

## REIMAGINING THE NATION: IDENTITY AND BELONGING IN *CENTRAL DO BRASIL*

### REIMAGINANDO A NAÇÃO: IDENTIDADE E PERTENCIMENTO EM *CENTRAL DO BRASIL*

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**Abstract:** This article examines Walter Salles' *Central do Brasil* (1998) as an allegory of Brazil's search for national identity. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities (1983), the analysis explores how the film constructs an image of Brazil through its portrayal of displacement, belonging, and the rediscovery of collective roots. The narrative of Dora and Josué — two characters whose physical and emotional journeys mirror the nation's own trajectory of loss and recovery — reflects a symbolic process of re-identification after decades of political and cultural fragmentation. Through its juxtaposition of the chaotic urban setting and the spiritualized rural landscape, *Central do Brasil* reimagines the nation as a shared emotional space rather than a fixed geographic or political entity. The article argues that Salles' film reaffirms cinema's role as a medium of national self-recognition, projecting a vision of Brazil as both fractured and united by its search for meaning, belonging, and humanity.

**Keywords:** Nation. National Identity. Brazilian Film. *Cinema de Retomada*. *Central do Brasil*.

**Resumo:** Este artigo analisa o filme *Central do Brasil* (1998), de Walter Salles, como uma alegoria da busca brasileira por identidade nacional. Com base no conceito de *comunidades imaginadas* (1983), de Benedict Anderson, a análise investiga como o filme constrói uma imagem do Brasil por meio da representação do deslocamento, do pertencimento e da redescoberta das raízes coletivas. A jornada de Dora e Josué — personagens cujos percursos físico e emocional refletem a trajetória da nação em direção à recuperação de si mesma — simboliza um processo de reidentificação após décadas de fragmentação política e cultural. Ao contrapor o espaço urbano caótico ao Sertão espiritualizado, *Central do Brasil* reinscreve a nação não como entidade geográfica ou política fixa, mas como um espaço emocional compartilhado. Argumenta-se que o filme reafirma o papel do cinema como meio de autorreconhecimento nacional, projetando uma visão do Brasil simultaneamente fragmentado e unido por sua busca de sentido, pertencimento e humanidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Nação. Identidade Nacional. Filme Brasileiro. Cinema de Retomada. *Central do Brasil*.



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## INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The discussion surrounding the representation of cultural identity in Brazilian cinema has been a long-standing debate, the origins of which date back to the *Cinema Novo* era. National production often reflects the dual aspiration of achieving international recognition and forging a cinematic language identified with the nation. Walter Salles' 1998 film *Central do Brasil* inserts itself into this tradition by revisiting the search for an identity, metaphorized through the protagonist's journey to find his lost father. Based on this premise, this article proposes to investigate the extent to which the film's narrative can be read as an allegory of national identity, by analyzing how the concept of identity is constructed within the work.

## 1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Identity is a word of Latin origin (*identitas*) that designates the set of traits of an individual or a community. These characteristics distinguish the individual of others. The identity is also linked to the consciousness that a person has of itself. National identity, in turn, is a social, cultural and spatial concept that summarizes a set of feelings, which make an individual feel part of a society or nation. These are characteristics which are related to political surroundings since, in general, nations are associated with a state formed by its population. The identity of a country is very important for its cultural characterization and representation worldwide, as states Coimbra (2006, p. 1).

### 1.1 Nation and the Imagined Community

Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), defines the nation as an imagined political community — imagined because “[...] the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. In this sense, national identity is not a natural essence, but a collective fiction continuously reinforced by cultural narratives and shared symbols.

Cinema, like literature, plays a central role in this process by producing and disseminating images that enable citizens to “imagine” themselves as part of a community. The visual and emotional language of film provides a medium through which national belonging can be felt, even when not rationally defined.

Analyzing the national image spread by Brazilian cinema is a way of reflecting on the representations that viewers can build about Brazil, a country of various backgrounds, ethnicities, genders and classes. Such identity consists of various cultural aspects and social values, such as: ethnic, linguistic, religious, social, cultural, political and economic. Art is a factor of great importance to the built a social identity, however, as stated by Nagib (2003, p. xvii), in Brazilian cinema there is still a search for recognition, a language of its own and an identification with the country.

In the case of Brazilian cinema, *Central do Brasil* functions as one such “imagined mirror”, where the personal journeys of its protagonists embody a collective search for meaning and unity. By connecting Anderson’s theory to Stuart Hall’s reflections on identity as a production — never complete, always in process — the film can be read as a narrative of becoming rather than being. The road travelled by Dora and Josué symbolizes the dynamic, unfinished movement of Brazilian identity itself: constantly negotiating between the modern and the traditional, the local and the universal. Thus, *Central do Brasil* has fulfilled what the former Minister of Culture, Gilberto Gil, defines as the goal of national cinema:

A Cinema that reflects the size of Brazil’s culture, economy and territory. A visual expression that reflects and energizes the consciousness and their national sovereignty, to submit with its own light, for Brazilians and for the world, their way of being Brazilian. (Gil, 2004)<sup>2</sup>.

## 1.2 Brazilian Cinema: Historical Aspects

Brazilian cinema reached a remarkable peak in the 1960s with the *Cinema Novo* movement, which sought to portray the country’s social and political realities. Glauber Rocha’s famous slogan — “[...] a camera in the hand and an idea in the head” — encapsulated the movement’s commitment to an authentic and critical representation of Brazil. The filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s explored new aesthetic and ideological perspectives, aiming to offer

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<sup>2</sup> The quote presented is by Gilberto Gil and was published in an article he wrote for *Folha de S. Paulo* in August 2004, when he held the position of Minister of Culture. The text, entitled “Audiovisual, a strategic industry”, discussed the importance of cinema and the audiovisual sector for the cultural and economic development of the country.

alternative interpretations of Brazilian society. Yet, despite its revolutionary ambitions, *Cinema Novo* ultimately became marked by the pursuit of a utopian myth of national foundation, according to scholar Wolney (2012, p. 15).

Brazilian national film production endured significant challenges, first during the twenty-year military dictatorship (1964-1985) and later under President Fernando Collor. Collor, the first president elected by direct popular vote after the regime, was later impeached on corruption charges. This period marked a profound crisis for the industry, with scholar Lúcia Nagib noting that “The first two years of the 1990s were certainly among the worst in Brazilian film history” (xvii). The dissolution of Embrafilme, a state agency that had previously provided essential funding, brought production to a near standstill. A pivotal shift occurred only after Collor’s impeachment, with the subsequent government enacting the Lei do Audiovisual (Audiovisual Law)<sup>3</sup>, a legislative measure designed to revitalize and support national film production.

This new stage, called *Cinema de Retomada* represents the recovery of film productions in Brazil in early nineties. This chapter of the Brazilian film history has generated high-impact movies such as *Central do Brasil* and *Cidade de Deus*, and is characterized by the resumption of violent scenes. The films, even when dealing with scenarios like the hinterland or slums, develop a melodramatic narrative. In some cases, poverty and violence are transformed into mere entertainment and among its great features is the dispute with the international market.

*Cinema de Retomada* symbolizes an important rediscovery for the homeland that had long been lost, worn by the atrocities of the military dictatorship and the scandals involving Fernando Collor’s administration, conveying a feeling of freedom that had been repressed for years. It also brought back some of the themes from *Cinema Novo* and produced films with more prominent Hollywood visual effects, setting the violent and harsh Brazilian reality as scenery. According to Luiz Zanin Oricchio (2003), a renowned Brazilian film critic, *Central Station* “[...] heralds a return to the great tradition of *Cinema Novo*, that in the 1960s was concerned with documenting a country that had not yet been discovered, at a time, unlike now, when Brazil was still relatively lacking in visual representations of itself”. (p. 150).

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<sup>3</sup> The Audiovisual Law (Lei 8.685/93) is a 1993 Brazilian law that created tax incentives to foster the audiovisual industry by allowing individuals and corporations to invest in productions like films and series. This investment encouraged funding for various audiovisual projects, including production, distribution, and exhibition. The law also included mechanisms for international co-production and was overseen by the National Agency for Cinema (Ancine).

## 2 RESULTADOS E DISCUSSÃO

### 2.1 Walter Salles' Cinematography, a Modern Portrayal of Brazil

Walter Salles (Cf. Image 1), who emerged during the period of *Retomada* of Brazilian Cinema, presents a work with unique characteristics and values the national identification during this recent period of Brazilian national cinema, standing out in the world cinema, on which he earned notoriety and respect as a national and international exponent of contemporary cinema. His work presents portraits of Brazil and there are some common themes always revisited in his films in different ways, such as: the chance of discovery and a new beginning and the discussion on issues related to Brazilian roots. Such themes are portrayed in *Terra Estrangeira* (1995), *Central do Brasil* (1998) and *Abril Despedaçado* (2001).

IMAGE 1 — Walter Salles



Source: <https://realtime1.com.br/cineasta-mais-rico-do-mundo-e-um-dos-socios-da-eneva-que-investe-no-am/>  
(Nov. 19, 2025)



Another remarkable feature in Salles' work is his belief in road movies and the impact that roads have on the transformation and the journey of the characters and people. The road movies are a common point in his films, the characters' confrontation with the new and the dislocation allows this confrontation that brings the possibility of recommencement, motif presented in most of his movies *Motorcycle Diaries* (2004) and *On the road* (2012).

Walter Salles's *Central do Brasil* (*Central Station*, 1998) stands as one of the most significant and award-winning productions in contemporary Brazilian cinema. More than two decades later, Salles once again captured international attention when his film *I'm Still Here* (2024) received an Academy Award nomination for Best Picture and won the Oscar for Best International Feature (Cf. Image 2):

In 1998 *Central Station* received the Golden Globe in Berlin, achieving enormous success in Brazil launching the country back on the international scene after an absence that had lasted since the glorious days of Cinema novo in the 1960s. (Nagib, 2003, p.xviii).

IMAGE 2 — *Central do Brasil* and *I'm Still Here*, by Walter Salles



Source: <https://encurtador.com.br/Topl>  
(Nov. 19, 2025)

## 2.2 *Central do Brasil* — The Portrayal of a Lost Nation

*Central do Brasil* (Cf. Image 3) portrays the nation through the physical and emotional journey undertaken by Dora and Josué. Salles masterfully orchestrates elements such as soundtrack, movement, and the interplay between actors and environment, grounding the film in a palpable social reality. The characters embody the despair of displacement — being uprooted from their familiar worlds and forced to navigate an existence suspended in both time and space. Life, as depicted in the film, unfolds with tension, uncertainty, and quiet endurance. This dramatic portrayal of human survival is meticulously crafted, alternating between moments of rapid motion and lingering stillness that amplify the emotional resonance of the narrative. Pain and suffering are ever-present, yet beneath them lies an enduring drive for survival and the pursuit of happiness — a symbolic return to the world the characters once belonged to, or perhaps, to a world they continue to imagine.

IMAGE 3 — The Film's Poster



Source: <https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obras/123419-central-do-brasil>  
 (Nov. 19, 2025)

The plot in *Central do Brasil* revolves around the story of a boy in search of the father he never met, and this quest leads to a deep emotional reflection about the importance of family ties. Moreover, it depicts the anguish caused by the absence of a father. When Josué wants to find his father and, later, when Dora remembers her own father, who had long been lost in her memories, the importance of a father's figure is highlighted.

This search is constantly interpreted as an important symbol of the need for Brazil to seek its roots, probably as a reflection of its political memory to define the lost concept of homeland, the vacuum left for the lack of a father, this sense of orphanhood which brings prospects of an uncertain future lived by Brazilians who were seeking one exit to the national crisis was symbolic the path that the main characters crossed in the movie. "Cinema in Brazil has undergone a process of 'resensitization'" — an expression used by Walter Salles to define the experience of *Central do Brasil*'s main character. "This process", — he explains, is to an extent the reunion of the father and the nation. "It's a way of understanding Brazil", as mentioned by Nagib (2003, p. XXV).

Central of Brazil refers to Rio de Janeiro's old railway linking major cities to the center of the country, it is believed that the movie title was intentionally chosen since the train station is symbolically established as a central core, the railway-center of the country, where people from all over Brazil can be found. Its trains carry people anywhere and everywhere; it is the place where millions of people come and go every day forging their own sagas.

The millions of bodies walking in the station introduced in the first moments of the movie represent the people with their destiny not yet determined, the Brazilian people independent where they from, who struggle every day to survive and live their lives in search of a better future is a symbol for how the country was at the period in time, a whole population searching a path to follow, a destination to reach. The production's title reinforces this idea: "[...] a boy in search of his father, a woman in search of her feelings, a country in search of its roots". People are looking for their origins to be able to find their fate.

The film depicts different types of people, from all parts of Brazil and cultures of all kinds coming in search of a better life. The scenes that follow the moment when Dora offers to take Josué to the countryside to find his father show the beauty of the backlands in contrast to the depressing background of the big city. The Northeast in the film is portrayed as a beautiful place where the characters are able find themselves while undergoing a kind of spiritual journey.



The value given to the origins is essential to define each character, once Josué comes back to his birthplace to discover who he is, similarly, Dora does the same journey in a spiritual way, remembering her childhood moments and being able to change the woman she became into a better person. The movie's recommendation is that Brazilians take a trip back to their essence to realize the importance of the country as a whole. According to Walter Salles, the film tells not only the story of Dora and Josué, but the story of all Brazilians, a nation in search of its roots.

Like *Cinema Novo*, which turned their lenses to the Northeast to seek those figures mythical founders of Brazil, Salles also went to Northeast searching the same answers, or better, he went in search of a possible solution for the process of “disidentification” the country was going through during those times. The films of the period seek a national identity, as well as the *Cinema Novo*, but do not present a concrete proposal, there is a possible link between the two periods, which are the use of terms in common, as “Sertão”, “favela” and “pobreza”. According to Orrichio, “The *Sertão* in *Central do Brasil* is essentially a place for reconciliation and acts as a source of healing for a nation in need”. (Orrichio, 2003, p. 153).

Nevertheless, Celia Tolentino defends that the recurring idea that national identity is authentic only in the rural Northeast is an old fashioned and almost an unbearable theme in Brazilian cinema: “Por que ainda queremos encontrar o verdadeiro Brasil e o povo brasileiro num suposto outro, nunca aquele que fala?”. (2000, p. 2). According to her, *Central do Brasil* proposes a return to rural roots. In the backlands, Brazilians are introduced with great dignity and collectivism, unlike urban characters which are usually depicted as self-centered and individualistic. It suggests that city people would never represent anything but themselves, idea that clearly bears a concept of prejudice:

At first glance, the film tries to convince us that migrants from Brazil come to town and get lost in the chaos of the city. And, then, it is necessary to lead them back to their homeland to rescue their identity, collectivism, hope, and beliefs. A speech full of romanticism and pre-judgments [...]. (Tolentino, 2000, p. 3).

One can argue that, in a country like Brazil, rescuing the backland community, its bonds of loyalty, mutual dependence, and mystical faith is a way of trying to compensate the need to recover some collectivism. This comes in contrast to the violence and loneliness brought by Brazilian modernization, as shown in the urban part of *Central do Brasil*. The difference in portraying both settings, which may be a way to super value some things in contrast to others. It is something not considered to be fair once a nation is made not only of people from a specific

region, however, it is an association, a little from each part that makes the whole. The way Rio de Janeiro is portrayed in the movie is deliberate, the lack of color in the big city symbolizes the harshness, loneliness and despair lived by the main characters while in that setting. However, according to Coutinho, regardless of an individual origin, that person will always find difficulties which are inherent to humankind:

O homem é visto em conflito ou tragado pela terra e seus elementos, uma terra hostil, violenta, superior a suas forças. Esse meio tanto pode ser as áreas rurais e campesinas, como as cidades, grandes centros urbanos, zonas suburbanas ou pequenos aglomerados, as primeiras manipulando os típicos locais, as últimas os cenários urbanos, ambas ressaltam a pequenez do homem em relação aos problemas que o homem lhe impõe<sup>4</sup>. (Coutinho, 2005, p. 264).

Josué's return towards the old, central Brazil, where the boy meets and sees his family and feels happy at home is in the countryside of Brazil, not in the urban and modern center that the bonds of belonging and identity are redone. Just as *Cinema Novo* turned its lens to the Northeast to seek those mythical founding figures of the nation, Salles also went to the Northeast after the same answers:

*Central do Brasil* quer, com isso, se apropriar duplamente desta terra que se tornou estrangeira: o espaço físico, geográfico do País, e o eu de cada pessoa. A peregrinação que se inicia é a marca do herói em busca de si mesmo. Da cidade cinza e cruel, mostrada sempre em enquadramentos enclausurantes, asfixiantes, passa-se para espaços de campo aberto, verdes e ensolarados<sup>5</sup>. (Faria, 1999, p. 8).

One of the apparent changes caused by the journey of Josué and Dora lies in the fact that both shop for new clothes in the many stops they make. The first of these exchanges is a white shirt, a symbol of purity, but also the new, untouched, what is ready to be filled with new meanings. The white shirt combines the fate of the two characters, who became both maternal orphans at the same age and the father is an unknown figure to them. Dora had long lost hope of having a family, however, as time goes on, she can remake her ties of belonging and identity.

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<sup>4</sup> Translation: "Man is seen as being in conflict with, or being swallowed up by the Earth and its elements — a hostile, violent Earth, superior to his own strength. This environment can be rural and peasant areas, as well as cities, large urban centers, suburban zones, or small settlements; the former manipulating local characteristics, the latter urban settings—both highlighting man's insignificance in relation to the problems that man imposes upon him".

<sup>5</sup> Translation: "Central do Brasil, through this, seeks to appropriate this land that has become foreign in two ways: the physical, geographical space of the country, and the self of each person. The pilgrimage that begins is the mark of the hero in search of himself. From the gray and cruel city, always shown in confining, suffocating framing, the film moves to open, green, and sunny countryside".

Josué, as a child, embodies the quest to reclaim his personal history and belonging by seeking out his remaining family in the northeastern backlands. His journey illustrates how an individual can come to represent an entire community, carrying within him the specific cultural markers of that place. This aligns with Stuart Hall's conceptualization of identity as a discursive construct, "[...] a discourse consisting of meaning with which it is possible for individuals to identify themselves or not". (1992, p. 50). Hall, drawing on Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as an "imagined community", argues that national identity is built through shared stories, memories, and images, which are often legitimized by hegemonic institutions. This unified whole is frequently symbolized and made comprehensible through the figure of a representative individual, much like Josué himself.

Dora, who worked writing letters to illiterate people at a train station, falsely promised several of her customers that she would mail their letters to these people's loved ones. She used her knowledge to act as a judge, or even as God, choosing which letter would reach its destination. This is the situation of many poor people that, either by ignorance or by fear, need someone to speak for them, lacking the power to be heard, always depending on someone else voice their needs. It shows a relationship of continuous dependency, considered also at a political level in Brazil, a clear symbol of the lack of reliable political representatives in the country. It also exposes the situation of financial and cultural marginalization of a group of people, the illiterates, that are left in the hands of unscrupulous individuals like Dora, who interfere in people's lives simply because they have access to power. Possibly this situation was intentionally portrayed in the movie to awake viewers to their duty as citizens in the Brazilian society, they should assume an active role and not act as the politically illiterate defined by Bertold Brecht<sup>6</sup>:

The worst illiterate is the political illiterate, he doesn't hear, doesn't speak, nor participates in the political events. He doesn't know the cost of life, the price of the bean, of the fish, of the flour, of the rent, of the shoes and of the medicine, all depends on political decisions. The political illiterate is so stupid that he is proud and swells his chest saying that he hates politics. The imbecile doesn't know that, from his political ignorance is born the prostitute, the abandoned child, and the worst thieves of all, the bad politician, corrupted and flunky of the national and multinational companies.

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<sup>6</sup> The famous "political illiterate" quote is not from a book but is a widely circulated statement attributed to the playwright Bertolt Brecht. It highlights the dangers of political ignorance by arguing that those who ignore politics are unaware that their daily lives are deeply affected by political decisions.

Religion is explored in impressive detail in this film. There is a significant relationship between the names of Josué's relatives, namely, Ana, Jesus, Moisés, Josué, and Isaías, which are essential to create a metaphor for the journey of people in search for an identity. Society is not part of the material culture and within that human enterprise, religion occupies a prominent place, as it establishes a sacred cosmos, assigning a latter meaning to society, putting the existence in order.

Furthermore, the film goes in search of Jesus, Josué's father, which has a meaningful religious and traditional value. It represents the belief that there is something greater, which drives a person to the future and probably a symbol for how the country needs to have "faith" in a better future. Salles also purposely names Josué's father "Jesus", implying that if the character Jesus represents God, his absence suggests God's nonexistence. Even though at the end of the film, Dora tells Josué that "You're right. Your father will come back", because she perhaps realizes that God was never absent and that she just had to see her immoral actions were "redeemed" through faith.

The social function assigned to the family is to transmit the values that constitute the culture, superior values and behaviors. The film emphasizes the importance that a family represents for an individual, the unit which builds up a person's personality. This became even more evident when Josué lost his mother in a terrible accident and decided to find his father and brothers. The two central figures in the film — Dora and Josué — who are victims of traumatic events, both related to father absence, each in its own way, walk together to an outcome that restores their characters a certain dignity and a reunion with these lost familiar values and, consequently, with the fullness of the human condition. Despite the differences between the characters and the conflicts experienced by them, there was a great bond of friendship and reciprocity, which each character accomplished in searching for a more significant meaning to life.

Josué was reunited with his family, two brothers equally orphans, but who have a home, job, friends and ties of belonging. The village is under construction and has a suggestive name, Bom Jesus, where Josué's brothers live, is a symbol of reconstruction of a new country, remade from the inside out. A new beginning for Josué, which now symbolizes the new, but for Dora, the old who earns new colors.

The *Sertão* found by the characters is arid, but cozy. With this, Walter Salles does not end the drama of the duo but announces the continued search with the final song in the movie, *Preciso me encontrar* (I need to find myself). The song leaves the message that one must have

the freedom to search for something bigger, better; a hope in life despite its hardships. One must try to find reasons to laugh despite life's hardships to be able to succeed, to progress:

Deixe-me ir  
Preciso andar  
Vou aí a procurar  
sorrir pra não chorar<sup>7</sup> (Cartola, 1976).

According to Alexandre Faria “[...] the reason for the trip is commonly associated with the discourse wishing to discover or find the Brazilian national identity”. Trips of this kind are associated to the rediscovering of many Brazils, along with the trajectory of the national culture.

“Preciso me encontrar” de Cartola e Elton Medeiros, ao final de *Central do Brasil* mostra que a viagem não tem mais o risco de não ter volta, mas é, por definição, um retorno: à terra natal da mãe, à terra dos descobridores da própria pátria. (Faria, 1999, p. 5)<sup>8</sup>.

The feeling of nationality links individuals to the homeland, thereby making a feeling fairly complex and sometimes elusive, marked by closeness and identification with a nation, more precisely with the ideological point of view. The issue of nationalism is directly connected to identity. In general, as a critic of the work it reveals the thinking of the Brazilian man of the twentieth century formed by the assimilation of the existent cultures. The process of *Retomada* of Brazilian cinema is still evolving as well as the process of self-identification of Brazilians with their country. Similarly, the film suggests a rediscovery of identity of the characters, suggesting that the peregrination to the countryside of Brazil serves as a tool to open the eyes of the citizens to the world around them and both government and society are therefore better prepared today to face the challenge of building a strong nation and consequently a stronger national film production, as stated by Nagib:

The country understands, more every day, how important it is for us to look at ourselves in a “cinematic mirror”. We realize that we need that fundamental function of self-identification which is made possible by the projection of our common experiences on a screen, to understand each other better and to define with more clarity what we want for ourselves in the new millennium. (2003, p. 5).

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<sup>7</sup> Translation: Let me go / I need to walk / I'll go there to search/ smile not to cry.

<sup>8</sup> Translation: “I Need to Find Myself”, by Cartola and Elton Medeiros, at the end of *Central Station*, shows that the journey no longer carries the risk of no return, but is, by definition, a return: to the mother's homeland, to the land of the discoverers of their own nation.



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Adriana Telles suggests in the article *Central do Brasil como interpretação do país* that (p. 2) if the concept of national identity could be condensed into a two-hour narrative, the movie *Central do Brasil* would be a prime candidate to symbolize it. This is not only due to the story's content or the visual contrast between the chaotic urban setting and the desolate hinterland, but also, and perhaps more importantly, its interpretive framework. The author posits that “*Central do Brasil* would thus be a vision of Brazilianess, the image of a certain Brazil”. (2006, p. 2). Beyond the film's explicit intentions, Brazil is represented through the physiognomy of its characters: tired, weathered, and aged, yet persistently hopeful.

The film, therefore, effectively showcases diverse facets of Brazilian society. Its setting in the late 1990s captures a specific moment that continues to resonate, reflecting a societal essence that appears virtually immutable, resistant to the passage of time and global modernization. This aligns with Stuart Hall's assertion that national culture seeks to unify disparate members across class, gender, or race into a single cultural identity, representing them “[...] as belonging to the same family and nation”. (1992, p. 53). For these reasons, *Central do Brasil* can indeed be regarded as a potent representation of Brazilian cultural identity.

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