

## Market Conditions: the Brazilian LGBT+ Press in the 1990s and 2000s – *SuiGeneris and G Magazine*<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*This article charts the way that an idea originating in the United States – that homosexuals should be considered not as a marginalised minority but as a valuable niche market – was brought to Brazil by means of the glossy printed magazine, with its promise of attracting lucrative brand advertising. It examines two major titles – SuiGeneris and G Magazine – to show how the format was adapted in different ways to Brazilian conditions. This led to interactions with two existing factors, the LGBT+ social movement and the erotic male nude magazine, together with the contemporary phenomenon of celebrity culture. The article reviews scholarly research on the topic, assessing to what degree the original idea met its objectives, both on its own terms and within the wider social goal of combatting prejudice and discrimination against homosexuals.*

### Resumo

*Este artigo explora como uma ideia originada nos Estados Unidos – de que os homossexuais deveriam ser considerados não como uma minoria marginal mas como um mercado especializado e valioso – foi trazida para o Brasil por meio de revistas impressas em papel couché, com a promessa de atrair a publicidade lucrativa das grandes grifes. O artigo examina dois títulos importantes – SuiGeneris e G Magazine – para mostrar como o formato foi adaptado às condições brasileiras de modos diferentes. Houve uma interação com dois fatores existentes, o movimento social LGBT+ e a revista erótica de nus masculinos, junto com o fenômeno contemporâneo da cultura da celebridade. O artigo analisa ainda as pesquisas acadêmicas sobre o assunto e avalia até que ponto a ideia original conseguiu atingir os seus próprios objetivos e os ideais sociais mais abrangentes de combater o preconceito e a discriminação contra homossexuais.*

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“Manchester United are on a collision course with a Brazilian porn star!” – *News of the World*, 9 January 2000.

The modern LGBT+ periodical press is a creation of the post-Second World War world and has always had both a national and a transnational character. Individual titles are generally published in one country for readers in that country but many have a section on international news, aiming to keep readers informed of developments in gay culture and the LGBT+ movement elsewhere. Easily transported, periodicals serve to communicate news, information and ideas across borders. This article examines the LGBT+ printed press in Brazil at a critical juncture between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s as the country consolidated its liberal democracy and opened its economy to globalisation. It follows the course of a particular idea – that gay men and to a lesser extent lesbians formed an affluent niche market which could be captured by advertisers through the vehicle of the sophisticated glossy magazine, catering to their consumer interests while not entirely ignoring their political and social concerns. This was developed in the neo-liberal environment of the United States and Britain and brought to Brazil as it was struggling to adopt a similar model. The article examines two periodical titles of the period, which illustrate different responses to the changes occurring: *SuiGeneris* and *G Magazine*. Together, these form a distinct phase in the print history of the Brazilian LGBT+ press, which began in 1964 and appears to have ended in the mid-2010s, as printed titles ceased publication or migrated to the internet.

### **The LGBT+ press in its context**

The LGBT+ press has always co-existed with two, sometimes difficult, partners. On one side is the LGBT+ movement, a social movement characterised by voluntary action, political activism and self-funding, which effectively began in the United States and Britain in the 1970s. Although often ignored, a substantial proportion of periodical titles in the 1970s and 1980s were bulletins and newsletters published by activist groups to publicise their thinking and activities. The more prominent members of the LGBT+ press were the independent titles, financed by cover prices and advertisements from LGBT+-oriented

businesses and aiming to serve the wider LGBT+ community rather than just the politically committed activists.

On the other side were the erotic titles containing photographs of male nudes, often referred to as porn mags. These began with the US physique magazines of the 1950s, which sought to evade press and postal censorship by subverting the existing genre of the body-building magazine, steadily developing an increasingly obvious gay sensibility (Hooven, 1995). The physique magazines were a transgressive genre, pursued by the authorities in the name of morality but a source of delight and support for many gay men, who found in them confirmation of their desires and identity. Indeed, as recent scholarship has shown, by the 1960s these were large businesses in the USA and reached far more readers than the publications of the activist homophile organisations of the period (Johnson, 2019). Over the following decades, publishers in the USA and Britain steadily pushed the boundaries of what could be published. Initially the models wore small posing pouches, then it became permissible to show a flaccid penis, then an erect penis and finally, scenes of sexual activity, often drawn from pornographic videos. In Brazil, the development was rather different. There were a couple of body-building magazines in the 1950s but the main change came in 1980 when the relaxation of censorship as part of the Abertura process led to a flood of pornographic magazines.

A third element in the mix is celebrity culture, which emerged in the late 1980s along with changes in the media and an increased academic interest in mediatisation. Celebrity culture has a symbiotic relationship with the media and with consumer society: celebrities are produced by the media, bought and sold like commodities and consumed by the media audience. Aspects of celebrity culture which have been highlighted by scholars include the relationship between celebrities and ordinary people, the power relationship between the celebrity and the audience, the question of authenticity and the desire of the audience to know the 'real' person underlying the celebrity, privacy versus the right to know and the limits to intimacy (Cashmore, 2007; Holmes, 2006; Nayar, 2009).

### **Marketing and the LGBT+ press**

From 1970 onwards and gathering pace in the 1980s, a vibrant commercial scene comprising bars, clubs, restaurants, hotels, saunas, cinemas and bookshops developed in the major cities in the US and Britain, thanks in part to their ability to publicise their services

through the LGBT+ press. In 1988 and 1990, two US advertising agencies carried out market surveys which seemed to show that gay men and lesbians had higher than average purchasing power because they lived as couples with double incomes and no children. This data was later shown to be misleading because it depended on an unrepresentative sample which was not typical of the whole LGBT+ population (Baker, 1997; Nunan, 2003; Badgett, 2003). Nevertheless, the idea of a “pink economy” took hold, serving the interests of LGBT+ entrepreneurs who wished to advance their business interests and activists who saw a chance to break the political stasis by demonstrating that gay men and lesbians were responsible people who had a stake in society. Critics saw this development as contributing to the decline of gay culture and socially divisive (Harris, 1999; Chasin, 2000).

For the LGBT+ press, always subject to chronic financial instability, the idea was attractive because it held out the hope of obtaining mainstream advertising, which was the mainstay of newspapers and magazines in other fields. It led a number of periodicals, such as the long-running US title *The Advocate*, to make radical changes, reducing their sexual content to make themselves more acceptable to major brands, and to the launching of new titles specifically aimed at providing vehicles for advertising, such as *Out* in the US and *Attitude* in the UK. These glossy magazines concentrated on lifestyle and fashion and proved highly successful in attracting both readers and advertisers (Streitmatter, 1995).

The main catalyst for bringing these new ideas to Brazil was the Festival Mix Brasil de Cultura da Diversidade and its founder, André Fischer. Fischer had curated the Brazilian section of the New York Gay and Lesbian Experimental Film Festival and in October 1993 showed a selection in São Paulo with the title I Festival Mix Brasil. Such was its success that the festival became an annual event. Fischer saw that there was an untapped LGBT+ market in Brazil and shortly afterwards launched the BBS Mix Brasil web portal, one of the first catering for LGBT+ internet users in the country (Fischer, 2005). The Mix Brasil Festival invented the acronym GLS (“gays, lésbicas e simpatizantes”), the Brazilian equivalent of the American “gay-friendly”. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, a lively commercial scene had developed in the main cities, located in the middle-class areas of the Zona Sul in Rio de Janeiro and the Jardins in São Paulo, separate from the traditional cruising grounds in the city centres (Simões and França, 2005). Fischer and others promoted the potential of the LGBT+ market while recognising its exclusionary aspect and seeking to avoid the compartmentalisation of the US movement. The mid-1990s was marked by an upsurge in LGBT+ activism and visibility, with the foundation of the Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lésbicas, Bissexuais, Travestis, Transexuais e Intersexos (ABGLT) in 1995 and the first Parada Gay de São Paulo (now Parada do Orgulho LGBT) in 1997, which, starting with 2,000

participants, reached 2.5 million in 2006 and was recognised by the Guinness Book of Records as the largest Pride parade in the world. The LGBT+ publications of the 1990s rode a wave of optimism engendered by the consolidation of democracy, the success of the Real Plan in conquering inflation, the opening of the economy to international trade and the growing sense of hope created by the success of antiretroviral drugs in combatting AIDS. Nevertheless, Brazil remained in many ways a socially conservative country.

### **The Brazilian LGBT+ press and movement**

A remarkable characteristic of the Brazilian LGBT+ press is the amount of academic attention devoted to it. There are at least 4 books, 18 theses and over 50 articles on the subject (Green, 1999; Howes, 2004; Péret, 2011; Rodrigues, 2010). In the *Histórias da Sexualidade* (2017-2018) exhibition of the prestigious Museu de Arte de São Paulo, an entire section was devoted to the LGBT+ press, with a display of issues of *Lampião*. In contrast to the UK and USA, the gay press in Brazil is characterised by a number of distinct phases, with hiatuses in between. The first phase, 1964-1969 comprised small mimeographed magazines, notably *O Snob*, published by “turmas”, informal groups of gay men in Rio de Janeiro, Niterói, Campos and Salvador, who were engaged in cross-dressing competitions and produced the magazines to record and publicise their activities. They voluntarily ceased publication during the hard years of the military dictatorship but resumed publication after 1975. The second phase was dominated by *Lampião da Esquina* (1978-1981, 37+4 issues), a tabloid periodical published in Rio de Janeiro and edited by Aguinaldo Silva. *Lampião* was both a newspaper and a cultural journal, exploring through interviews and in-depth features different aspects of Brazil’s LGBT+ life and culture, which at that time had hardly been touched on by academic research, such as travestis, male prostitutes and the gay subculture centred around Rio’s Praça Tiradentes. It also pioneered the innovative, discursive use of gay slang, notably the word “bicha” [queen], to which it gave a positive meaning, rescuing it from the negative connotations with which it had been popularised by the contemporary, satirical magazine *Pasquim*. *Lampião* was distributed by subscription and sale on newsstands in a limited number of the large cities, with a circulation of 10-15,000 (Howes, 2015).

At the same time, the first wave of gay groups sprang up, beginning with Somos in São Paulo in 1978 and spreading to other cities (Trevisan, 2000; Facchini, 2005). However, this wave of activism was short-lived and most of the groups, together with *Lampião*, collapsed amidst considerable acrimony by 1982. Homosexuality had been legal in Brazil since 1830 but prejudice against homosexuals was deeply ingrained in Brazilian society.

Luiz Mott, a leading activist who founded the Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB), summed up the problem: "a velha e ultrapassada imagem da bicha frágil, palhaça, ultra-desmunhecada, fútil, uma caricatura que provoca o riso mas que humilha os milhões de homossexuais que a duras penas querem ser vistos e tratados socialmente como homens que são, e não como palhaços" (Mott, 1999). Another related problem was that of violence against LGBT+ people. Mott started combatting this scourge by compiling a list of people murdered, which was later used as the basis for a report detailing abuses of LGBT+ human rights (Mott, 1996) .

There were no commercial publications for LGBT+ readers for most of the 1980s, although the gap was partially filled by two activist groups, which continued to publish bulletins throughout this period. The GGB published the *Boletim do Grupo Gay da Bahia* (1981-2005, 47 issues), which initially appeared as a mimeograph newsletter and later as a desktop offset publication, detailing the group's campaigns and activities, and publishing the list of murder victims.

Meanwhile, in São Paulo, the Grupo Ação Lésbica-Feminista (GALF) published a bulletin entitled *Chanacomchana* (1981-1987, 12+1 issues). As the provocative title [Pussy with Pussy] indicates, the GALF was initially a radical lesbian-feminist group which split from Somos in May 1980 because of the machismo of the gay men only to encounter resistance from the heterosexual women of the feminist movement. Determined to remain autonomous and fight for the specific interests of lesbian women, it maintained its independence as it struggled against the problems of isolation and invisibility. Its publications demonstrate gradual developments in physical format, change in content and continuity of purpose. In 1987, *Chanacomchana* changed its title to *Um Outro Olhar* (1987-2002, 38 issues) and the group adopted the name Rede de Informação Um Outro Olhar when it registered as an NGO in 1990. The first issue of *Chanacomchana* was published as a tabloid newspaper but this was too expensive so it changed successively to a mimeograph, offset and later photocopied bulletin. In May 1995, it adopted a magazine format which was steadily improved, with a professional layout and full colour. Initially, the bulletin was distributed by subscription and person-to-person sales but this proved uneconomic, so around 1990 it became part of the Rede membership package, although the later issues were also put on sale in a few newsstands in São Paulo. The early issues were heavy in theoretical texts such as the need for autonomy and the function of the homosexual in society but it gradually lightened up in the 1990s in an attempt to make activism more attractive, devoting pages to the TV series "Xena: Warrior Princess", which had a large lesbian following. The magazine contained an officially-funded health supplement, *Ousar Viver*, and carried advertisements for Editora Brasiliense. Nevertheless, it maintained its commitment to being

“uma publicação feita exclusivamente por lésbicas, da primeira vírgula à última letra, para lésbicas” (*Um Outro Olhar*, 1995), publishing accounts of activist conferences, international news and political developments of interest to lesbians. *Um Outro Olhar*, which had been edited throughout by Míriam Martinho, ceased print publication at the end of 2002 and migrated to digital format.

These publications illustrate the contribution of activist groups in terms of identification of political objectives and continuity of commitment. They also show some of the limitations, notably in circulation: the *Boletim do GGB* printed 250-400 copies while *Um Outro Olhar's* maximum print run was 5,000 copies and only about 2,500 were actually distributed (Martinho, 2007). Meanwhile, the HIV/AIDS crisis gave a new stimulus to activism, with some groups using HIV prevention funds to publish periodicals that publicised measures to combat the disease. In the early 1990s, there were sporadic attempts to publish LGBT+ journals, such as *Nós por Exemplo* and *Ent&*, but these were small-scale efforts and also limited in circulation. Beyond these, the only other material available to gay men were pornographic magazines.

### *SuiGeneris*

A major change came with the launching of *SuiGeneris*, a glossy magazine similar in format to *Veja* or *Istoé*, which was published monthly in Rio de Janeiro from January 1995 to March 2000 (55 issues, plus a sample issue zero). It was the first LGBT+ periodical to be distributed nationally by Brazil's main distributor, Fernando Chinaglia, and had a print-run of 20,000-30,000. *SuiGeneris* was edited by Nelson Feitosa, a 26-year-old journalist who got the idea after a visit with his partner to New York, where they saw a number of US and British magazines (Viterbo F, Adnet and Leite, 2005). The magazine was first announced in a *Jornal do Brasil* article on the gay market on 25 September 1994, where it was said to be frankly inspired by *Out* and *Attitude*. Feitosa later clarified that it was to be half way between the two, less combative than *Out* and less obsessed with fashion than *Attitude*. Feitosa told a conference that the magazine was aimed at socio-economic classes A and B because only these people would have the purchasing power necessary to buy a magazine of this scale, “unindo desta forma os possíveis anunciantes e um público pronto para consumir” (Barcellos, 1994, p. 15). A dummy issue was produced in December 1994 to attract advertisers. In its editorial, Feitosa (1994) clearly set out the ambition of the new publication:

Não pense que o Village saiu de NY e baixou nos Jardins ou em Ipanema. Mas, também por aqui, a cultura gay vem ganhando espaço nestes anos 90. Entre as novidades que têm surgido, ganhou destaque a descoberta de que a gente é bom de shopping e, portanto, merece do mercado uma atenção mais de acordo com nosso poder de compra.

The early issues lived up to this billing, with covers and interviews featuring international celebrities. The first issue carried a cover photograph and interview with the singer Neil Tennant: “O Pet Shop Boy Neil Tennant abre o jogo: ‘I am gay’”. According to Feitosa’s associates, they saw the interview in *Attitude*, immediately phoned London and bought the rights and photographs. Subsequent issues featured Boy George, Almodóvar and Antonio Banderas. Interspersed with these were covers, features and interviews with many of Brazil’s leading LGBT+ and gay-friendly musicians, entertainers and supporters: Ney Mattogrosso, Cássia Eller, Renato Russo, the mother of the rock singer Cazuza (who had died in 1990), Maria Bethânia, Roberta Close and Marta Suplicy, who, as a PT deputy, introduced an ultimately unsuccessful bill legalising same-sex civil unions into Congress. After about a year, this impulse began to run out of steam and the magazine increasingly concentrated on Brazilian personalities and events. The first 18 issues were designed by Nelson Feitosa but in January 1997, it underwent a revamp when Felipe Borda took over as graphic designer for the next thirty issues, with a new masthead and internal layout (Rodrigues, 2010, pp. 143-144).

*SuiGeneris* contained certain fixed features, such as readers’ letters and a fashion section, and regularly published information and reviews about the LGBT+ scene, cultural events and personalities; social and political events affecting LGBT+ people; history; entertainment and music, theatre, cinema, video and book reviews. Although in his promotional pitch, Feitosa suggested that market power had replaced political activism as the best means of furthering LGBT+ interests, right from the beginning *SuiGeneris* printed articles and opinion pieces from LGBT+ activists, notably Luiz Mott of the GGB and the writer João Silvério Trevisan, who had helped found the first gay group, Somos, in 1978 and had been on the editorial board of *Lampião*. Both raised political and social issues affecting the lives of LGBT+ people. A number of articles drew attention to the rising influence of evangelical churches – the fiercest opponents of LGBT+ rights, and the magazine published an interview with Olavo de Carvalho, who linked homosexuality with Nazism.

Interviews were a regular feature, ranging from the footballer Renato Gaúcho to the anthropologist Roberto DaMatta. Many of the interviewees were telenovela actors playing gay characters, who were asked their views on homosexuality; while many were

heterosexuals or declined to reveal their sexuality, their performances were carefully watched by activists since novelas were one of the most important channels for combatting the negative stereotypes prevalent amongst many Brazilian people. An early cover and feature article were devoted to the character Sandrinho, played by the actor André Gonçalves in the Globo novela *A Próxima Vítima*, one of the first times that a gay couple had been depicted as normal.

Although *SuiGeneris* was aimed at both men and women, the overall ethos of the magazine was predominantly male, youthful, affluent and white in terms of the lifestyle presented, the emphasis on coming out as gay and the models featured in the photographs. There were exceptions, however, such as an issue devoted to blacks, occasional black models in the fashion pages, a cover and an article devoted to the transsexual Roberta Close, some interviews with people over the age of 50 and a cover with Ney Matogrosso, then aged 55. There were articles and interviews about women, although they were always in a minority and rarely featured on the cover. AIDS was covered but not emphasised and there was relatively little on travestis, at the other end of the social spectrum from the magazine's primary target audience.

*SuiGeneris* did not publish erotic male nudes but the covers frequently showed bare-chested or nearly naked men, leading to complaints from some readers that it ended up being sold alongside porn magazines. However, *SuiGeneris* only had one brush with censorship, when in June 1999 the distributor Fernando Chinaglia refused to handle an issue with two men kissing on the cover. Eventually a compromise was reached when the offending issue was sold in a plastic wrapper.

Apart from some advertisements by the major record companies, Ellus fashion brand and, latterly, South African Airways, *SuiGeneris* failed to attract the hoped-for mainstream advertisers and had to rely on income from subscriptions, sales and advertising by small businesses catering to the LGBT+ market. Competition from *G Magazine*, launched in 1997 with its mixture of information and male nudes (see below), damaged sales, reducing the print-run from 30,000 in 1995 to 20,000 in 1999. *SuiGeneris*'s publisher, by now named SG Press, increased revenue by launching a series of titles such as *Homens*, featuring male nudes, erotic stories and, later, lifestyle articles, and *Porn*, with stills from pornographic videos showing sexual activity, aimed at a male audience further down the income and education scale. Whereas sales of *SuiGeneris* were concentrated in the large cities, such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, *Homens* sold well in the interior and income from this title helped to subsidise the continued publication of the original magazine. By the time

*SuiGeneris* reached issue 50 it was beginning to look tired and a decision to close it was taken in December 1999, with the last issue appearing on 22 March 2000.

*SuiGeneris* broke new ground as the first glossy LGBT+ magazine produced to international standards and managed to sustain itself for over five years. Its impact can be gauged by a number of measures, such as letters from its readers published in the magazine, mainstream press comment and academic analysis. Each issue contained a section with readers' letters placed prominently near the front, where correspondents conducted a dialogue with the editors and sometimes with each other, forming one of the magazine's attractions. Many of the letters commented on items published in previous issues or suggested new topics or changes in the magazine's content. A large number recounted coming-out experiences or gave examples of the everyday discrimination faced by LGBT+ people. Although many of the letters praised the magazine, others were more critical: there were a few complaints about the price and the use of gay slang and English words, requests for more activism, less fashion and more about AIDS or more black models. A regular demand was for more material of interest to women and there was an ongoing debate as to whether the magazine should have male nudes, with letters for and against. Taken together, these letters constituted a debate over the ideal and actual characteristics of *SuiGeneris's* readership, what the magazine should be aiming to achieve and, by extension, what it revealed about the LGBT+ population as a whole. Two sets of questions, in particular, emerged, which were later taken up in academic analysis of the magazine: (i) the diversity of the LGBT+ population and its implications for identity; and (ii) the visual image of the male body conveyed through its iconography.

The debate about diversity and identity started early on with a letter from a reader who advised, with a mixture of truculence and jocularly: "Sou um homossexual, mas antes de tudo, sou um homem. Um macho que gosta de outros machos." He didn't want to be called "meu bem" or "poderosa": "Vejam a suprema beleza que reside na virilidade." He never liked the "bobagens do universo feminino" and condemned *SuiGeneris's* use of "este linguajar de bicha", ending "Por favor, alegria sim, viadagem [faggotry] não!". Nelson Feitosa replied in a similar tone: "Veja a suprema beleza que reside na diversidade das manifestações masculinas." He would not have any censorship: "Aqui, macheza e viadagem têm igual valor." (*SuiGeneris* (1995), 1(5), August, p. 6) In the next issue, an indignant reader wrote that "a revista tem de ser liberal e eclética. Além disso um gay que tem coragem de se assumir como cidadão gay é muito mais macho que esse paspalho, careta e enrustido [straight, closeted idiot]." (*SuiGeneris* (1995), 1(6), October, p. 6) The original correspondent, who gave his full name in both letters, replied in the following issue that a man could camp

it up like Carmen Miranda if that was his nature but he objected to femininity being imposed by force on the community. “Esse denominador comum de linguagem que vocês adotam em alguns textos para atingir todo o público gay é muito tendencioso. Não existe uma única tribo gay, mas várias homo-tribos... E a grande maioria delas se ofende em ser chamada por nomes femininos.” (*SuiGeneris* (1995), 1(7), November, p. 6)

This exchange, although unusually aggressive and couched in sexist and misogynistic terms, suggests some of the difficulties and also some of the possibilities open to the magazine in terms of the interwoven issues of gender, sexuality, community and identity. To some extent, it was followed up by the readers who wanted male nudes and those who asked for more material of interest to women. *SuiGeneris* responded to the former by publishing a parallel magazine, *Homens*, containing personal contact ads and erotic stories as well as nude photographs, which allowed it to deflect the more sexually-charged demands from correspondents. This was important in allowing it to reach readers outside the gay subculture, as a 15-year old boy, who had not yet come out as gay, explained: “Escrevo para agradecer por fazerem uma revista que, não sendo pornográfica, é permitida para menores. Assim, adolescentes como eu podem se nutrir de fontes tão deliciosas como essa.” (*SuiGeneris* (1998), 4(31), p. 5). In response to the letters from women readers, Nelson Feitosa made clear that they were producing a magazine for gays and lesbians and it published a regular column, “grrrls”, by the lesbian singer-songwriter and activist Vange Leonel, interviews with female entertainers such as Maria Bethânia and Adriana Calcanhotto and other items about women. However, the ethos of the magazine remained predominantly male, with very few women on the covers. Nevertheless, despite the upbeat tone characteristic of a lifestyle magazine, readers could find discussion of more serious and complex topics, such as ageing, discrimination against “sissies”, gay relationships, fidelity between partners, travestis, AIDS, murders of LGBT+ people and the cult of masculinity in the regular columns by Luiz Mott, João Silvério Trevisan and the journalist Gilberto Schofield Jr., as well as occasional special features, such as ones on androgyny and police harassment. Thus, while the predominant discourse of the magazine itself largely remained within a series of simple binary divides – male/female, gay/straight, out/closeted – it was possible to find alternative and more nuanced viewpoints within its pages.

Towards the end of *SuiGeneris*'s run, by which time it had a firmly-established house style, a number of letters commented critically on its use of body imagery. Two readers wrote separately, complaining about the use of the “protótipo ‘ser jovem, belo e forte para ser feliz’” and “o império das chamadas ‘barbies’” [gay men who work out in the gym]

(*SuiGeneris* (1999), 5(46) p. 5). They were supported by another reader, who objected to the obsession with being “sarado” [fit] (*SuiGeneris* (1999), 5(49), p. 4). The magazine did not respond to these complaints, which went to the heart of its identity, but they foreshadowed some of the later academic analysis of *SuiGeneris* (and *G Magazine*) and reflected a general unease internationally at the treatment of the gay male or queer body in lifestyle magazines, which critics characterised as “body fascism” because it appeared to exclude those who did not conform to the ideal (Padva, 2002).

The issues of identity and exclusion came to the fore in a controversy over the character Uálber, an effeminate gay man in the TV novela *Suave Veneno*, written by Aguinaldo Silva, the former editor of *Lampião* who afterwards became a successful novela writer. Luiz Mott accused him of perpetuating the humiliating stereotype of the homosexual as a ridiculous clown; Silva responded that he had a right to create an effeminate character as he was effeminate himself, like millions of other effeminate homosexuals who suffered discrimination (Mazarro and Feitosa, 1999).

In contrast to earlier phases, when the LGBT+ press was largely ignored by the mainstream press, *SuiGeneris* received a fair amount of press coverage. Its launching was initially announced in the *Jornal do Brasil* and its editor, Nelson Feitosa, was called on to provide quotes on gay issues for the press. The magazine was regularly mentioned in gay columns, especially in the *Folha de São Paulo*, and it was occasionally satirised in other newspapers, like the popular *Tribuna da Imprensa*. There was little deep analysis in the press although a section was devoted to it in an article on the gay market in the venerable *Jornal do Commercio* on 29-30 March 1998. Perhaps the most remarkable piece was an article published in the sports pages of the Niterói newspaper *O Fluminense* on 15 February 1996, which treated the decision of the footballer Renato Gaúcho to appear (bare-chested with trousers) on the cover and in an interview as a serious example of respect for others’ sexual freedom.

Several books, theses and a documentary film have been produced about *Lampião* since its demise in 1982 but, at the time, academic research on contemporary urban LGBT+ life was only just beginning (Junior, 2011; Rodrigues, 2010, pp. 49-97; *Lampião*, 2016). The magazines of the 1990s and 2000s, on the other hand, have been the subject of a wave of academic scrutiny, in the case of *SuiGeneris* beginning just as it ceased publication. Rodrigues (2010, pp. 138-167) analyses the graphic design of the magazine, showing its different phases while Kronka (2000) uses discourse analysis to examine the texts by LGBT+ activists and the composition of the covers, noting the importance given to coming-out.

Other works drew attention to some of the contradictions embodied in the project: between a lifestyle magazine, such as *SuiGeneris*, aimed at an intellectualised middle class audience, which used distinct concepts such as homosexual and gay community, and a magazine of nudes like *Homens*, produced by the same team for a lower class audience, which worked with a more fluid sexuality involving passive, effeminate men relating sexually to active heterosexual men, partly reflecting the dichotomy observed by the anthropologist Peter Fry between egalitarian and hierarchical models of homosexuality in Brazil (Monteiro, 2002); between the idea of getting close to readers with a philosophy of made by gays for gays and the reality of a culture and lifestyle magazine for the middle class, which excluded those of other social classes (Gonçalves, 2010); and the exclusionary aspects of visibility, with its preference for gays relating sexually to gays rather than heterosexuals, the use of English words, the emphasis on coming out and the promotion of “barbies” as idols, which effectively excluded the poor, blacks and the old (Lima, 2001; Feitosa, 2018).

*SuiGeneris* faced a number of problems, which ultimately stemmed from its failure to secure the support of mainstream advertisers. Without this financial backing, the publishers had to abandon their initial objective of creating a cosmopolitan, upmarket magazine appealing primarily to a sophisticated A/B readership and seek a larger audience with more diverse concerns. The dilemma this presented is illustrated by three letters printed in the same issue. One correspondent, a sophisticated 29 year-old, wrote a long piece of self-criticism, admitting that while he bought imported gay and gay-friendly magazines, such as *The Face*, *i-D* and *Attitude*, he only ever read copies of *SuiGeneris* borrowed from friends because of “uma certa arrogância que acabamos tendo em relação ao que é nosso, que está perto, que está ao nosso alcance mais facilmente”. He promised to amend his ways in future. Meanwhile, for another correspondent in the same issue, “Esta revista sempre foi um bom exemplo de superficialidade e futilidade que a ignorância gay gosta de propagar como hype e fashion.” For readers who lived in small cities in the interior, on the other hand, the magazine acted as a lifeline. A correspondent in Bahia wrote: “Espero com impaciência cada nova edição. A Sui é como um amigo em quem posso confiar sempre e que me conta as novidades, me deixa bem informado, enfim, me faz companhia” (*SuiGeneris* (1999), 5(42) pp. 4, 6).

To be financially viable, *SuiGeneris* had to cater to many different tastes and levels of sophistication, which explains some of the inconsistencies and contradictions in the publication. The amount of space devoted to television novelas, accessible to most of the population, illustrates how the magazine accommodated itself to the interests of a wider audience. Thus, between the fashion shots and the tourism features, a careful reader could

find a range of informative material on LGBT+ politics, different aspects of sexuality, international and Brazilian gay culture and its influence on mainstream culture, history and literature. *SuiGeneris* considerably expanded the boundaries of the lifestyle magazine but was ultimately limited by the constraints of the genre, with its emphasis on the stereotypical figure of the beautiful, buffed up, young gay man and his attendant consumerist lifestyle. This generated criticism from those who felt excluded from the innately-conservative image of LGBT+ life which it embodied and wanted other representations. Nevertheless, the number of correspondents who wrote in to praise the magazine and the emotional identification with it which they showed suggests that it did indeed succeed in establishing a meaningful bond with many readers.

Beset with financial and administrative difficulties, the editors eventually lost the will to continue publishing the magazine, as Feitosa (2000) explained in his final editorial: “Em algum momento, ela se foi, talvez pela distância entre o que queríamos fazer e o possível”. What was possible, however, despite *SuiGeneris*'s shortcomings and the criticisms of them, was an attractive, multi-faceted portrait of Brazil's diverse LGBT+ culture, drawing largely on its own resources and able to sustain itself against competition for over five years.

### *G Magazine*

*G Magazine* was a glossy magazine published monthly in São Paulo from October 1997 to June 2013, with a total of 176 issues. It contained articles about LGBT+ life and culture, fashion and practical advice. However, it was best known for its photo features of male celebrities posing nude, full frontal and with erections. Indeed, because of the media comment which this generated, *G Magazine* is the only LGBT+ publication to have become familiar to the wider Brazilian public. It was founded and published by the journalist Ana Fadigas, who ran it until 2008, when financial difficulties forced her to sell out. Its circulation generally ranged from 60,000 to 110,000 when someone famous was on the cover. 10% of copies were sold by subscription and 90% on newsstands in plastic wrappers.

Ana Fadigas was a journalist with Editora Abril for nearly 16 years, before leaving to set up her own company, Fractal Edições, in 1995. Initially they published *Sexy*, a magazine with female nudes for a heterosexual readership, but in 1997 they decided to move into the gay male market, launching *Bananaloca* in April 1997. This published 5 issues before changing its name to *G Magazine* in September 1997. In *Bananaloca*'s first editorial, Ana Fadigas pointed out that gays formed a growing market which should be of interest to advertisers. The printing quality and layout of *Bananaloca* were not particularly good and,

apart from the more lavish use of colour, the magazine was not a great advance on earlier magazines, such as *Alone* and *Spartacus*, which had tried to combine nudes and information.

Once it had become *G Magazine*, however, it improved rapidly, adding new features in response to reader suggestions, upgrading the printing and layout and generally giving the impression of a quality product. The models in the early issues were mainly strippers, go-go boys and little-known actors. Its break-through came in August 1998, when it published nude photos of Mateus Carrieri, a well-known television actor, who became the first of “os famosos” to star as cover models.<sup>2</sup> Circulation was reported to have increased from 20,000 to 60,000. Things really took off in January 1999, when Vampeta, a Corinthians footballer and member of the Brazil squad, posed for the magazine, boosting circulation to around 118,000-140,000 (reports differ). He was followed the next month by his team-mate Dinei. From then on, a steady stream of well-known footballers, actors and singers appeared in the magazine. A particularly fertile source of models were the reality TV shows such as *Big Brother Brasil* (BBB) and *No Limite*, with competitors keen to cash in on their 15 minutes of fame. By 2006, BBB was being referred to as a “celeiro de desinibidos” for nude subjects, with the female participants being invited to pose in Brazilian *Playboy* and the male ones in *G Magazine*. The great majority of *G Magazine* models were white men in their 20s and early 30s, with relatively few black or mixed-race men and only a couple over 50. According to the editor, circulation fell when they put a black model on the cover (Camargo, 2005). However, the issue with the highest sales of all was the one with Vampeta, who was black. Another indication of *G Magazine*'s popularity was that it was the periodical which most frequently got “lost” in the post.

By the 2000s, *G Magazine* had evolved a successful formula mixing eroticism and information, with a cover and main nude photo feature, usually with a well-known personality, plus one or two others with unknown models; regular columns by a drag artist (Nany People); social column (David Brazil); diversity (bears, trans, HIV-positive, lesbians, etc.); LGBT+ questions (João Silvério Trevisan); fashion; fitness and health; together with short news items, interviews and articles about cultural and political topics of interest. Nevertheless, while heterosexual celebrities were happy to pose nude in a gay magazine, very little advertising support was forthcoming except from businesses directly serving the LGBT+ community. Ana Fadigas complained in April 2000 that advertisers refused to advertise in *G Magazine* because of the nudes whereas the (heterosexual) *Playboy* had overcome this barrier. To put the matter to the test, in 2001-2002 Fractal published a new

<sup>2</sup> A list of the models featured on the covers can be found on the *G Magazine* Wikipedia page.

title, *G News*, a well-produced glossy magazine featuring a combination of lifestyle and informational articles but without any nudes or sexual content. It managed to obtain advertising from Absolut Vodka (famous for its pioneering advertising to the LGBT+ market in the US), DirecTV, Fox DVD and South African Airways but still not enough to make it a viable publication. In June 2003, the company suffered a financial crisis but managed to renegotiate its debts. It had another crisis in 2008 and Ana Fadigas was forced to sell it to an American-owned group. It then seemed to lose much of its élan, stopped featuring famous nudes and eventually ceased publication altogether in June 2013.

In January 1998, one of *G Magazine's* readers complained that they had a fixed image of their readers as guilt-ridden, effeminate homosexuals who desired heterosexual men and suggested that they carry out a market survey to see what the readership really was. The magazine did this at the end of 1999 and produced a report which both summarised the survey's results and set out the publication's aspirations. The survey found that 94% of the readers were male while 84% of the women who bought it were young heterosexuals (18-29). In a separate interview, Ana Fadigas (n.d.) observed that the proportion of women buyers rose to 24% out of a larger print-run when there was a famous cover model, which suggests that women were more interested in uncovering the intimate aspects of celebrity than in male nudity per se. The average age of the readers was 30, with 47% aged 18-29 and 46% aged 30-49. 48% had a higher education qualification and 39% belonged to socio-economic classes A and B. 80% of the male readers were single and 54% lived with their family, 25% alone and 14% with a partner. When it came to defining the magazine's ethos and image, the report noted:

Posicionamento: revista ousada e séria.

É ousada porque mostra homens famosos nus em poses ousadas e com o pênis ereto. O leitor quer mais pênis, mais ereção, mais ousadia.

É séria porque não é pornográfica.

Principal benefício: lazer/erotismo e informação.

[... Os leitores] Querem homens nus em poses ousadas, mas também querem informação. [...]

Imagem: é uma revista para o público gay.

Não é uma revista gay, e sim dirigida ao público gay.

[...]

Por ser uma revista dirigida ao público gay, mas não necessariamente gay, a *G Magazine* consegue atingir os diferentes segmentos do mercado GLS. [...]

Esse é um cuidado que a revista sempre deve ter: não cair na futilidade, nem na "bichice". A revista não deve ser "afetada", pois nem todos os gays o são. Desse

modo, continuará atingindo diferentes nichos no mundo GLS. (Fadigas, 2000)

Two points call for comment here, the idea that *G Magazine* was not pornographic and the reference to “bichice” [campness]. A distinction is often made between pornography, which is intended to cause sexual excitement, and erotica, which emphasises the aesthetic aspects of the naked body or sexual scenes. In an interview with a researcher (Matos, 2004), Ana Fadigas claimed that *G Magazine* was not pornographic because it did not depict explicit sexual activity. While strictly true, this claim appears to be undermined by the obvious fact that the models are in a state of sexual arousal. However, the sexual implications are carefully moderated through the photography. The settings for famous subjects are generally related to their area of professional activity (football pitches for Vampeta or the goal-keeper Roger, holding musical instruments for musicians, etc.), emphasising their celebrity, or the settings are neutral spaces, such as the outdoors or the shared areas of domestic interiors. Generally, the models are not shown in bedrooms or adopting blatantly sexual poses. The result can be a rather detached feeling: the erections appear as physical achievements or symbols of masculine/masculinist prowess rather than signs of sexual activity. Yet, at the same time, the models are frequently looking straight into the camera lens, inviting the reader to share a sense of intimacy. This creates an overall effect of ambiguity, which hovers between distance and availability. In practical terms, however, *G Magazine* was sold on the newsstands in a sealed plastic wrapper like a pornographic magazine.

The reference to “bichice”, which has overtones of homophobia and misogyny, appears to address two concerns. On the one hand, it refers to the use of the discourse of the gay subculture in some publications, such as *Lampião*, with its popularisation of the term “bicha”, and the contemporary scene newspaper *Babado*, published in Campinas. While attractive to some readers, giving a sense of shared identity, it was considered alienating by others, who felt excluded from the LGBT+ scene. *G Magazine*, aiming at a broad market, rejected this kind of discourse as a matter of policy, with the exception of the drag queen, Nany People, who was allowed to say what she liked and occasionally used some slang (Camargo, 2005). At a deeper level, the rejection of “bichice” and the term “afetada” reflect the tendency of some gay men, epitomised by the *SuiGeneris* reader quoted earlier, to prize masculinity above femininity and to reject those with effeminate characteristics when seeking sexual partners through contact ads or as objects of desire in gay magazines (Trevisan, [1996?]; Martino, 2006). This tendency, summed up in the expression “straight-acting”, has often been criticised as a sign of internalised homophobia and self-oppression

yet it remains a deeply-rooted, if unattractive, element of gay male culture. Desire is a powerful force. As the feminist film critic Carol J. Clover (1994, p. 3) points out, “pornography can move our bodies, even when we don't want it to and even if we don't approve of the images that make it happen. (If the unconscious were a politically correct place, it would not need to be unconscious.)” Publishers have to know their market and the fact that *G Magazine* survived for 15 years, ten years as market leader, which was longer than any other commercial publication, suggests that they made a realistic assessment.

*G Magazine* has received more academic attention than *SuiGeneris*. Some researchers have examined its editorial project, that of a magazine written by gays for gays, or the meaning of the discursive formulations of “sexualidade-stigma” and “cidadania gay” in Trevisan’s column “Olho no Olho” (Carvalho, 2010; Dezerto, 2011). Others have looked at *G Magazine*’s treatment of tourism and older gay men (França, Fonseca-Silva and Farias, 2010; Silva, 2017). Most, however, have concentrated on the cover and nude photo features, which were the magazine’s main draw. Using a semiotic framework, particularly discourse analysis, and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, scholars have shown how the covers and photographs were constructed to produce the image of a muscular, young, white man as a symbol of virility and masculinity, and the erotic object of homosexual desire (Silva, 2007; Mendes, Santos and Coelho, 2010). While recognising the power of this image, several pointed to its negative aspects, with the emphasis on the heterosexuality of the model acting as an implicit rejection of effeminate or passive homosexuals, and as an essentially conservative failure to match the imagery to the textual discourse of the right to sexual diversity (Silva and Montenegro, 2012; Rodrigues, 2007).

While these are valid criticisms, it is also useful to consider how these images are consumed, both as erotic images and as part of celebrity culture. As Jennifer Wicke (1994, p. 70) writes in relation to the pornography debate amongst feminists, “pornography is not 'just' consumed, but is used, worked on, elaborated, remembered, fantasised about by its subjects”. The importance of fantasy should not be underestimated. A reader, writing to *Homens*, asked rhetorically why homosexuals bought magazines with male nudes and answered his own question: “Excitar-se é óbvio!” (*Homens*, [n.d.], 1(5), p. 4). The image of the handsome young man as an object of desire dates back to the earliest days of physique photography. The chiselled body (“corpo malhado”) is a more recent addition but points in the same direction of the idealisation of masculinity. Such images, with or without nudity, are prevalent internationally, both in gay pornography and lifestyle magazines, although subject to criticism as outlined above. Their use by *G Magazine* was a sign of its fundamental conservatism but it was following a well-trodden path.

In contrast, its contribution to celebrity culture was unusual, indeed virtually unique (together with Brazilian *Playboy*). Despite opening much of their lives to public scrutiny, celebrities in most of the world have tried strenuously to stop the publication of nude photos showing their genitals, leading to the growth of a minor industry claiming to reveal indiscrete, clandestine shots (Knee, 2006). In the United States, the gay porn industry has created a number of star performers but these are unknown outside their particular niche (Mercer, 2006). *G Magazine*, on the contrary, featured mainstream celebrities, well-known to the general public, who bared their most intimate and private parts to the public gaze by consent and indeed by contract. Some of these were celebrities by achievement (the sportsmen, novela actors and musicians) while others had attributed celebrity (the participants in reality TV shows) but all had become celebrities before they appeared in the magazine. As celebrities, they are commodities which can be bought and sold – Vampeta casually acknowledged in the interview which accompanied the photos that he belonged to the Banco Excel – and, although some models wanted to make a gesture towards sexual freedom or improve their career prospects, most, like Carrieri, did it for the money. This adds an extra dimension to appreciation of the images. For while, as researchers have pointed out, the images undoubtedly position the celebrity subjects as masculine, virile and, by implication when not explicitly stated, heterosexual, they are also commodities, bought through the fee paid for posing and sold to readers on the newsstands. The homosexual consumer has used his purchasing power to take possession of them and is free to do with them what he wishes.

There is an additional aspect to the celebrity nudes, since they also had a life outside the pages of the magazine – their reception by Brazilian society as a whole and the impact on the position of LGBT+ people. *G Magazine* achieved considerable media coverage. Reports and speculation circulated concerning who was going to pose, who had been approached or refused and what fees were supposed to be being paid (*G Magazine* never confirmed the amounts paid but Vampeta was rumoured to have received R\$120,000, three times his monthly salary as a player). The media were always looking for an unusual angle: both *G Magazine* and *Homens* published features with fathers posing nude with their adult sons; *G Magazine* was reported to be negotiating with twins and then triplets; a female reality TV participant appeared in *Playboy* at the same time as her husband posed for *G Magazine*; perhaps most bizarrely, in 2018 it was reported that an actor who had posed nude in *G Magazine* was hoping to play Jesus Christ in a novela produced by a TV station owned by an evangelical church. All this created an aura of sensation around *G Magazine* yet it managed to avoid a reputation for scandal, largely because of its high production values,

the fact that its woman owner was a respected journalist and its conservative business methods, with formal contracts for the models.

Some of the social ramifications of *G Magazine* can be seen in the subsequent careers of the celebrity subjects. Alexandre Frota was an actor with a reputation as a “bad boy” but was popular with *G Magazine* readers and appeared four times in the magazine, selling 80,000 copies of one issue. Subsequently, he starred in heterosexual porn videos but then went into politics, being elected as a federal deputy for São Paulo in 2018. The footballers had varied experiences. When it was known that Vampeta was going to appear nude, the Corinthians manager Wanderley Luxemburgo asked him to wait until the end of the championship or at least until after a decisive game but took no further action. Vampeta used the money to restore a historic cinema in his home-town and later sponsored a LGBT+ parade there. Other football managers banned their players from posing under the terms of their contracts. When the São Paulo FC goal-keeper Roger appeared, the manager Carpegiani dropped him from the team and sent him on loan to another club.

Another facet is the reaction of the players and press. The models were banned by contract from making negative remarks about homosexuality when their photos were published but otherwise were able to express themselves. Vampeta said “Não sou gay, mas respeito a opção de cada um” and “Eu não sou vaidoso nada. Eu não sou modelo, sou atleta profissional e gosto de mim” (Santamarina, 1998; Giacomini, 1998). Roger told an interviewer that his wife had received invitations to pose nude and, although he would be jealous, he had to accept the situation. The sports magazine *Placar* and the widely-read news magazine *Veja* both devoted articles to celebrities appearing nude in gay magazines and a columnist in the liberal *Folha de São Paulo* commented “Se o gesto de Vampeta servir para superar os preconceitos de uma sociedade hipócrita e machista, terá lavrado um tento, mesmo que não seja essa a sua intenção” (Kfoury, 1998). *G Magazine* forced Brazilian society to review its attitudes to sexuality. It also gave a wider platform to gay activists such as João Silvério Trevisan (2006): “Eu, particularmente, considero fascinante propor minhas idéias em meio àqueles paus duros. E ela tem sido hoje o grande canal de comunicação entre a comunidade GLBT brasileira e a luta pelos seus direitos”.

## Conclusion

André Fischer continued to promote the idea of a gay market and had a shot at turning the original dream into reality in 2007 when he launched *Junior*, a high quality, upmarket lifestyle magazine, with a mixture of fashion, attractive male models (not nude)

and articles on LGBT+ culture and politics. The first issues were distinguished by a striking layout and printed on high-quality paper, with a few advertisements by major brands, but it failed to sustain itself in the long-term, ceasing printed publication in 2015. Two similar competitors, *DOM - De Outro Modo* and *Aimé*, were also short-lived.

The idea of an attractive lifestyle magazine, catering to an affluent LGBT+ market and sustained by major brand advertising proved unsustainable in Brazil in the long-term. The main reason given was deep-rooted prejudice against homosexuality amongst the advertisers but one may also question whether such a market existed in Brazil, with the likelihood that such consumers, like the *SuiGeneris* correspondent quoted above, would prefer to buy the foreign originals rather than the local version. In any case, an alternative model was developed using the transgressive but profitable genre of the male nude magazine and the contemporary phenomenon of celebrity culture. *SuiGeneris* adopted a fairly conventional approach, treating celebrity in the main magazine and eroticism separately in *Homens*, profits from which subsidised the original title. *G Magazine* found a far more innovative solution, combining nudity with celebrity, resulting in a formula which was virtually unique to Brazil, and revealed some of the ambiguities and contradictions in Brazilian attitudes towards homosexuality.

That such a solution was not inevitable is shown by the longevity and continuous adaptation to new conditions of *Um Outro Olhar*. However, the circulation figures speak for themselves: 2,500 for *UOO* against 20-30,000 for *SuiGeneris* and 60-110,000 for *G Magazine*. These two commercial magazines had far greater reach and so greater impact than the publications of voluntary organisations could ever hope to. The discrepancy in circulation figures also points to gender differences related to women's reduced economic power: Miriam Martinho's accounts of the history of the *UOO* network make clear that publishing the bulletin/magazine was always a major struggle.

Did the LGBT+ press contribute to the wider social goal promoted by activists of combatting prejudice and discrimination against LGBT+ people? Clearly, these still exist but the success of the GLS formula and the greater visibility in the public sphere, of which *SuiGeneris* and *G Magazine* were an important part, helped to reduce the marginalisation of LGBT+ people and to bring discussion of LGBT+ issues into the mainstream. The transnational concept of a "pink economy" did not take root in Brazil but nevertheless it helped to inspire Brazilians to create something more closely attuned to Brazilian conditions - a colourful, vibrant LGBT+ printed press which lasted for twenty years and reached into the digital era.

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