Introduction

In *Pirinop, meu primeiro contato* (*Pirinop, My First Contact*, 2007), directed by Mari Corrêa and Karané Ikpeng, a village of indigenous Ikpeng people are seen watching images of their first contact in 1964, starting with aerial shots taken by the filmmaker who accompanied Orlando Villas-Bôas’s contact expedition. The original contact footage, taken by the documentarian Jesco Von Puttkamer, is accompanied by a voiceover that renders the Ikpeng as exotic: “This is an expedition that will try to contact a completely unknown tribe,” the narrator states. The encounter between the Ikpeng and the footage of the contact is a catalyst that provokes the village to discuss and narrate several episodes of their recent history from their own point of view, including this first contact and their subsequent exile from their homeland on the shores of the Jatobá River. In 1967, the Villas Bôas brothers relocated the group to the recently created Parque Indígena do Xingu. Done ostensibly to save the few dozen remaining Ikpeng from extinction due to epidemic diseases, war with neighboring indigenous groups, and the rapid encroachment of hostile miners into their territory, the group’s relocation is a lasting source of regret for the village elders, who are consumed with the idea that they could still fight for and return to their original lands. In part compelled by their viewing of the contact footage, this Ikpeng community performs several reenactments through which they corporeally and collectively remember their history. These reenactments are recorded and screened for the entire village, inspiring further reflections and reenactments in a feedback loop that links the archival record with the living present. *Pirinop* deals with returns to and returns of the past in ways that help the Ikpeng understand their present and look toward their future.

Though in many ways a unique film grounded in Ikpeng history and experience, the manner in which *Pirinop* mobilizes audiovisual records in conjunction with other forms of remembering, putting in motion mediations and re-embodiments of memory that use documentary filmmaking as their enabling medium, is relatable to a wide array of documentary films in
contemporary Brazil. It finds clear echoes in videos being made today with and by various indigenous groups that are taking guardianship of the records of their past (increasingly stored in their own cultural centers and archives) and taking control of the construction of their own audiovisual image. *Pirinop*'s engagement with archives also resonates with documentaries from seemingly disparate settings and contexts, such as films dealing with the urban spaces and marginalized perspectives in Brazil's highly segregated cities; films that delve into the disjunctions between law and justice that tear at the frail fabric of the Brazilian republic; and works that dwell on private and familial life in ways that alter the boundaries between what is intimate and personal and what is socially and historically significant and belongs in the public record. Despite constituting the most prolific period of documentary output in Brazilian history, this recent body of work remains understudied, especially outside Brazil. This book is an effort to remedy this gap in the critical literature by examining a representative sample of films from this vibrant field and providing an interpretive approach that illuminates a broad constellation of films and filmmaking practices. This approach focuses on the ways in which the documentary interacts with multiple ideas of the archive during a historic period in which both Brazilian society and Brazilian documentary filmmaking have been undergoing related processes and efforts at transformation and democratization. This book engages not only with Brazilian films and with the field of film studies but also with theories of the archive that have emerged in recent decades from across the disciplines of the humanities—thus placing the films into a broader context of critical reception and legibility.

Contemporary documentary production can be loosely mapped onto the history of Brazil's democratization, which began in 1985 after twenty years of military dictatorship, and is exemplified by the ratification of the country's most progressive constitution in 1988, the ascension of the Workers' Party to the presidency in 2003, a significant reduction in poverty especially during the Lula da Silva presidency, and the increased participation in the public sphere of segments of society that had been historically marginalized. These were much-needed gains for a society that, despite its ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity, was and remains one of the most unequal in the world. This period of democratic progress has arguably come to an end with Brazil's current political and economic crises, the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016, the implementation of drastic austerity measures by President Michel Temer, and the alarming reversal of the social gains of the previous years—though it is too soon to ascertain the full impact of these unfolding events. Be that as it may, innovative documentary films emerged around the time of Brazil's transition to democracy, as illustrated by works by Vladimir Carvalho, Vincent Carelli, Lúcia Murat, and Eduardo Coutinho—directors who will be discussed in this book alongside a younger generation of filmmakers. From the 1990s onward, and especially in the new millennium, Brazilian documentary grew
dramatically in both volume and quality of production, with an unprecedented number of innovative feature-length films. This surge in production reflects similar trends in other parts of the world, which have also experienced documentary booms and the consolidation of documentary film studies as an academic subfield. Echoing broader international trends but taking on a specific local manifestation, the expansion of the documentary in post-1990s Brazil was made possible by several factors, such as the implementation of public funding laws for cinema (particularly the 1993 Lei do Audiovisual, which makes private investments in cinema tax deductible); the emergence of relatively affordable digital technologies; the recognition of the documentary genre as an important form of audiovisual expression on a par with fiction; and the emergence of a documentary culture that includes film festivals, receptive audiences, specialized publications and blogs, and the increased professionalization of filmmakers dedicated to documentary. Brazilian documentaries circulate in mainstream movie theaters, on both public and cable television, in art galleries and museums, and on internet streaming platforms such as Vimeo, YouTube, Amazon, and Netflix. In recent years, about a third of all national films released in theaters were documentaries.

Despite this increase in production and visibility, though, the documentary is far from a mainstream cultural form. It is worth noting that even with this increased viewership, the documentary-viewing public remains too small to allow production to thrive without the continued support of the state. This is true for Brazilian fiction films as well, however; inadequate distribution of national films has been a constant problem for Brazilian cinema. Its dependence on the state condemns Brazilian film production to cycles of booms and bust tied to the increase or decrease in governmental support. I would suggest, however, that the documentary’s relative marginality and the resulting fact that it is not entirely bound by market logic offers it a degree of freedom to experiment with forms, dramaturgies, topics, temporalities, and modes of production sharply distinct from the mainstream. As a niche in Brazil’s audiovisual culture, the documentary is a publicly supported space of artistic expression and critical reflection. In some ways, the documentary can be seen as part of an elite culture holding little appeal for the popular classes. Yet, as the examples discussed in this book will demonstrate, the documentary of this period also has become an increasingly inclusive and diverse field that serves as both a platform to reflect on and a tool to intervene in situations marked by asymmetrical distributions of power and pending social justice.

The struggles for the transformation of Brazilian society and of filmmaking coalesce and become entangled in this cinema’s preoccupation with a variety of archives and with the very idea of archivization. Historically linked to the exercise and maintenance of power, the archive is a critical concept in processes of democratization, increased participation, and justice. As memory studies scholar Aleida Assmann puts it, “Archives always belonged
to institutions of power: the church, the state, the police, the law, etc.”9 In modern Europe, notes Carolyn Steedman, archives were created in order to memorialize and legitimize monarchical and, later, state power.10 During the nineteenth century, archives became sites for the production of history—though we know that neither these sources nor the narratives produced from them were neutral. Archives not only preserve but also destroy memory by choosing what to store and what to disregard and whose history matters. Processes of democratization and decolonization invariably involve access to archives as well as confrontations with all that those archives exclude, such as marginalized histories and points of view. In cultural theory, the “archive” not only refers to physical sites wherein documents are stored (the source of knowledge for historians, as Ann Laura Stoler notes) but has also become a means for thinking about the intersection between memory, forms of representation, and power.11 Claude Levi-Strauss, inspired by his encounter with the Nambikwara Indians in Brazil during the 1930s, characterized writing not just as an instrument for the organization of memory and knowledge but as a tool for the enslavement of humanity. Writing (and the records it produces) allows for the formation of cities and empires, “that is, the integration of large numbers of individuals into a political system, and their grading into castes and classes.”12 Also linking archive and power, Michel Foucault argued that archives are not just repositories of documents but a discursive system that establishes the possibilities of enunciation. “The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events,” he writes. Others, like Roberto González Echevarría, have emphasized the term’s etymological origins—from the Latin archivum or the Greek arkhe, meaning to command or govern, as well as denoting the residence of the magistrate.13 The archive, then, is the place of power and the place of memory. It is the source and guarantor of authority and the law. In his influential Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression, Jacques Derrida argues that the archive is inextricable from questions of both origins and power—and the interchangeability of the two, as in the power of origins and the origins of power; two aspects that become enmeshed in the establishment of the law (represented in the origins of the term archive as the house of the magistrate and also the place where foundational documents were kept). Derrida also states, however, that “nothing is less clear today than the word ‘archive.”14 The term’s imprecision was born from myriad changes and events, including processes of decolonization and democratization that bring with them revisionist approaches to archives and to the past, more permeable borders between the spheres of public and private life, and the rise of new technologies that alter the ways in which records are made, stored, and accessed—ways that far transcend the traditional domain of print-based archives.

The archive is also a useful concept for thinking about documentary filmmaking as a cultural practice that produces lasting records of the historic
present, repurposes archival materials, and has a deeply rooted relationship with the idea of the document—the principal concern of the archive and a term laden with authoritative connotations of proof, record, and evidence. With roots in the ethnographic imaginary (represented, for instance, by Robert Flaherty’s 1922 film *Nanook of the North*, often classified as the first documentary), the documentary has a recurring preoccupation with collecting the inscriptions of society’s others, although this practice becomes increasingly troubled and self-critical, as we will see in concrete examples throughout this book. Documentaries are always archival documents of sorts, records of the near or distant past that can serve as supports for cultural memory long after a film’s production. They can be stored and forgotten for long periods of time only to be discovered anew later when they can gain meaning and significance sometimes unsuspected at the time they were created. Documentaries are also storehouses of discrete audiovisual records, shots or photographs of fleeting events and occurrences—materials that are most likely to be preserved if they are included in a film. Assembled into a narrative or meaning-producing structure within a film, individual shots can be disassembled later and appropriated to new uses and arrangements like any archival content. Outtakes not included in the final cut tend to end up on a waste pile and consigned to oblivion. In a sense, the outtakes of a film constitute its repressed or secret archive, the raw material from which the images used are selected and to which the viewer is not granted access. From this perspective, each cut is a seam that points to the relation between the visible and the invisible, between what is preserved and displayed and what is effaced or hidden away. Cuts are interstices that point to lacunae, to what is missing, and at the same time evoke a virtual, unseen archive—what filmmaker João Moreira Salles calls “the secrets of the film” and media theorist Damiela Torlasco describes as the invisible fold pointing to a virtual archive or an archive of the virtual.

Although the archive can always serve a heuristic function for thinking about documentary practices, in the Brazilian case, comparative thinking is also warranted by the contexts of the films’ production (in which disputes over participation and power are often at stake) and by the way in which documentaries themselves persistently evoke, represent, reflect on, and rework a variety of archives and archive-related mnemonic concepts and ideas. Official archives are visited in films that explore the differences between the memories of marginalized people and the official records of the state. This audiovisual incorporation of the archive goes beyond repositories of documents and includes a variety of other records accumulated from diverse sources—ranging from museums and indigenous cultural centers to family albums and home movies, from recorded testimonies of the least authoritative social subjects to corporeal marks and scars that are read as the inscription of history upon human bodies, living documents of sorts. Some filmmakers are keenly aware of their role as archons of the audiovisual, authoritative magistrates
who determine what will be remembered and what will not, opening up a passageway from the visible phenomenal world, always subject to change and inhering in the temporality of duration in the present, to the durable and fixed record of film. As with any archival practice, the making of documentaries involves decisions about what to record and what not to record, what to reveal and what to hide, what to place at the center and what to relegate to the background or margins of the audiovisual record—decisions whose importance hinges on the fact that filmmakers and filmed subjects meet on uneven ground. The recognition of this power asymmetry can lead to innovative forms of production (emphasizing forms of collaboration and the inclusion of a plurality of subject positions and points of view) and to reflexive meditations on and experimentations with documentary form. More importantly, though, archival awareness results in films that explore and reconfigure the borders between centers and margins, visibilities and invisibilities, silences and speech, forms of authority and of resistance. As Jonathan Kahana notes, the documentary is by nature a transitional medium—in that it carries fragments of social reality from one place and time to another. The documentaries featured in this book are transitional in Kahana’s sense but also decidedly liminal, located on multiple social, medial, and sensorial borders, functioning in zones of contact and passage.

Film studies has engaged with archives mostly from the perspective of the preservation, restoration, and digitization of audiovisual images—topics that are the concern of professional archivists. This is not the preoccupation of this book, which favors instead the analysis of works that, through the filmic medium, think about and experiment with archive-related questions. In documentary film analysis, the archive is usually evoked to refer to the repurposing of audiovisual materials from the past, materials that are called “found” or “archival” footage. This is an important dimension of the relationship between documentary and archive. The incorporation of found footage points to the preservation of images across time and to an audiovisual archive understood not as a unified collection gathered in a single location but as a dispersed body of work, preserved in actual and virtual storage sites, that documentaries can put back into circulation (these films themselves becoming part of that database afterward, available for reuse in the future). The documentary, then, draws from the archive so as to bring what is stored back to light while also working with the possibility of resignification through montage, “dislocating images from their original legibility to construct new modes of perception and intelligibility.” Such repurposing of footage produces “archive effects,” Jamie Baron’s term for the viewer’s experience of having a confrontation with history provoked by the disparities of temporal origin and authorial intention, residues of difference that are brought into the filmic text by the repurposed images. The passage of time is often inscribed in the footage itself—as in the markers of technological change that distinguish different periods or in the condition and
wear-and-tear of the print. Archival footage can also provoke feelings of loss—as in the awareness that the people and places we see preserved in their perfect likeness may no longer exist. The potential of archival footage to generate such a variety of impressions reflects the mixed hopes and intentions that inhere in every act of preservation. Archives are partly turned toward the past and instigate and allow returns to sources and origins—like the return to the historicity of a patina-covered image or to a paradigmatic moment in history or in one’s biographical life. On the other hand, archivization is always a wager about the future—a wager that what is saved will someday be reused. The filmic incorporation of archival footage fulfills this bet by returning images to the “present” (which is a different “present” than the “present” of the recorded image) and ushering them toward new uses and meanings.

The documentary’s affinity with the archive has roots that are deeper and older than the formation of the documentary as one of three major creative modes in film—the other two being the experimental avant-garde and narrative fiction. The documentary, succinctly defined by John Grierson as “the creative treatment of actuality,” only gained full conceptual cohesion during the 1930s. The term then served to retrospectively classify and include earlier works, such as Flaherty’s poetic ethnographies like his Nanook of the North (1922), the city symphonies of Dziga Vertov, Walter Ruttman, and Alberto Cavalcanti, and, under the broad umbrella of non-fiction, even the actualités of the Lumière brothers, which recorded moments of ordinary life with indexical fidelity to the contingencies of the visible, like the dog that walks across the frame and passes into the posterity of its afterlife in the cinematic record in Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon (1895).

Cinema’s affinity with the archive rests on what Mary Ann Doane calls the medium’s “core and formative indexicality” and the lasting “lure of instantaneity”—traits that originate in the light sensitivity of the celluloid film but continue to inform and inflect the electronic formats of video and the digital. Cameras operate at the threshold between the spatiotemporal dimensions of the ephemerality of unfolding time and the durability of an externalized, permanent record that can be stored independently of living bodies. As sensitive recording instruments, cameras glean a surplus of contingent inscriptions from the profilmic—fingerprints of the visible that are preserved in the audiovisual record as in “a grand archive of time,” writes Doane. The film medium was recognized from the outset as having an “archival mission,” as Paula Amad notes. In 1898, Polish cameraman Boleslas Matuszewiski wrote that the filmic record “has a character of authenticity, exactitude, and precision that belongs to it alone.” The lens, Matuszewiski continues, grasps even what escapes the eye, tracking “the progress of moving objects . . . from their distant beginnings in the horizon to the point closest to the fore-plane on the screen.”

The archival nature of film, based on the mnemonic capacity of the audiovisual record, is not the exclusive domain of the documentary but belongs to
all filmic modes—which is why Bill Nichols, partly as a provocation, states that “all films are documentaries.” Documentary, narrative fiction, and experimental film are not entirely separate domains but overlapping and mutually influencing. Narrative is germane to documentary and fiction alike, and the documentary is no stranger either to the formal experimentations of the avant-garde or to fictional invention and dramatization. Many of the documentaries this book examines borrow from these other modes while engaging with ideas of the archive and archival records—an intermingling of components that has significance best examined case by case, as I will do. Fiction films too can have a strong documentary component. One can approach a fiction film with attention to its indexical records—the contingent material that David Bordwell calls the “‘fellow travelers’ of the story,” such as details of real locales, bodies, clothing styles, time-specific mannerisms of language and gesture, and all data in excess of narrative purposes that ends up recorded and preserved. Some fiction films make conscious use of their documentary capacity and this is a common trait of Brazilian cinema, which after the 1960s is characterized by location shooting, the frequent use of non-professional actors, and the construction of narrative plots that are entangled with the real through direct referentiality as well as allegory. One can ascertain a documentary-like engagement with the real in fictional films as diverse as Nelson Pereira dos Santos’s *Vidas secas* (Barren Lives, 1964), Carlos Diegues’s *Bye bye, Brasil* (1979), and Fernando Meirelles’s *Cidade de Deus* (City of God, 2002), to name a few emblematic films from distinct periods. Fiction films also become part of a society’s audiovisual archive, providing the imagistic material by which a society remembers its past. This book’s arguments about film and the archive are therefore not based on the absolute exceptionality of the documentary but only on a relative one. Although all filmic modes have an archival dimension, this dimension is crucial for the documentary as a cultural form that embraces cinema’s “core and formative indexicality” as a constitutive component of its identity. Even when indexical images are unavailable, the documentary asserts itself as such by claiming reference to the historical real. As Michael Renov writes, “Every documentary issues a ‘truth claim’ . . . positing a relationship to history which exceeds the analogical status of its fictional counterpart.” A defining trait of the documentary is the objectification, that is, the turning into image, of whatever is presumably given by reality. Stella Bruzzi argues that even in the era of manipulations of digital media and postmodern skepticism, the notion of the audiovisual document and of film as record remains at the heart of the documentary. The documentary is defined by the interaction between film as record (the archive of events) and film as imagination, suggests Bruzzi, proposing an updated version of Grierson’s definition of the genre as the “creative treatment of actuality.”

The relationship between documentary and archive involves a great deal of ambiguity—and this ambiguity is essential for the way films can perform
archival functions as well as interventions. Archivization is fundamentally a form of capture. Archives are made up of what is removed from the present—extracted from the possibilities of movement and change. Thus, archivization is sometimes described as “quarantine” or “house arrest.” The archive’s dilemma, notes Rielle Navitski, is “the frequent incompatibility of preservation and access,” a tension that determines the archive’s role. Achille Mbembe, thinking specifically of the archive’s relationship to state power, notes that archives despoil the present by taking materials out of circulation and obscuring them from view, enclosing them in half-light for a period of time. Archives have been imagined as monuments and crypts, storehouses of secrets that conceal what they hold. The present, on the other hand, is always in *media res* and is made of performances that disappear even as they are enacted, such as in the evanescence of corporeal gestures and speech acts. Archives and archival technologies attempt to grab hold of the present’s flow and to spatialize its temporality—freezing whatever they capture into a fixed material that can be sheltered, hidden, and preserved. To archive something is to remove it from the unpredictability of the present and guard it not only in a special place but in a separate temporality. It is a strategy to resist time.

Film at once epitomizes and escapes this logic of capture, functioning at the thresholds of the archive’s creation and its undoing. Documentary films are vehicles for the de-archivization of materials—the means through which records are taken from house arrest and moved into new arrangements of narrative and meaning as well as released into circulation and made available to viewing publics. But films also produce and preserve archival records—turning fragments of the present into materials available for the future. Janus-faced, films can confound the boundaries between the spatialized time of the fixed record and the temporalized space of the unfolding present. Even though film reels are material things that can be stored, films are unusual archival objects in that they cannot be held like a photograph or a paper-based document; they exist as films only when they are placed into motion through playback and enter into contact with the contingencies of viewership. Movement and change, therefore, inhere in the film’s “fixed” record, which, as Siegfried Kracauer argued, has the vocation to render visible the “flow of life.” If the photograph marks “a transition from the animate to the inanimate, from life to death,” as Laura Mulvey argues, film reverses this trajectory from movement to stillness “by means of an illusion that animates the inanimate frames of its origin.” What is in fact archived by film, writes Mary Ann Doane, is “the experience of presence. But it is the disjunctiveness of a present relived, of a presence haunted by historicity.” By recording precisely what eludes capture (the experience of presence, the flow of time, ephemera), the filmic record is freighted with a surplus of semantic potential. The audio recording of a voice, unlike its written counterpart, preserves not only words spoken but the qualities of speech—such as accent, tone, rhythm, and all the other components
that elude representation in alphabetic writing. Similarly, the records of bodies in film are preserved with a richness of corporeal detail that exceeds authorial intentions of meaning. The audiovisual record holds within it an excess of intentionality that challenges our “desire to clothe images with the properties of language rather than recognizing in them the more material properties accessible to consciousness,” as David MacDougall puts it.\textsuperscript{42} If the production of records and archivization perform a spatialization of time, film performs a temporalization of space, putting what is fixed back into motion for the lifelike duration of a repeated present.

Brazilian filmmaking is a fertile terrain in which to investigate the relevance of archives for both the stirrings of an unequal society and documentary filmmaking as a cultural practice. Documentaries can intervene in records and their legibility, illuminating alternative positions and forms of articulation. This possibility becomes more pronounced when actual records are being explored in the “present” time documented by films—that is, when archival materials are not just included through editing and in full-screen (by which the filmmaker communicates meaning to the viewer) but are also part of the mise en scène and of the profilmic event, part of the unfolding reality inhabited by the filmmaker and the film’s participants. This is the case for many of the films examined in this book, such as \textit{Pirinop, meu primeiro contato}, with which I began (this film is further discussed in chapter 2) and Eduardo Coutinho’s seminal film \textit{Cabra marcado para morrer} (\textit{Man Marked For Death/Twenty Years Later}, 1964–1984), to which I now turn.

\textbf{Archival Thresholds in a Transitional Film}

An inaugural example for the corpus of films of this book, Eduardo Coutinho’s landmark \textit{Cabra marcado para morrer} is a transitional film that spans a period of two decades in production and is uniquely imbricated with national history. The film functions at the threshold between documentary and archive, operating at once as a vehicle for acts of de-archivization, returning recorded materials to the present, and constituting an alternative archive as a work of record-keeping that is also hyperaware of loss. Initially envisioned as a fictional narrative rooted in a documentary approach, the film was started in 1964 as a dramatization of the life and assassination of João Pedro Teixeira, a peasant union leader. It was shot in a politicized community not unlike the one in which João Pedro had lived, and used only nonprofessional actors—local peasants, including Elizabeth Teixeira, João Pedro’s widow, who played herself. Exactly one day after the military coup of 1964, the local army invaded the village and brought all cinematic and political activity to a halt. Filmmaker, crew, and Elizabeth escaped into the wilderness to avoid capture. Certain that her arrest would lead to torture or death, Elizabeth moved to another state,
changed her name, and severed all links with people she knew, including her own children. It was as if she were dead. Meanwhile, the footage of the incomplete film, which was initially thought to be lost, entered into a clandestine existence of its own. The reels were stashed in the house of an army general, the father of filmmaker David Neves. Some of the negatives escaped confiscation and destruction because they had been sent to a laboratory in Rio de Janeiro to be developed. Later, the footage of the unfinished film was smuggled into the film archive of the MAM, Rio’s modern art museum, and saved under the decoy title *A rosa do campo* (*The Rose of the Field*). Made on the eve of Brazil’s re-democratization and documenting the filmmaker’s return to the peasant village with the unearthed footage in hand, the final film enables and interweaves multiple returns to life. The unfinished film is brought to completion and becomes a classic not only of Brazilian but also of Latin American cinema. Archived images are, in effect, repatriated to the community from which they were taken, and the peasants recover an important chapter of their repressed political past. Even more poignantly, Elizabeth Teixeira, whose whereabouts were still unknown at that time, is located by Coutinho and chooses to publicly reclaim her name, history, and political convictions in front of his camera while viewing the images of her younger self.

In addition to its unique history of storage and unlikely survival, ideas of the archive are brought up in several ways by Coutinho’s film, for instance, by one of the participants in the 1964 film, the peasant Duda. When the filmmaker returns to Galiléia in 1981, Duda welcomes him to his home and takes him to a wooden trunk in a corner. Here is where he keeps his books, he says, and takes out a book about cinema and a copy of *Kaputt* (1944), by Curzio Malaparte. Someone in Coutinho’s crew left the books behind when they fled the site in 1964, he says. The soldiers wanted to confiscate the book but Duda claimed that it was his and argued with the soldiers so that he could keep it. It is unclear why he would have taken such a risk. Although Duda is only marginally literate, he volunteers to read the beginning of Malaparte’s book to Coutinho in 1981. *Kaputt* begins with the story of the book’s manuscript, which was written in secret during WWII, and kept from destruction by a peasant who hid the text from soldiers inside a cavity in the wall of his hut. “The story of this book is a lot like your movie,” Duda comments, providing through this brief comparison an insightful commentary on Coutinho’s film, which also involves the production of a politicized document, the friendship and collaboration between director and a group of peasants, a period of unofficial archivization so as to prevent the text’s destruction, and later that material’s return to the light of day.

*Cabra*, notes Carlos Alberto Mattos, “is a succession of encounters between the documentarian and his interlocutors.” But the film also stages encounters and a dialogue between the recorded images of the past and a present time of filmmaking, which is a lived duration where meaningful events
and experiences are unfolding in tandem with, and often as a result of, the making of the film. By presenting the footage of the unfinished film to the peasants, Coutinho stages a cinematically mediated encounter between the past (which includes the unfinished film as well as interrupted life trajectories and political projects) with the present at a moment when the country had begun to transition to democracy. *Cabra* starts with a shot of a projector set up in the patio of the village of Galiléia and is punctuated by scenes showing the screening of the 1964 footage to the reunited participants—who, through this cinematic meeting, commemorate a collectively shared past that was disrupted by the coup and the ensuing dictatorship. The encounter between archival images and viewing bodies is often rendered through a shot–reverse-shot structure that alternates between images of the screen and images of the viewers’ faces illuminated by the screen. This construction underscores the ongoing “dialogue” between the filmic record and the filmed present. This dialogue is not about an exchange of words but the exchange of gestures, physical expressions, and affects. In the de-archivization performed by Coutinho’s film, what was recorded in the past returns to and affects the bodies that were imaged in the first place.

The dialogue between archival images and living bodies becomes particularly significant in the case of Elizabeth Teixeira. Because of her period of hiding under a false identity, Elizabeth had, in effect, become alienated from her past. Recall that she was in hiding until Coutinho arrived—guided by Elizabeth’s son, who had himself only recently discovered his mother’s whereabouts. The past returns unexpectedly to Elizabeth in the form of a returning filmmaker, a few photographs, and the footage of the unfinished film. The most poignant moments of *Cabra* show Elizabeth interacting with images of her younger self and becoming compelled to speak of and reveal her past. Over-the-shoulder shots that appear at several moments in the film show Elizabeth holding photographs of the shooting of *Cabra* or viewing the projected image of her younger self on a movie screen. Reverse shots show her face lit up by the return-of-the-past screen. Through the editing of other shots of Elizabeth, the film continues this reflexive dialogue between body and image, present and past, that occurs in the scenes of image viewing. For instance, in Figures I.1–I.4, note how the orientation and framing of her body helps to suggest a dialogue between two moments in time. If her body is slightly oriented to the left in one image, it appears slightly oriented to the right in another. She touches the side of her head in 1964 and again in 1981. In an earlier shot, we see her speaking with her body oriented to the right and in its “reverse-shot” from 1981 we see her speaking with her body similarly framed and oriented to the left. These would be unnoticeable details lost in the intricate montage of this film, except that other factors signal their significance. The dialogue between images from two moments in time reflects the momentous encounter between the archive and the present that
FIGURE I.1  Still from *Cabra marcado para morrer* (1964–1984) by Eduardo Coutinho

FIGURE I.2  Still from *Cabra marcado para morrer* (1964–1984) by Eduardo Coutinho
FIGURE I.3  Still from *Cabra marcado para morrer* (1964–1984) by Eduardo Coutinho

FIGURE I.4  Still from *Cabra marcado para morrer* (1964–1984) by Eduardo Coutinho
is enabled by the filmmaking process. In Elizabeth’s case, this encounter with
the image-remainders of the past allows for the rediscovery and the reani-
mation of the self in the present.

One of the recurring images of Elizabeth that is intercut in these
segments of the film shows her at a political rally sometime in 1962, where
she commands the attention of a crowd. After the death of her husband,
Elizabeth appears to have assumed a position of leadership in the peasant
movement. The footage is silent and our attention is drawn to Elizabeth’s
arms, which gesture with an energetic and earnest force that punctuates
her political speech. This particular version of herself is perhaps the one
from which she would have become most alienated as a result of historic
circumstances. Indeed, in the 1981 conversations with Coutinho, she at first
enters the terrain of politics timidly. With some nudging from her son, she
thanks the president, General Figueiredo, for the country’s recent political
opening. She is deferential to the regime. During the process of the two-day
conversation, however, a body appears to rediscover itself. This is most vis-
ible at the very last moment of the filmmaker’s visit to Elizabeth, when he
and his crew are already in their van, ready to leave. At this moment, her
gestures regain the assertiveness seen in the early footage—mimicking al-
most exactly the gestural movement of the 1962 rally. Her words, too, are
no longer of polite deference. As she lists current political injustices, her
gestures resemble those she made at the political rally. The somatic dialogue
between archival images and the embodied present performed by the film
establish a bridge that allows for a rekindling and a restitution—a repatri-
ation of gesture that accompanies the repatriation of images. If the malaise
of 1981 could be thought as the problem of living in a fragmented present,
of having become alienated from oneself and one’s history, the unexpected
return of images from the archive afford the possibility of reparation. Here
archival images are deployed less for their capacity to offer access to the past
than for their power to affect and quicken the present.

The film’s reworking of previous materials across different media can be
thought in relation to the idea of remediation. Remediation has become an
important term in media studies at least since Bolter and Grusin’s influential
1999 Remediations: Understanding New Media, in which they define it as the
“representation of one media by another.”46 As illustrated by the long tradition
of literary ekphrasis, representational media have always cited one another
in the process of constituting themselves and their boundaries (and Marshall
McLuhan went as far as noting, provocatively, that “the ‘content’ of any me-
dium is another medium”).47 Acts of representation across media, however,
became increasingly important with the advent of digital media and its ten-
dency to absorb all previous analog media. Though made before the advent
of digital media, Coutinho’s film is replete with acts of remediations—starting
with the way in which the 16mm film shot in 1981 incorporates the 35mm
footage of the 1964 film as well as photographs from that time. The film also includes written texts (like Malaparte’s *Kaput*, discussed earlier) and a variety of documents and news items of historic value for the film. At one point, we see a shot of the film’s 1964 script, which had been confiscated by the army but was accidentally found and saved by an attorney who had access to the army headquarters—so that the script evokes another anecdote involving near destruction, storage, and a later retrieval, echoing the film’s own story and other stories it tells. The motivation for the remediations performed by Cabra is not to reflect the historical transformations of media itself or the convergences it might allow but to manifest at the level of form and the process of production the film’s ultimate purpose, which as Silvio Da-Rin states, is “to recuperate the material and imaginary fragments of the history of the film, of each of its participants, and of the country.”

The film incorporates bits of pieces of externalized memory and offers them up to the present—an embodied present with fragmentary and disrupted memories that can be rekindled. In Cabra, remediation remits not just to again-ness (“re”) of media but to “remedy,” as the return of materials to the present helps to thaw lives and stories that were arrested. This remediation, therefore, takes place not only across media but across the spheres of a multi-media archival record and the immediate present with which the film interacts, in the process producing further records.

Yet the film is by no means restricted to optimistic hopes about the image’s remedial power. For some of the peasants, the return of the footage offers no redemption. The man who played the lead role of João Pedro Teixeira in the 1964 film, for instance, is now an evangelical Christian who wants no association whatsoever with the leftist politics he believes the 1964 film represents (though his beliefs echo government anti-communist propaganda rather than reality). Cabra offers myriad reminders that not everything can be saved or recovered. Of João Pedro Teixeira, we are told, not even a photograph remains, except for one snapshot of his lifeless body wrecked by gunshots, which was published in a newspaper at the time of his death and is included in the film. We also learn that São Rafael, the remote village where Elizabeth took refuge and survived during the years of repression, was about to be inundated due to the construction of a reservoir. The town was scheduled to be evacuated when Coutinho arrived and later it disappeared permanently under water. If the film’s de-archivization of the past is imbued with remedial potential, its archival work is inflected by a constant sense of loss. The film is in part an inventory of losses and a collection of fragments of the past salvaged from the dustbin of history, as Jean-Claude Bernardet notes.

The film has the impulse to gather what has been scattered, like the reuniting of the peasants from the 1964 project. Elizabeth’s children, abandoned by their mother when she went into hiding, are dispersed geographically as well. Elizabeth speaks of her desire to see them all again and Coutinho’s film, in this regard more resourceful than Elizabeth, searches them out, including the ones that have migrated to Rio and
São Paulo, and films them. Yet the film has a keen consciousness of the limits of such gathering gestures. It is notable that Coutinho’s film ends not with Elizabeth’s speech at the door of the van, which offered a satisfying climax, but with another segment that extends the film so as to note the death of the peasant João Virgínio—a man who, earlier in the film, offers testimony of his extensive torture following his arrest after the coup. This testimony, by the way, is the first such documentary testimony of torture suffered by a peasant and is in itself a valuable documentary record.

At the end of the film we see footage of João Virgínio celebrating his birthday and learn that he died shortly after Coutinho filmed him in 1981. The final images do not open to vitalist horizons but become, instead, the *memento mori* of a “present” that becomes irretreivably past, surviving only in the afterlife of the film record as a ruinous remainder. The film ends, therefore, with a memorial acknowledgement of the irreversibility of loss even when records endure.

Coutinho cultivated a lifelong relationship with the peasants he first filmed in 1964, then again in 1981, and finally again in 2014, when he returned to Galiléia, shortly before his own passing in 2015. *Sobreviventes da Galiléia* (*Survivors of Galiléia, 2014*), included as an extra in the latest re-issue of *Cabra* on DVD, shows the way Coutinho’s cinema performs a tender inventorying of survival and loss. In one scene of *Sobreviventes*, Coutinho visits Cícero, a peasant who participated in the 1964 film. In 1981, Cícero was living in São Paulo and working at a factory, but Coutinho interviewed him there and included that footage in the final *Cabra*. We also learn that in 2007 Cláudio Bezerra, one of Coutinho’s collaborators, had travelled to Galiléia and filmed Cícero and other participants of *Cabra*. The conversation with Cícero in *Sobreviventes* involves images from all of these periods. We see Cicero in several stages of his life, from his relative youth in 1964 to his aged state in 2014, when he looks old and frail. These archival images are not just directed at the viewer through editing but are also incorporated as part of the mise en scène of the interview. At one point, Coutinho watches with Cícero the video of the latter’s conversation with Cláudio Bezerra in 2007, when he looked younger and in better health. In that video, Cícero holds photographs of himself that were taken in 1981. Layers of time interact in a reflexive mise-en-abyme construction of diachronic encounters between images and the imaged body, the audiovisual record and the corporeal present.

*Cabra* is a landmark work for Brazilian cinema in part because its history as a film is imbricated with national history—in particular with the period of the dictatorship and the transition to democracy in 1985. The film’s relationship to the return to democracy is relevant for this book as issues related to power, participation, memory, and justice will be crucial to my analysis of several clusters of films and filmmaking practices in the chapters that follow. *Cabra* is also important as a film that marks a transition point between distinct phases of the documentary in Brazil. In his classic study of the Brazilian documentary,
Cineastas e imagens do povo (Filmmakers and Images of the People, 1984), Jean-Claude Bernardet locates Cabra at a turning point of Brazilian documentary by focusing on questions of voice. The documentary of the 1960s and 1970s, Bernardet argues, was defined by a sociological approach—meaning that they were informed by a desire to analyze and explain the world from the perspective of middle-class intellectuals. Taking advantage of direct sound and portable cameras, the films of this period are replete with the voices of workers, migrants, and peasants. Their voices are “voices of experience” in that they speak from and about personal experience while also being circumscribed to that particularity, unable or unauthorized to provide interpretive meaning. In counterpoint to these voices, these films incorporated “voices of knowledge,” often included in the disembodied voiceover narration but sometimes included in the diegetic presence of authoritative subjects, distinct from the subjects of experience. Unlike the “voices of experience,” the “voices of knowledge” can interpret and generalize and speak from a position of a surveying critical distance not granted to ordinary people. This model and its distribution of voices and forms of speech broke down during the 1970s and early 1980s, culminating in the dialogical approach of Cabra, which inaugurates a new era for the documentary.53

What is rarely recognized in the critical reception of this film, however, is the way in which it evokes and engages with questions about the archive and the archival in their interactions with the present. On the one hand, Cabra imagines the possibility of the re-animation of the present through the return of archival images. On the other, it manifests the desire to inventory losses, marginal survivals, and the dwindling remainders of time. It is because of the film’s operation at the threshold between these possibilities that I take Coutinho and his 1984 film as a point of departure for contemporary Brazilian documentary film, in which concerns about loss and conservation, destruction and survival, extraction and restitution, and archivization and remedial incorporations recur across a diverse array of films and filmmaking practices.

Though this book can serve as an introduction to Brazilian documentary, it is not meant to be a comprehensive overview. It opts, instead, to offer in-depth analyses of a diverse sample of films that are representative of major documentary trends as well as of key areas of concern for filmmaking and Brazilian society alike. There are some significant omissions here—reflecting the criteria of selection and the book’s concern with the archive concept.54 Along with works well-known outside Brazil, I have attempted to include relatively marginal and lesser-known films that deserve greater attention and viewership; the works of indigenous filmmakers, for example, are rarely discussed alongside the works of metropolitan directors. In the process of selection, I have also attempted to move beyond the axis of Rio de Janeiro–São Paulo, often dominant in discussions of Brazilian cinema, to include works from other regions of the country—such as Northern and Central Brazil.
The book is divided into three sections, each of which has two chapters: “Ethnographies of the Indigenous,” “Law, Evidence, Capture,” and “Private Life (Going Public).” Each section brings into view specific spatial and social margins—the margins of national space in “Ethnographies of the Indigenous,” the margins of urban spaces in “Law, Evidence, Capture,” and the margins of households and private existence in “Private Life (Going Public).” The two chapters of part I examine the legacy of the ethnographic documentary, paying particular attention to the images and the imaginaries of contact with indigenous people in the Brazilian interior and the Amazon, as well as to the audiovisual records of what I call “the contact film.” The choice of this as the book’s opening section serves to address an important area of concern for the documentary as well as to evoke Brazil’s colonial history in conjunction with the history of documentary filmmaking, which is linked to the production of ethnographic records of people characterized as “primitive.” Drawing from this history, chapter 1 focuses on ethnographic documentaries, mostly made in the Amazonian region, that bear the weight of a long and troubled legacy of contact. Chapter 2 turns to the work of video activists and rising indigenous documentarians preoccupied not only with archival records of indigenous cultures but also with the continuity of indigeneity in the twenty-first century. Structured almost as a shot and reverse-shot, chapters 1 and 2 offer contrasting possibilities: The first, emphasizing the perspectives of metropolitan travelers, is hyperaware of destruction and loss. The second, emphasizing the perspectives of indigenous people, reflects on possibilities for the recovery and continuity of native cultures.

Part II, “Law, Evidence, Capture,” shifts to metropolitan contexts and current conditions of inequality in cities—conditions that are connected to another facet of Brazil’s historical past: the late abolition of slavery in 1888 and the unequal distribution of citizenship rights that marked the founding of the Brazilian Republic in 1889 and continues to affect the present. The films discussed in this section evoke archives and archival practices in order to imagine a role for the documentary in contexts of entrenched social injustice, including the marginalization and criminalization of certain social groups by society and its institutions. Marginal majorities can be subjected to conditions of social invisibility, although they may occasionally be called into visibility as targets of the media or of disciplinary institutions such as the police, the court, and the prison. The films discussed in chapter 3 consider these forms of social and archival (in)visibilities as they explore the documentary’s own forms of observation and production of visual records. Chapter 4 focuses on Brasilia, the nation’s modernist capital, founded in 1960, and on the production of social invisibility within that hypervisual, monumental city. This chapter unearths a lineage of documentary films that evolved in direct counterpoint to the state and that focus particularly on the nonvisual, such as on the oral testimonies of people who live on the margins of the city and their memories.
of injustices that are neither acknowledged by the state nor documented in
the official records. The chapter focuses especially on Vladimir Carvalho and
on the recent work of Adirley Queirós, a filmmaker who mixes documentary
and science fiction in his critical engagement with the history of Brasilia as
remembered from the margins of the modernist city.

Part III turns to familial and private life and to the migration of intimate
and personal subjects and materials to the movie screen, a notable trend in
contemporary documentary. What was once assumed to be private has be-
come part of the public record as constituted by documentary films. The
contents of intimate archives such as photo albums and home movies, for-
merly deemed materials of little public interest, are being transferred to the
screen in films that explore the public significance of what is privately expe-
rienced, as well as the personal importance of what is public, historical, and
collectively shared. Chapter 5 discusses films that probe relationships of power
and questions of labor within private life and domestic spaces—in the pro-
cess reworking materials and the logic of the established forms of familial and
private life memorialization (the “home mode”) that specifically excludes or
marginalizes labor and conflict. Chapter 6 turns to the memory of the dic-
tatorship in contemporary film with a particular focus on the work of women
filmmakers and the daughters of political militants, who, in part by delving
into both private and public records, attempt to renegotiate their relationships
with political history and familial memory. The book’s epilogue draws forth
some of the interconnections undergirding the distinct sections of the book
and discusses several recent films that show the documentary’s continuing en-
gagement with contemporary issues, with post-dictatorship memory, and with
questions about the archive.