

Black Panther
Wakandan “Civitas” and
Panthering Futurity

Edited by

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Series in Cinema and Culture



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Introduction

At times so many renderings of the Panther *genre* have been considered and some reviewers weigh in and think it both admirable and reprehensible especially in terms of encapsulating a specific group of people or rather people construed as presentable and at times pejorative despite the progressive and positive portrayal of indigeneity if such an aspect of organic peopling can really be conceived. For various positive reviews at the time of the *Black Panther* film's release see reviews from Natasha Alford of *The Griot*, Jamie Broadnax of *Black Girl Nerds*, Jamelle Bouie of *Slate*. Also, there is Carvell Wallace's timely "Defining Moment" assessment in *The New York Times* that appeared around the same time of the movie's release back in February of 2018. There were so many positive responses, Todd McCarthy of *The Hollywood Reporter*, Peter Debruge at *Variety*, Manohla Dargis of *The New York Times*, Kenneth Turan of *Los Angeles Times*, Richard Roeper, of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Brian Truitt of *USA Today*, Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone*. Many of the media editorials and articles supplied praise and adulation for the movie and its concept.

On the other hand, Devindra Hardawar at *Engadget* considered the special effects at various scenes somewhat unrealistic and rather considered its computer-generated imagery (CGI), and special visual effects which are used to help lessen real stunts activity, but in the case of the film, it might have benefited from more development. Then there is James Wilt, writing for *Canadian Dimension* who considered it adhering to respectability depiction (i.e., politics), and Faisal Kutty from *Middle East Eye*, who pointed to its subtle Islamophobic tendency with its Boko Haram allusion. And Tre Johnson of *Rolling Stone* who felt that the folkic finally arrived at their long-awaited Black superhero moment although with some limitations and in other words Johnson tagged it as differing from the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s in that it seemed like rehashing a twenty-first-century watered-down Blaxploitation formatting. Johnson is certainly pointing out something that resonates with some as the film industry continues to endeavor and attempt to preempt any controversies from accruing, especially when considering the legacy of Black portrayal and imaging on screen.

Nonetheless, in terms of cinematography and reflecting on the *genre* in this instance, we could state that the film version is a one hundred and eighty degree turn away from traditional representation of the Black folkic as in Victor Fleming's directed film *Gone with the Wind* where a gloried "Old South" offered a longed-for, chauvinist past, an antebellum South that encompassed days of enslavement, confederacy, and lost causes. *Gone With the Wind* was one of the

highest-grossing films in history when it premiered on December 15, 1939, that starred Vivian Leigh and Clark Gable, but the movie disparagingly represented content that venerated loyal enslaved people, which was symbolized by the Oscar-winning best-supporting actress Hattie McDaniel as a servant and stereotyped “mammy.” The film plotted subtleties of a benevolent old way of the South and extolled inferiority with a false normativity covertly adulated as a harmfully racist idyllic worldview.

In June of 2020, there was talk of out-servicing the film by HBO Max as noted by *The Hollywood Reporter*, but instead, it ultimately opted to continue access and amending it with a four-and-a-half-minute historical contextualization (at best presented with a disclaimer regarding its controversial historical portrayal). John Ridley, screen writer of *12 Years a Slave*, advocated for censorship because it not only ignored slavery but presented stereotypes; it should have been taken down back then when it first appeared and certainly now, Ridley argued. Its subtle representation of Black lives should be construed as a milder and gentler form of film than director D.W. Griffith’s disreputable and supremacist 1915 *Birth of Nation*. However, with the Black Panther *genre* and film, we find a fuzzy twoness of being both proleptic and prophetic, i.e., a foretelling worldview seen and guised in perhaps not entirely inferior but yet nearer to a sort of presentation of Black full humanism. The *genre’s* humanism substitutes the best humanism that counters a European-descended globalized arrangement that is self-imploding with aspects of extremist culture.

The Panthering *genre’s* attribute or adjunct for suitable humanity works via topological inversion. Its magic formalism or rather theorized on what does it mean to be African and Africa and at times antithetically diasporic presents a newly discovered world within a world equipped with gadgets, and unimaginable technological advances. In the Panther imagination, there is this rupture of the “primitive” human linked to animalistic Panther intellect and agility which is linked to Blackness in the metonymic arrangement. And in linking and delinking old and trifling assumptions of what it means to be African signified as panther and related to a sparsely populated Africa ultimately there is this conveniently discovered and richly endowed place with limitless resources to sustain and even better human life.

The *genre* also ruptures nomadic living with its appearance of disorderlessness and much-ordered high-end civilization hence without chaos. One can consider ancient Egyptian *Isfet* which personifies “disorder” and is countered by an ancient Egyptian goddess referred to as *Ma’at*, i.e., “order.” Wakanda functions orderly with faculties of reasoning; there is strength in Blackness and the Black civilizational image in this *genre* suggests actualized and continuous perpetuity breaking old misunderstood notions with highly proficient governance; their life is not as cruel and selfish as traditionally espoused, but

proficient indigeneity at last is rightly collective and benevolent as it delicately balances autonomy and autochthonous. Etymologically, the Panther *genre* strategically represents a foretelling graciousness and compassionate tranquility.

The proleptic Black civilization invokes harmony and once discovered it is implored to save a world drenched with evil ways, and really outsiders (as is their custom to infiltrate Africa) and quite instinctively pillage and loot. The Panther *genre* reminds us of an obtainable ideal humanism. Anyone of the many characterizations on screen and stripes are shamans fending off primordial chaos (*Isfet*) and semblance of Aryanism with its interminably and inevitable terrible intentions. Diopan two cradle theory comes to mind. The African worldview is seen as an ancient continuous tradition that contends with outside, i.e., disorder as a manifestation of abandonment of the right way. Wakanda must prevent its fall by repelling through covert and overt actions pesky colonizers' intrusion. Two cradles mean Eurasian (nomadic and aggressive) and African (sedentary and peaceful). Wakanda cannot allow dependency hence the true real-life meaning of Black liberation and Diopian concept does not espouse universalizing stages of historical evolution nurtured by one cradle over another or seen as absolutely conflicting, but the primary cradle molds a right way of Black existence never ever intent on world domination in any time frame. The cherished beginnings disrupt the falsification of premier African civilization that once was and always will be at the foundation of everything. The *genre* then makes a case for today when we learn that tomorrow is yesterday. The Panther *genre* then is an augury of a world that has been and that is to come. The Panther dangles a future at our grasps. When the world seems about to end there is this glimmer of light of the better humanity that we see that was hidden and unseen.

The anthology has been partitioned into three segments: reconfiguring, visualizing, and time. All the excerpts share perspectives and thoughts of varying facets. Some venture into comparatives and some critique the *genre's* faulty and short-sighted renditions of a long-sought singularity. The first part of this anthology focuses on the configuring or rather comparative figuration in form and some writers making use of varying content. The writers in this compendium consider the shape of characterization as resulting from disposition of a part and or partial appearances and they contour aspects of the *genre* each in their own way to shed light and delve into specific and variant interests.

The anthology begins with Alicia Matheny Beeson's work, titled "The 'Spirit of Freedom': Wakanda and Black Utopias of the Progressive Era," which engages quite insightfully with an impression of utopia in African American literature. She considers "The volatile and even deadly manifestations of racism throughout American history have pushed black individuals to imagine better

worlds of freedom, prosperity, and security.” Beeson analyzes Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood; Or, The Hidden Self* (1903) and how Hopkins work rewrites the history of the African race and describes a utopian society—a lost Eden—in Africa. She considers the novel’s protagonist Reuel Briggs who discovers the Ethiopian people of Meroe in a secluded, wealthy, long-standing city of Telassar. For Beeson, Telassar is much like Wakanda, where an isolation and secrecy of the society serves as protection from the colonization and enslavement that many Africans faced.

In Hopkins’ work, the hidden city is framed as an incredibly desirable civilization that Black Americans could rejoin after centuries of separation. Beeson also considers, in contrast, Lillian Jones Horace’s *Five Generations Hence* (1916) which, according to Beeson, presents a civilization on the African continent in the process of creation. The novel features Grace Noble, a writer who argues that migrating to Africa would improve Black Americans’ lives. Ironically, though her friend Violet Gray moves to Africa to become a missionary and initiate this ameliorative society for Black Americans, Grace Noble remains in Texas, where her happiness is largely contained within the bounds of her familial home. Thus, Jones Horace presents both living in the United States and migrating to Africa as viable options, though the African community offers more unrestricted freedoms. Like Wakanda, Telassar and Gray’s community are localized utopias: prospering, fulfilling, isolated communities. Considering past examples of imagined and improved communities in Africa contextualizes *Black Panther’s* Wakanda within a long history of Afrocentric utopias.

Diana Forry’s analysis “Souls of Wakanda” explores the intersection of W.E.B. Du Bois’ philosophy with the character struggles that are evident in *Black Panther*. *Black Panther’s* Killmonger is subject primarily to the idea of double consciousness on a personal and global level. The conflict of being raised as African American, while also identifying as Wakandan, drives Killmonger to physically rectify his state of double consciousness. However, it is not until T’Challa wills himself to face the Veil that he is able to understand Killmonger and the double consciousness that has been forced upon him. It is this crisis that compels both Killmonger and T’Challa -and thus the Black Panther *genre* audience in the present time- to confront Du Bois’ double consciousness and what it truly means to be Black in a White world. *Black Panther* displays the continued relevance and importance of W.E.B. Du Bois’ work throughout modern and popular culture.

Grace Gipson’s “Step into the Spotlight: Introducing the Dora Milaje” notes that 2018 began on a very promising note for comic book fans, as the long-awaited Marvel Cinematic Universe *Black Panther* film premiered on February 16th. For Gipson, although T’Challa, also known as Black Panther, was the main

attraction, the Black women in the film demanded just as much attention. Gipson more specifically analyzes a group of fictional female master combatant warriors known as “the adored ones” or the Dora Milaje who as Gipson reviews “stepped into the spotlight.” Gipson delves historically the Dora Milaje within comics which, according to Gipson, is not often discussed, nor is there a surplus of academic inquiry. Making their first appearance in *Black Panther* Vol. 3 #1, “The Client” (November 1998), written by Christopher Priest, their existence in comics is still young. Priest’s rendition is one of several writers who have made use of this *genre*. Gipson adds that this elite all-female Military faction of Wakanda, was formed with the intention of training each young girl as a future wife to T’Challa (Black Panther), king of the fictional country Wakanda. As we read Gipson’s section, we learn that this make-up of women is filled with layers of complexity, addressing issues of tradition, patriarchy, and child warriors. In the earlier interpretations, the Dora Milaje which followed five central characters (Aneka, Ayo, Okoye, Nakia/Malice, and Queen Divine Justice) can be read as submissive warriors who are loyal to the king, must sacrifice their lives, and hide their emotions.

Gipson examines the unique presence of a radical, Black and queer feminist narrative, grounded in African diasporic tradition within the Dora Milaje. Starting with the introduction of the Dora Milaje in 1998, to the present-day personifications of the elite group in the World of Wakanda and Wakanda Forever comic book series, and their cinematic debut in the 2018 Black Panther film, each of these mediums presents a perspective that allows for them to be at the center of the discussion. Moreover, an inquiry into this group of fictional female warriors offers an entry point to query future feminisms, sexuality, and African traditions through the lens of a popular medium. Gipson focuses on the distinctive narratives of these Black female characters who are seen as critical, empowering, humanizing, and give life, while also acknowledging Black female identities that are often minimized or ignored.

In this chapter, we acquire that as fictional characters, the Dora Milaje engage with this representation and become a unique platform that can potentially reach a wide audience.

Gipson explains that in many ways the Dora Milaje narrative and the creative teams behind them are widening the door of complex and diverse storylines within the medium of comic books. Thus, the re-introduction of the Dora Milaje through the various literary and cinematic narratives readers and viewers are able to see how this group of African diasporic women explores and even disrupts the power shifts in a heteronormative, white, male society. All in all, revisiting the Dora Milaje, according to *Black Panther* writer Ta-Nehisi Coates, also “creates a template for how the sexist, troubling backstories of long-standing female characters can be flawlessly course-corrected.” Gipson

concludes this anthology's first segment and transitions the anthology into the other writers' theorizations concerning images seen or rather unseen aspects of conceived meanings and interplay both filmic scenes and comic strips.

Some aspects of this anthology consider visualization and with chapter four we have Aaron Rosenberg's work titled "Cutting the Tongue of the Drum: Black Panther and the Dominion of the Visual" who considers the lack of African music and musicality in the Black Panther comic books together with the recent film and the comic series. Rosenberg claims that given the important position that musical elements serve in many African societies, including those acknowledged in the Black Panther narratives such absence becomes even more noteworthy. This ignorance, deliberate or otherwise, speaks volumes to the perspective of the (re)creators of these stories and their perception of their viewing and reading public's interests and capacities as far as the interpretation of texts.

Aaron Rosenberg seeks to contextualize the reasons behind as well as the manifestation of this absence of musicality not simply as an unintentional oversight on the part of writers and readers but instead as a logical if not inevitable outcome of the technical- aesthetic characteristics of the medium in and out of which the Black Panther cosmos has emerged and the sociocultural circumstances into which these tales have been born. Through a close reading of these mediated forms alongside ethnographic, musicological and literary studies, Rosenberg investigates and formulates responses to the following questions: In what ways does the Black Panther ethos formulate at the same time as it responds to a culture of visual domination which effectively undermines African music and sounds in general? What are the implications of this exclusive phenomenon in the creation of an ostensibly revisionist and even utopic rethinking of Africa? And finally, how can we as discerning observers unpack these realities in order to gain a more balanced and nuanced understanding of the potential and accomplishments of the Black Panther to date and into the literal and literary future?

The fifth chapter presents Sheng-mei Ma's "Afro-Asian Filmic Duet" who notes and converts duet to duel and reviews their similitude as represented in film. His work considers American popular culture, both African American alongside Asian American representations that oftentimes emerge as a cross between a duet and a duel. For Ma, the duality between *a pas de deux*: and *a danse macabre* is insightful. The two symbols of power, quick fist of yellow kung fu and quick tongue of black rappers and comedians, join forces from the 1970s onward, Bruce Lee and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker, Jet Li and DMX, culminating in the problematic rap-punctuated Busan, South Korea, sequence in *Black Panther* (2018). In "black" rather than "white" hands, the Busan casino and car chase scenes come across as same old, same old white

discourse over the Orient. The Afro-Asian filmic duet on the other side of the Pacific Ocean is emboldened by President Xi Jinping's "China Dream." China in Africa energizes Jing Wu's *Wolf Warrior 2* (2017), a jingoistic nationalist sequel to *Wolf Warrior* (2014), not to mention Dante Lam's copycat *Operation Red Sea* (2018). A study of Afro-Asian filmic duet entails a look beyond the casting of leads to cameo appearances and extras; beyond onscreen black and Asian bodies to blackness and Asianness secreted elsewhere; beyond the literal to the figurative.

In the sixth chapter Raquel Baker's "Wakanda Forever: On the Impossibility of Black Visibility" reviews the film *Black Panther* (2018) and examines Ryan Coogler and Joe Robert Cole's use of Afrofuturist and Afropessimistic elements. Baker makes a case for sociopolitical and psychic tensions that inform contemporary modes of African American identification. The arc of the supervillain Erik Killmonger centers on an Africa American identity primarily constituted through loss, abandonment, and a struggle to return. Killmonger's story arc represents African American identification as the monstrous result of abandonment---a monstrousness that must be destroyed. In this way, the writers represent African American identification as a kind of death in line with Afropessimist theories of subjectivity. While the moral arc of the story has Africa return to develop/redeem African Americans Raquel examines what Killmonger's arc allows us to say about the reception of blackness. Elevating African cultures through creating an alternative speculative world that imagines the possibility of African futures is an Afrofuturist technique used to write against the politics of Empire.

Baker's work looks at how the images of African technological advancement connected to the development of an indigenous resource writes against representations of African backwardness, such as Conrad's canonical image of penetrating the *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Such an Afrofuturist imaginary works to challenge the global world system that is enriched by moving resources out of the continent for the benefit of non-Africans. Most important, these speculative practices work to intervene in the underlying philosophical foundation of western modernity, built as it is on hierarchical, racialized modes of subjectivity. The Afrofuturist gestures work to develop a powerful receptiveness of an imagined Pan-African- or hybrid African-- civilization. However, for Raquel Baker Killmonger's death builds African visibility and futurity on the repudiation of African American homing. This trope of antagonism allows for a key ethos of western modernity to be maintained: black abjection/white supremacy. Using visual theorists, such as Nicole Fleetwood. Baker argues that as a literary or representational device, Killmonger's death allows the audience to experience empathy toward African-ness without requiring a real epistemic disruption with modernity or a

transformation of racialized subjectivity as a hierarchical form of identification. In line with Fanon's explication of how the white gaze affects a kind of annihilation of a healthy Black subjectivity, Killmonger's death retains blackness as a problem in the visual field while seemingly centering black futures.

In chapter seven, according to Daniel Conway's titled piece, "Black Ajax: Why Must N'Jadaka Die?" the creators of the film *Black Panther* raise a philosophical question for which they have no credible response: What is to be done with (or about) N'Jadaka, aka Erik Stevens, aka Killmonger? Conway reviews the arc of the hero's narrative, which clearly belongs to T'Challa and argues that this narrative requires a sustained (and ultimately triumphant) encounter with a Doppelgänger (or "evil twin") antagonist. Conway directs our attention to the story, as the audience realizes very early in the film, that T'Challa must dispense the merciful justice that will establish his fitness to rule, while Killmonger must perish. But why? Conway enquires.

Conway urges that the creators of *Black Panther* would have us believe that Killmonger is a lost cause. Despite his intelligence, perseverance, and formidable martial skills-not to mention his unerring advocacy on behalf of oppressed persons of color across the globe-he cannot be rehabilitated. He thrives in a world at war, and he will instinctively start or escalate the conflicts in which he will feel most at home. In short, there is no place for him in Wakanda or in any other nation that is dedicated to peaceful coexistence with other nations. Conway considers two aspects: One, the creators of *Black Panther* are obliged to follow a visionary first act and a thrilling second act with a desultory, tedious, and barely coherent third act, in which they encourage viewers to conclude that Killmonger is better off dead. Two, for all its prosperity, leadership, culture, and technological sophistication, Wakanda displays a flaw common to many wealthy nations: it cannot tolerate (much less accommodate) one of its own who has lost his way. Nor is it prepared to acknowledge its own role in forsaking one of its own.

If granted an appropriate period of transition, nurture, and adjustment, could Killmonger not have been trusted to serve, alongside T'Challa, as minister of defense? Apparently not. Here we should note, moreover, that Wakanda's poor treatment of Killmonger reflects its more general disdain for impoverished persons of color across the globe, with whom it refuses to share its wealth. The Wakandans go so far as to hide behind-and, so, perpetuate the tired stereotype of the underdeveloped, pre-civilized, third-world African nation. Despite being blessed with an abundance of the vibranium-infused heart-shaped herb, Wakanda lacks heart.

And lastly, there is this, in presenting Killmonger as intractably violent and antisocial, the creators of *Black Panther* come perilously close to reviving the

odious stereotype of the angry black male, who, once enraged, reverts to his native savagery. The righteous, justice-oriented character of Killmonger's indignation is thus displaced behind what audiences are urged to understand as the maelstrom of nihilistic, anarchic enmity in which he is permanently engulfed. Like many black men, Killmonger becomes, in the words of philosopher Tommy Curry, a "man-not."

Conway compares the characterization of Killmonger with that of Ajax. And offers an aspect of Ajax presented by the Greek tragedian, Sophocles, who recounts a similar story. According to Conway at the conclusion of the Trojan War, in a time of hard-won peace, the armor of the fallen Achilles is awarded (by Agamemnon and Menelaus) not to its rightful and deserving heir, Telamonian Ajax, but to the clever Odysseus. While there is no question that Ajax is the greatest surviving warrior, the end of the Trojan War calls for a different decision, which is made, as we learn, by appealing to a different set of criteria. (One is reminded here that T'Challa availed himself of a cheap technicality in order to resume and win the apparently concluded challenge for his throne.) Although Odysseus lacks the battlefield presence and valor of the great Ajax, his skill set is deemed to be better suited to the transitional epoch that follows the conclusion of the Trojan War. Conway assesses Ajax is judged to be a relic, a throwback, and he is of little or no use to peace-loving Achaeans. Like Killmonger, moreover, Ajax is regarded as expendable: Having been driven to madness by Athena, an enraged Ajax unwittingly commits shameful acts that oblige him to take his own life. Like T'Challa, Odysseus is now free to lead without challenge or objection, save those raised by dissatisfied readers (in the case of Ajax) and viewers (in the case of *Black Panther*).

According to Conway, Plato sees things differently. The central gamble of his magisterial Republic involves an intensive program of education that is designed to train the warrior class (the Guardians) to be fierce with foes and gentle with friends. It is not an exaggeration to state that Plato's entire enterprise of designing a just city is dependent upon the success of this program of education. If it fails, we may expect to witness either of the outcomes proposed in the third act of *Black Panther*: pre-emptive military aggression on the part of the ascendant warrior class or the defeat of an upstart warrior class by a just and (miraculously) revenant king.

Conway continues with more answered queries in his piece, what if Plato's program of education, or something like it, were to succeed? Would not Ajax, Killmonger, and their remaindered brothers in arms be welcome contributors to peaceable societies? That this contrary hypothesis remains unconfirmed invites a deeper philosophical question: Why have so few actual societies (or "cities in fact") attempted the kind and intensity of education that Plato recommends for the warriors who will defend his "city in speech?" Is it possible

that the creation of warriors who will be disposable in peacetime is precisely what most war-inclined societies have intended to accomplish? Indeed, do not many of our returned and returning soldiers experience something like the ingratitude and exploitation to which Killmonger forcefully attests? Conway concludes his chapter by treating Wakanda's (and T'Challa's) failure with respect to Killmonger as an occasion to revisit and update Plato's proposal for the education of thoughtful, peace-loving warriors. Conway makes use of the reconsideration of Plato's proposal as confirmation of the distance that currently separates us, and as affirmed by Conway, especially with respect to our treatment of wounded warriors, from the best version of our own society.

The last two chapters of this anthology turn from visualization to time, that is time in the sense of origins and as well as time in relation to positive virtuousness perceived from African anteriority readily symbolized in the Panther *genre*. In the eighth chapter, Jorge Serrano's "Juxtapositioned Wakanda and Black Metonymy" ventures into the Afrotopic ideal and civilizational advancement. Serrano contends with aspects of origins and receptions of the Black civilizational image and narration as literary artifact specifically seen in film and graphic novel, which discloses an understanding of various Africa and African (diasporic) characterizations and their *aetiologia* and embellishment. Serrano juxtaposes the ideal and/or dystopic civilizational interpretive. His work presents various sides understood on screen (and/or comics) regarding reading text and how it reveals connectivity from or to a Black past, particularly locating eutopic (and or utopic? nowhere, i.e., ineffectual) notions that counter or affirm traditional gazes upon Black civilization. Serrano's reading renders notions of identity as racial and colonial processes that require theoretical and literary inquiry, and which lends itself to making whole a dimidiated exhibition. Understanding this filmic representation entails an intersecting analysis. His work considers themes that situate narrative, anti-hero heroism, character symbolism, epistemic grouping fissure, consciousness epiphanies, global impact, empire, contradiction, and Marvel franchise (re)structuring.

His work juxtaposes cognizance and inference of African (read as a Black racialized civilizational trope) and what he refers to as its "Panthering meta-effect" (and construed outcome as a foretelling futurity that implicates entrenched socialized humanity), which perhaps replicates contentious and mingled divisive continuance and hence an entrapped perpetuity and manifest continued great right-wing disputation precipitated by fear of a threatening Black parity and replacement. Juxtapositioning presents challenges and situates philosophies on civilizational worldly schema, i.e., an African past and present that embody a propensity and not actualization of an inextricable and longed-for ameliorative futurity. Such aspects presented in this chapter

consider time and space and their looped continuum that adds another layer to understanding the *genre* as textual cultural (re)reading.

In the ninth and last chapter of this anthology, Patricia Varas' "*Black Panther* and *Quilombo*, Wakanda and Palmares: How the Past Dreams the Future and the Future Remembers the Past, Creating Afrocentric Utopias across Time and Space" begins with the 1984 Brazilian director Carlos Diegues, of Cinema Novo, who successfully created *Quilombo*. Varas compares Diegues and the thirty-four years later, Ryan Coogler's directed film *Black Panther*. According to Varas, both films have commonalities, and she engages it through a comparative analysis of the historical, social, and cultural backgrounds of Brazil and the United States as a whole. She considers the aesthetics involved in the filmmaking, the commonalities they share. Varas offers that both films employ myths, the ability of their leaders to keep a spiritual connection with their ancestors, similar male heroes perceived as struggling against villains that are not so villainous, and both have strong warrior-like female characters, among others.

For Varas, whereas *Black Panther* uses the superhero and science fiction format to create a futuristic utopia, i.e., Wakanda, *Quilombo* grounds its narrative in legend and the historical community of Palmares (1605-1694). Varas suggests that the films express an urgent need for African diasporas to create narratives that respond to diasporic yearnings. While racism in Brazil and the United States differs, its impact is similar: the intersectionality of race and poverty confirm that Blacks continue to suffer, according to Varas' assessment. Varas unpacks another variance of the utopia motif and suggests that the Afro-Americans and Afro-Brazilians are reevaluating their cultures. And while representation of empowerment takes place, its duration remains debatable.

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