering the focus on vulnerable groups, let us also talk about the memory of the suffering. For this, the text of Paul Ricoeur can help us. Upon being invited to celebrate the memory of the Jewish holocaust, the author asks if this memory has the same meaning as the biblical memory of the exodus. What does the glorious memory of liberation from slavery have to do with the memory of the holocaust and its victims? (Ricoeur 2016, p. 240). Ricoeur’s first answer is that remembering is a moral duty faced with the debt we have regarding the victims. The least we can do is to remember them, become aware of their lives and of their suffering. To save them from being forgotten through memory and the narrative, says the author, based on Elie Wiesel. To recollect is also a way of avoiding banality, since the exhaustive explanation of the tragedy can make the event something necessary. The memory then serves to maintain the scandalous dimension
and the monstrousity as something that is inexhaustible for explanation (Ricoeur 2016, pp. 240–41).

Ricoeur deepens his reflection, reflecting about the archaic and mythic depth of religion which seeks to show suffering as something deserved, the origin of evil. He tries to counter this tendency, which is also present in the biblical tradition, showing counterpoints to the justification of suffering. According to Ricoeur, “when the complaint of the innocent victims is no longer covered up by arguments of justification, this bare complaint is taken to the state of a pure cry” (Ricoeur 2016, p. 242). The Bible is filled with these cries of the victims against their tormentors. That is why we can make memories of the victims for what they are: bearers of a lamentation which no explanation is able to relieve (Ricoeur 2016, p. 242). With this, the author points to the need for the memory of the human lament before God. We believe in God despite the evil, much more than to explain the evil.

On this topic, T. Adorno can also help this reflection. For him, “the need to give voice to the suffering is the condition for all truth. Since suffering is the objectivity which weighs on the subject” (Adorno 2009, p. 24). Therefore, memory is not only remembrances, reminiscences, and much less a rational attempt to comprehend, to redeem oneself. Memory is a condition; it is the indispensable starting point for all thought. According to the philosopher, suffering is the prism through which social reality, history, culture, daily life, the economy, and the destiny of the people needs to be seen (Zamora 2008, p. 13). That is why, for Adorno, Auschwitz is a watch guard of memory, so that such barbarism cannot be possible again, being that the same mechanisms—Western reasoning, the explanations—which permitted Auschwitz, continue organizing the world. The memory updates the barbarism in the engendering of reason itself “so that Auschwitz is not repeated.” That is why the memory of suffering is an impossible memory, since it can never do justice to the suffering of the victims.

The victims of the Brazilian context have been, for centuries, abused and massacred multiple times in the fact that they are ignored, forgotten, and banalized. Many times, the suffering, when remembered, has used the same justifying schemes, biblical, as well as theological, rational, scientific, historical, and political. As if the suffering of thousands of blacks, indigenous, persons connected to people’s movements, women, imprisoned and tortured people, and people who are victims of domestic violence has a justification When excluded from memory, they are also excluded from their own suffering. For these human beings, memory has a counterpresent role (Woortmann 2001, p. 194). It is interesting that the social movements in their public manifestations customarily invoke the names of the dead crying out together “present”. They know that “a person lives when their name is invoked” (Assmann 2000, p. 63).

Steffensky is even more explicit:

The memory of the dead creates a native land. One lives differently in a place where the names of the dead are known, where the relations are known, also those of guilt and destruction. A native land is the place of the memory of successes and of losses of life. Leveling memory deprives us more of our native land than leveling the landscapes which we lament. The memory of the dead does not only recover them and preserves their names, but it also traces our own contours and gives us our face. In the act of remembering we learn what is important for us, what we desire and for what we are engaged. The memory of the dead institutes and dramatizes our own identity. (Steffensky 1998, p. 88)

3.2. Memory in the Worship Liturgy

In this scenario of the lack of and the covering up of memory, Brazilians gather weekly in worship to celebrate the memory of the Easter of Christ in the Eucharist, to remember the deeds of God in time and space, and to celebrate the memory of the Gospel embodied in the culture and memory of the Brazilian people. Here, we raise a question—To what measure could the worship service be a space for the preservation of memory or the construction of a memory of suffering based on the memory of Christ?
Following the Jewish tradition, Christian worship is a privileged space for exercising memory. The dimension of the *anamnesis*, the dimension of the *zakar* in the worship service helps us say who we were, who we are, and who we will be based on Christ, as the reformed theologian Jean Jacques von Allmen (2006, pp. 31–32) defends. According to the author, in the worship service, a recapitulation of the salvation story occurs. The worship service summarizes and always again confirms the salvation story, the culmination point of which is found in the incarnated intervention of Christ. In this summary and confirmation Christ continues his salvific work through the Holy Spirit.

For the author, such a recapitulation has a chronological and a theological meaning. In the chronological sense, it means that the worship service recapitulates and confirms Christ’s work, his incarnation, his cross, and his resurrection. The worship service is an anamnesis or a memorial of the past work of Christ. In this perspective, in which it reassumes the biblical memory, past and present are confused, since the past is at work again, the past becomes current. The recapitulation is not related just to the past which becomes present, but it is also something which is to come, since the salvation story is not reduced to the past. To include the future in the chronological perspective of salvation does not mean to think of the future as complementary to the full work of Christ, but to understand that the future means the confirmation and the last and eternal manifestation of the event of the cross. The worship service precedes the banquet of the Kingdom. A well-known hymn born out of Liberation Theology, called Utopia, sings “The future illuminates the present, you come and will come without delay.”

There is still a third dimension in the chronological recapitulation of the salvation story in the worship service. We have yet the present, itself, which is affirmed, through what Christ presents to the Father in heaven. Just as in the worship service, the past comes to the fore and the future is prefigured, so also heaven and earth touch and the present is glorified.

For Von Allmen, the worship service recapitulates the salvation story on a theological plain. In this perspective, the author picks up again the prophetic, priestly, and royal aspects of the salvation story. The worship, then, recapitulates the salvation story to the measure that it is prophetic, priestly, and royal with regard to Christ, be it through the preaching of the word, through the celebration of the Eucharist, or through the presence of free people who accept reconciliation (von Allmen 2006, pp. 37–38). These dimensions are present in each worship service as the continuity of the salvation story.

Based on this memorial comprehension of the Christian worship service, we can understand that liturgical memory helps us identify and celebrate not only the incarnation of God in Christ, but also this same incarnation happening every day in different places, historical and mythical times, in resistance struggles, and of utopic hope, in a dynamic combination of ancestral and mythic memory with the memory of current times and places as Bieritz points out:

In a worship service which is shown to be a community of memory and narrative, a space is created for the life and faith experiences of those who were there before us. They gain a voice when we sing their hymns, when we use their prayers, and we connect with them through praising God. They are with us and are commemorated when we celebrate Holy Communion. The salvation story which we remember while we tell it and telling it we remember includes them. (Bieritz 1996, p. 262)

Precisely in this dynamic between a memory that is remembered and the memory of people who live in the present time, the past gains relevance not only as the past, but also as a possibility to ensure the future and hope, even for those who are not yet born.

The salvation story also includes those who will come after us. As memory—and only as memory—the future grows, hope grows. A worship service as a community of memory and of narrative establishes itself thus as also against forgetting the future, against the inconsequential abuse of resources in the name of misleading interests on the part of the people today. The worship service gives
a voice to those yet unborn; it takes them into account in its prayers, it maintains them as still vacant spaces in the community of the Body of Christ. (Beieritz 1996, p. 263)

In this perspective of “salvation” not only as a soteriological dimension, but as a social and political dimension, we can, from J.B. Metz also rescue the dimension of the memory of suffering. “It reclaims history not only as a scenario of projection of current interests. It mobilizes tradition as dangerous tradition and, with this, as a liberating potential with regard to the unidimensionality and to the security of those whose ‘time is always ready.’” (John 7:6). (Metz 1992, p. 95).

Christian memory, as a memory of suffering, therefore, has the potential to awaken the memory of the victims of our times and places.

[. . . ] The memory of suffering in the Christian sense is not elusive in the nebulousness of social and political arbitrariness, but, sharpens the social and political awareness in the interest and suffering of others. It avoids the privatization and internationalization of the suffering and leveling of its social dimension. In this memory of suffering, the history of suffering and the history of social oppression are not simply identical, but they are also not concretely separable. (Metz 1992, p. 116)

The space where the memory of suffering is markedly articulated is Christian worship. The worship service is the privileged place of this memory of suffering, which becomes subversive memory because the memory of Easter surmounts the suffering and the cross while at the same time does not overcome and forget the cross and suffering.

If, therefore, the Christian community preserves in its worship the memory of its crucified Lord, resurrected and awaited for fulfillment, it not only makes present for itself time and again, his death, which sealed a new alliance, but then this Lord meets with it, with that which he did and will still do. (Schmidt-Lauber 1990, p. 71)

And within the service, especially the Eucharist, is the space where this memory of suffering is more concrete, as a collective ritual performance takes place.

Then the community makes itself present in the exodus to freedom and in the institution of the Lord’s Supper, then it experiences once again the communion with the resurrected one in a marvelous way, and then the glow and the presage of an indescribable glory will rest over it. (Schmidt-Lauber 1990, p. 71)

Worship is strongly anchored in this understanding of worship as memory, as paschal anamnesis, recovered, especially, in the eucharistic prayer (IECLB 2013). The worship service is conceived as a recapitulation of the salvation story, an event in which, through faith and the action of the Spirit, the past and the future of Christ is made present. The memory of the cross and the suffering gain space as a dangerous and subversive memory.

Even so, there is no space, or there is little space, for the memory of those without memory, of vulnerable groups, of the victims of centuries of exploitation and exclusion. The worship service of the Lutheran Church maintains itself encapsulated faced with the context of suffering. The memory of the cross is updated, but there is no space in the liturgy for the memory of permanently invisible people, of poor people, of marginalized, or groups of resistance and opposition to the dominant memories. It is as if the memory of Christ was enough in itself. As if the suffering of the cross did not incarnate in the suffering of the new victims. As if the memory of the liturgy could not inculturate in the memories of the people, mainly of those people who are not part of the community.

3.3. The Cinema as a Movement of Memory

If we ask about spaces and times of the memory of the Brazilian people, mainly of vulnerable people, we will not find memorials, museums, or significant dates on the civil or religious calendar of the country as we saw above. The cinema, popular music, literature, and carnival festivities surprisingly emerge as movements where the narratives about the memories of the people appear. The vulnerable people and those left out of the memories,
including the liturgical memory of the worship services of the Lutheran church, find space in art, and, especially, in the Brazilian cinema to preserve and express their memories.

Cinema can be understood and analyzed in many ways: as an art, as a technique, as an industry, as a narrative, and as imagination. In this study, we understand cinema as a way of mirroring culture and reality, a way of looking at reality in a different, amplified, mirrored way, a way of seeing oneself and perceiving oneself, building understandings, reaffirming cosmovisions, opposing perspectives, and points of view (Morin 1980). Cinema has consolidated itself as a daily way of not only making reality visible, but mainly of correcting it, increasing it, adapting it to the image and likeness of ourselves, under all the risks involved in this (Santos 2014, p. 248). It is in this sense that cinema has a potential for building, maintaining, and opposing the collective memory of social groups, as we will see below.

There exists in Brazil a cinematographic production of recognized artistic quality. Most of these films do not attract the interest or the taste of the Brazilian people, maybe because they are too dense and realistic. The forgotten and ignored memories gain their space in these films. The films, thus, become memories in movement. From dense films like Carandiru (2003, directed by Hector Babenco) on the massacre of prisoners in this penitentiary house or Cidade de Deus [City of God] (2002, Fernando Meirelles), on violence and drug trafficking in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, or films that deal with a more individual memory such as Aquarius (2016, Kleber Mendonça Filho), about a woman’s resistance to abandoning her apartment and neighborhood. On the military dictatorship, there is an enormous list of films: We can include in this list the film Batismo de Sangue [Blood Baptism] (2007, Helvécio Ratton) which tells the story of priests imprisoned and tortured by the military regime; or the film O ano que meus pais saíram de férias [The year my parents left on vacation] (2006, Cao Hamburger), which tells the story of the dictatorship from the perspective of a boy whose parents had to flee and leave him in the care of neighbors; also the film A memória que me contam [The memory that they tell me] (2012, Lúcia Murat), about the life of an ex-guerilla on her death bed and her companions in the struggle. Precisely during these days, in the Brazilian cinemas there is a film passing called Deslembro [Disremember] (2019, Flávia Castro), about the life of an adolescent Joana returning from exile and confronting the absence of the father, killed in the basements of the dictatorship.

Two important observations must be made. In this country without memory, in spite of the excellent cinematographic productions, many of them winning prizes in and outside the country such as at the Cannes Festival or in Berlin, the attendance on the part of the Brazilian public is minimal. In common knowledge, Brazilians do not like Brazilian films, probably because of their thematic density; they are too realistic. Brazilians prefer the romantic soap operas or Hollywood productions, which are less realistic, with less appeal to memory. At this point, it may be that something of what Pollack calls forms of forgetting and silencing which occurs in the process of social memories (Pollack 1989). In this case, a certain lack of interest in the themes addressed in Brazilian films can be a way of silencing and forgetting situations of suffering and social injustice that are uncomfortable for the society.

Despite this, Brazilian and Latin American cinema continues to bring to collective memory situations, realities, groups, and people that, in common sense and in official memories, tend to be forgotten and silenced. Cinema as a mirror of culture creates a situation with which the population or part of it needs to reflect and respond and this can contribute to the process of reconfiguration of cultural memory, taking into account mainly vulnerable groups and people and made unfeasible, as Pollack (1989) will say, “the film-testimony and documentary became a powerful instrument for the successive rearrangements of collective memory and, through television, of national memory.”

The article of Ismael Xavier, Political Memory and the demand for justice: a comparative study of two Latin American films (Xavier 2017, pp. 23–24), is very precious in this sense. The author deals exactly with the role of films for the recovery of memory related to the dictatorship and the demand for political justice today. These two observations, the
lack of interest in national cinema, and the little reflection of its role in maintaining memory point to the same tendency for lack of memory or the difficulty of constructing memory in Brazil.

4. Conclusions: Liturgy and Cinema as Subversive Memory

Worship services are not films, and vice-versa. Even so, they are human events which, as such, are close to each other (Adam 2016). Both gather people together in a certain place. Both work with narratives. Both ritualize life. Both deal with memories, be they ancestral or recent. Both can express memories of suffering, the memory of Christ, and the memory of victims. This corroborates the two conclusions we arrive at in this article: The memory of the suffering of Christ, a subversive and dangerous memory because of the resurrection, has space in the Christian worship service of Brazil. The liturgy guarantees space for this memory. Even so, this memory seems distant from the memory of vulnerable people. When they are remembered in prayers, in the Kyrie eleison, or in the preaching, they are remembered in a generic, distant, almost banal way, as Ricoeur said. One does not make the memory of Christ, in fact, a memory of the victims of the reality where we are. Thus, the cross is relativized. Suffering is relativized. In this sense, the liturgy of the worship service camouflages the memory of suffering, and of the social and historical tragedies of this country.

Another possible conclusion of this article is that a space for effective memory is present in Brazilian films. One of the important questions of this article is exactly this: To what extent can the memories brought into the films serve as a support for the liturgical memory? Yes, the memories brought forth in the films can sensitize and mobilize people to look at what they are not seeing, or do not want to see. Congregations should offer film debates to watch and discuss Brazilian films as a theological exercise of memory. Specifically, on the use of films in the worship service, there are two possibilities. The experience of the Filmgottesdienst in Germany, and what Clive Marsh suggests in one of his books.

Filmgottesdienst is a liturgical proposal, carried out with a team, being that the process of shaping the liturgy, the liturgical conduction, and the post evaluation are as important as the result itself. It is not about using the film or parts of films in the service, as an example, an illustration, or a resource, but of recreating the liturgy and the preaching based on a certain film. The film is the liturgy itself of the worship, or an integral part of the liturgical event (Kirsner and Gehring 2014). Films as movement of memory could be used as base for the whole liturgy, according to this proposal.

Marsh defends the relation between worship and cinema due to the fact that worship services should be participative; they need to be moving and should be connected to the rest of life. We can say that Christian worship has the mission of involving people with the forgotten memories of their people. As a methodological suggestion, Marsh proposes three examples: (1) use films as a text “A film-clip is here used in the same way as a reading may be used in a sermon. It introduces into worship a resource to be interpreted” (Marsh 2004, p. 24). The film clip can be put alongside the biblical text, for example.

(2) The second possibility would be to use the film in the worship as a liturgical enhancement. Parts of films could be used to amplify certain parts of the liturgy. A scene from the film about the prisoners of Carandiru could be combined with the confession of sins, or the Kyrie eleison. The scene of the Eucharist celebrated by the political prisoners of the dictatorship in the film Batismo de Sangue could be combined with the Eucharistic prayer. “The point is not to offer filmic material as commentary upon what is happening at a particular point in a service, but to allow film to facilitate the liturgical activity being engaged in at that point” (Marsh 2004, p. 26).

(3) The third possibility is to use film in the worship service for mood-setting. “It could equally be called ‘preparation for worship’, although mood-setting is not confined to what happens prior to worship. The mood of worship can be set at various points throughout a service” (Marsh 2004, p. 26). Music, images, and film scenes can be used before or during
the worship. The author also orientates on how to use the filmic resources with care, both with regard to the essence of the Christian worship service, as well as to the film itself as a work of art.

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**References**


