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Difficult to Digest: Rubem Fonseca's *"Intestino Grosso"* ["Large Intestine"] as a Scatological Theory of Crime Fiction

Abstract

Brazilian writer Rubem Fonseca's crime fiction has oft been examined through the lens of its blunt force, obscene and vulgar language, and harsh representations of violence. This aesthetic is characterized as self-reflective, meta-textual, brutalist, naturalist, indigestible, and even humorous at times. Yet, all of the arguments converge on one essential point, namely to attest to the historical and political significance of Fonseca's writing as a critique of the military dictatorship in Brazil. Fonseca parodies the threat he, himself, poses, which, although real, is insignificant when compared to the overwhelming oppression of poverty within neoliberal capitalism, state-sponsored violence, and censorship that threatens to silence him forever. In this article Nicole Sparling Barco argues that, in order to fully understand the affect/effect of the bandit-poet's aesthetic, a comparison must also be drawn from "O Cobrador" to the fictional work that is often considered to be Fonseca's political and poetic manifesto, namely "Intestino Grosso" ["Large Intestine"] (1975). This strange title has strong metaphorical and explanatory power that organizes what the author calls Fonseca's scatological theory of crime fiction, suggesting a reclamation, on the part of Fonseca, of "useless waste material.

Keywords: Rubem Fonseca, theory of crime fiction, *Intestino Grosso*

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Brazilian writer Rubem Fonseca's crime fiction has oft been examined through the lens of its blunt force, obscene and vulgar language, and harsh representations of violence. In fact, many critics have made convincing arguments about the complexity of Fonseca's aesthetic, which reflects a banal reality, but is also critical of violence and its representation. These critics characterize Fonseca's aesthetic as self-reflective, meta-textual, brutalist, naturalist, indigestible, and even humorous at times. Yet, all of their arguments converge on one essential point, namely to attest to the historical and political significance of Fonseca's writing as a critique of the military dictatorship in Brazil. [1] Fonseca's aesthetic of "indecency" or "obscenity" manages to both expose state-sponsored violence and the government's efforts to cover it up through propaganda and censorship, and, simultaneously, to intervene in these processes in powerful and innovative ways. By making his brutal representations of crime "obscene," he poses a conundrum for the military dictatorship. On one hand, in order to "protect" citizens from exposure to Fonseca's "indecent" violent representations, they could censor him; thus, they reveal their hypocrisy in policing "decency" as they violate its very principles in actuality. On the other hand, they could allow Fonseca to publish and, indirectly, support the "obscenity" in his writing, and, consequently, open themselves up to critique by their own adherents or by those who recognize Fonseca's critique. In both scenarios, the reader is shocked out of complacency and the hypocrisy of the military regime becomes subject to indictment, whether by its devotees or by its adversaries.

One of the more illustrative examples of this writing technique is Fonseca's crime story, "O Cobrador" ["The Taker"] [2] (1979), which situates its audience as a voyeur in a dark, gritty urban realism that privileges the deranged psyche of the criminal and his sadistic pleasure in performing criminal acts. We gain access to the stream of consciousness of the criminal, "O Cobrador," who feels that his society "owes" him, and commits heinous and horrific random acts of violence against those who have been privileged through the capitalist urban economy in order to collect from his "debtors." His crimes include maiming a dentist, gunning down a man in a Mercedes, killing a pregnant woman and her unborn fetus, beheading a rich man, raping a housewife, and executing an executive. While his actions cannot be attributed to any specific psychological trauma (other than his abject poverty) or any particular psychological condition or diagnosis (beyond perhaps sociopathy), the only logic appearing to govern his violent acts is a golden rule, as it were, not to harm those who are more "miserable" than he is, namely those with bad/missing teeth. [3] What seems, at first, to constitute a form of vigilante justice motivated by the bandit's interpretation of social justice, later in the story is transformed through romance into a more systematized large-scale effort governed by the "logic" of terrorism. Indeed, one could argue that "O Cobrador," himself, acts as both criminal and detective, who searches for the precise nature of the crime against him (and the collective he claims to represent, namely "those with bad/missing teeth") and attempts to discover an overarching motive that would connect his otherwise

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indiscriminate acts of violence.

The sensibility of the reader is verbally assaulted by this raw, uncensored narrative, with its blunt force and brutal language, which casts doubt on the literary nature of a text with such a troubling aesthetic and content. How do we read and understand a work of fiction that, on the surface, exploits the pain of others and glorifies violence by situating the reader as a voyeur, who, by continuing to read, engages in sadistic pleasure or who cannot put the text down out of fascination, shock, or utter disgust? And yet, an analysis of the metafictional qualities of Fonseca's crime story reveals how Fonseca forces the reader to take on the role of detective, who must simultaneously investigate the mind and motives of the criminal *and* the writer. In "O Cobrador," the criminal *and* the writer materialize in the recurring figure of the "bandit-poet," who is also, by extension, Fonseca, himself; indeed, "O Cobrador" interjects political diatribes masqueraded as poetry into the narrative and commits politically motivated crimes in order to literalize his version of poetic justice.

My research builds on that of Luciana Paiva Coronel, who describes the manner in which the recurring figure of the "bandit-poet" emerges in Fonseca's work: "Sem deixar de dar voz ao artista que se aproxima simbolicamente do bandido, o autor complementa a marginalidade simbólica daquele com a marginalidade aparentemente mais real do próprio bandido, construindo por meio de ambas a identidade marginal de sua produção ficcional, marcada por uma violência implacável […]" ["Without giving the artist a voice that imitates that of the bandit, the author complements the bandit's symbolic marginality with a marginality seemingly more real than that of the bandit, himself, constructing through both the marginal identity of his own fictional production, marked by relentless violence"] ("A representação da violencia," 189). Here, the bandit-poet occupies a doubly marginal position—"O Cobrador" concretizes his poetic vision through actual violence and assaults the reader with the violence of his prose. For Antonio Rediver Guizzo, the particularity of Fonsequian prose, "além de simbolizar o aspecto transgressor da arte e realçar a orientação agressiva do discurso – o narrador é o bandido, o protagonista da violência –, mescla, sem hierarquia e de forma justificada, a cultura popular com a cultura erudita." ["besides symbolizing the transgressive aspect of art and intensifying the aggressive orientation of discourse—the narrator and the bandit, the protagonist of violence—, mixes, without hierarchy and in a form that is warranted, popular culture with erudite culture" (Guizzo 33). In a metafictional move, Fonseca, himself, also satirizes the bandit-poet's vulgar aesthetic and the assumption that it emerges from his innate criminality as opposed to his socioeconomic marginality. As such, Fonseca parodies the threat he, himself, poses, which, although real, is insignificant when compared to the overwhelming oppression of poverty within neoliberal capitalism, state-sponsored violence, and censorship that threatens to silence him forever.

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Indeed, I would argue that, in order to fully understand the affect/effect of the bandit-poet's aesthetic, we must also compare "O Cobrador" to the fictional work that is often considered to be Fonseca's political and poetic manifesto [4], namely "Intestino Grosso" ["Large Intestine"] (1975). This strange title has strong metaphorical and explanatory power that organizes what I call Fonseca's scatological theory of crime fiction. In biological terms, the large intestine functions to store waste material and process previously undigested material, absorbing vitamins and restoring the fluid balance of the body, eventually passing useless waste material from the body. The bodily function of the large intestine, as organizing metaphor, suggests a reclaiming, on the part of Fonseca, of "useless waste material." This abject material contained and produced by the large intestine represents, therefore: 1) linguistically, the obscene, vulgar material that is often systematically purged on the level of language; 2) geopolitically, those people who are devalued, cast out, rendered invisible, and considered disposable within a neoliberal capitalist framework, or, to gloss Fonseca, "miserable people without teeth"; and, finally, 3) judicially, in terms of those identified as criminals, guerrillas, and terrorists during a declared state of exception and extra-judicially, in terms of those opponents of the military dictatorship who were tortured, imprisoned, and executed or disappeared. Fonseca's theory of crime fiction, as articulated in "Intestino Grosso," re-incorporates or "desexcomuniga" [un-excommunicates] such scatological material, thus staging an affront to sensibility, launching an attack on elevated definitions of human nature, and forcing us, as readers, to confront a heinous reality, brought to light only by examining that which society expels, conceals, abandons, and eliminates. As such, Fonseca's "Intestino Grosso" solidifies the connection between language, matter, and people in his aesthetic project, but, at the same time, reminds us of what can/will not be uttered and those who are rendered "disposable people," either through their poverty or their politics.

The question remains as to whether Fonseca and his fictional author are, to put it crudely, "full of shit" or whether a scatological approach to his writing can reveal something about the often shocking, profane, vulgar, and ruthless violence of his prose. As Christopher J. Ballantyne has so aptly stated, "By now it should become evident that the ostensible anti-metaphorical prescriptions articulated in 'Intestino Grosso' are themselves a metaphor for the literary endeavor upon which Rubem Fonseca has embarked" (Ballantyne 16). This observation brings us to the question of whether there is, moreover, anything of "value" in such "useless waste material from the body"? And if the large intestine can, indeed, be an organic metaphor for the language of crime, the urban landscape (Rio de Janeiro) [5], and crime fiction itself, then what is the nature of the "useless waste material," how is it eliminated, and what should be our ethical relation to it? This line of questioning informs, what I am calling Fonseca's "scatological theory of crime fiction," in that it is "characterized by a preoccupation with obscenity" (OED). Since "scatology," in its very definition, links together "[t]hat branch of science which deals with diagnosis by means of the fæces [sic]"

and “filthy literature,” so to does Fonseca align the role of the scientist, who searches for evidence in human waste to determine the health of the physical body, with his own readers, who analyze his “filthy literature” in order to uncover the truth about the body politic.

According to Pere Camellas, in “Rubem Fonseca and Noir Literature,” Fonseca’s “Intestino Grosso” could be described as “uma suposta entrevista a um escritor que ja foi interpretada como auto-entrevista do proprio Fonseca” [a supposed interview with a fictional writer that has been interpreted as a self-interview by Fonseca] (67-68). When the fictional writer is asked by the narrator why he chose writing, in particular, as a profession, he writes: “Gente como nos ou vira santo ou maluco, ou revolucionário ou bandido. Como não havia verdade no Êxtase nem no Poder, fiquei entre escritor e bandido” [“People like us either become a saint or go crazy, turn into a revolutionary or a bandit. Since there was no truth in Ecstasy or in Power, I ended up somewhere between writer and bandit”] (136; 461). The parallelism in this passage suggests that, given the elimination of sainthood and revolutionary, perhaps the writer, himself, is also part “maluco” [“crazy”] and part “bandido” [“bandit”]. In Roberto da Matta’s *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, he defines various figures that occupy the positions of heroes within the Brazilian national context: “we can say that the avenger, the social bandit, and the renouncer can be taken as crucial Brazilian heroes and studied as part of the same continuum” (266). For Da Matta,

> [T]hose who remain imprisoned in the past and to *vingança* (vengeance) as their basic social code and form of relationship tend to become bandits—or, ‘social bandits’ to use Eric Hobsbawn’s expression—and enter the *cangaço* (the backwoods) or the urban criminal underworld. Indeed, social bandits usually have a personal history marked by vengeance; and, as general or collective avengers, they tend to be given legitimacy by the people of the region where they operate, whom they come to represent in some way (see Hobsbawn 1969). Social bandits, then, have a biography marked by the same destiny as the Count of Monte Cristo: first he suffers injustice at the hands of his enemies, who are generally powerful landowners or wealthy businessmen; later he enters a liminal and highly dangerous zone. There he earns his power and develops his social resources, which are generally associated with the supernatural realm. There the paradox of cruelty and spontaneous generosity toward human beings in general and the poor in particular becomes part of the definition of his social personality. Finally, he takes his vengeance on the rich in a general way by stealing from them and giving to the poor, reverting the normal flow of goods and money. It is in this promotion of justice with his own hands and resources that one finds the legitimacy and popularity of these characters. (216)

In both instances (“Intestino Grosso” and “O Cobrador”), Fonseca’s bandit-poets reaffirm that there is something of value in “miserable people without teeth” who are often rendered “useless waste material” by the state. As such, his bandit-poets avenge marginalized peoples

not by redistributing wealth, but rather by "wasting" the lives of those who benefit from the state's economic policies and military protection.

In "'O Cobrador' and the Crisis of Violence: The Brazilian City at a Crossroads," Chris T. Schulenberg confirms this notion that redistributive justice occurs in the text on the level of human life: "Again death will compensate the Cobrador for the food, cars, and clothes that he does not have the funds to obtain" (34), so that "O Cobrador" collects lives to accommodate for the loss of people who live on the margins. The action is, thus, reciprocal—"O Cobrador" feels injustice for "the miserable people without teeth," who are considered "waste material" by the body politic, and, in turn, targets the wealthy elite, who are, in his mind, "disposable people." The bandit-poet's upper-class victims and, by extension, his audience, who, at a minimum, is literate, are horrified and remain, perhaps, willfully ignorant of their own indirect participation in the suffering of "others," and are shocked by the violent response of "O Cobrador," who refuses to accept any monetary incentives in order to spare them their lives or the truth. As such, "O Cobrador" refuses to participate in the economy that dehumanizes him, which is therefore converted into an economy where one devalued, dehumanized "life" is exchanged for a privileged, entitled "life." As Schulenberg suggests, "Nevertheless, the personal meditations of this narrator also reveal a curiously positive social face for the poet's murderous efforts" (34). Whether or not we find "O Cobrador" to be a deranged individual, he, himself is convinced of the valiance of his efforts and the justice that it represents.

By demanding to be paid "por palavra," the bandit-poet from "Intestino Grosso," on the other hand, exploits the system that marginalizes him, by making others pay, literally and metaphorically, for what he calls his "pornographic" fiction. The only words that he offers without compensation, "palavras de graça" ["free words"] are "Adote um árvore e mate uma criança" ["Adopt a tree and kill a kid"] (135; 460), words that refer to the canonical literature already in circulation that he critiques, namely novels that contemplate nature and beauty in an abstract form, and refuse to face a raw reality, and fairytales populated with depraved individuals, who perform heinous acts, such as the murder of children, in order to teach a "moral" lesson. Meant to shock and invoke curiosity, his "palavras de graça" not only entice the editor to pay him "por palavra," but also force the reader to contemplate his/her own aesthetic values, to the point of questioning whether or not this fictional interview, itself, is worth reading. Provocatively, the bandit-poet claims, "Sempre achei que uma boa história tem que terminar com alguém morto. Estou matando gente até hoje" ["I always thought that a good story had to end with somebody dying. I am still killing people"] (135; 461). His own form of redistributive justice occurs in the way that he makes visible "miserable people without teeth" and mocks the "load of crap" that has been fed to his people. This "load of crap" is exemplified by literature so far from their own reality in space and time as in 1) *Cartas da Duquesa de San Severino* [*Letters from the Duchess of San Severino*], or, as the

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bandit-poet describes it, “um romance que tem flores, beleza, nobreza e dinheiro” [“a novel with flowers, beauty, nobility, and money”], and 2) fairytales such as Joãozinho e Maria (i.e., Hansel and Gretel), which he describes as “uma historia indecente, desonesta, vergonhosa, obscena, despudorada, suja e sordida” [“an indecent, dishonest, embarrassing, obscene, immodest, dirty, and sordid story” (136, 138; 462, 463). Underlying both of these stories is a fascination with both consumption and consummation, as exemplified in the word “comer,” which literally means “to eat” in Portuguese and, which, in Brazilian slang, can also mean “to have sex” (see Lowe 144). In both accounts, either starving people populate the texts or sexual consummation is thwarted. In the instance of the Duchess, the Duchess’s teeth, which, although seemingly “brancos, perfeitos” [“white, perfect”], are actually false and the bandit-poet remarks on “à dificuldade que ela tem de comer um pêssego” [“the difficulty she has in eating a peach,” (137; 462) meaning that she cannot consume or ingest properly in the first place. This last point is a clear reference to T.S. Eliot’s poetic persona J. Alfred Prufrock and, via this comparison, a sexual metaphor for the Duchess’s undesirability and, as such, her inability to consummate a romantic relationship. In its place, she ends the novel alone, tending to orchids instead of children. As for “Hansel and Gretel,” their poverty and the lack of available food, not their teeth, prevent them from eating—so that, there is nothing to digest in the first place. Their parents, and the evil witch who lures them into captivity, will sacrifice Hansel and Gretel to ensure their own survival, the former through neglect and abandonment and the latter through sheer cannibalism. Sexual acts do not appear in this story, other than as a foregone conclusion, and, for the starving people, nourishment and survival can only be garnered by trickery, murder, and theft. In both of these examples, Fonseca’s “free words” are proven to already be in circulation: “Adopt a tree and kill a kid”; and yet, the horror that they evoke forces us to reckon with the values of our aesthetic inheritance. [6]

All in all, Fonseca’s aesthetic critique of these two exemplary texts that represent his definition of the canon of literary and oral tradition, ridicules the censors who would allow stories of people who cannot or choose not to consume in a period of abundance and people living in poverty with nothing to eat, but would consider his own works pornographic because they highlight where those categories intersect: “Sou [escritor pornográfico], os meus livros estão cheios de miseráveis sem dentes” [“I am [a pornographic writer], my books are full of miserable people without teeth”] (136; 461). If we were to formulate this as a Venn diagram, Fonseca’s argument shows how the intersection of the two categories within the canon is hidden or elided by the overrepresentation of the symmetric difference. “The miserable people without teeth” occupy the space of the intersection, namely those who cannot eat and have nothing to ingest; thus, these starving/starved figures can never be consumers and, instead, they are made vulnerable to being consumed by the body politic, in the sense of being expended or wasted. [7]

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In a metafictional move, "Intestino Grosso" (the short story) references *Intestino Grosso*, which is the name of the "fictional" novel that the "fictional" author writes, which has been concealed under the fake title of *O Anão que era Negro, Padre, Corcunda e Míope [The Dwarf Who Was Black, a Priest, Hunchback and Nearsighted]*, in which he argues that "para entender a natureza humana, é preciso que todos os artistas desexcomunguem o corpo, investiguem, da maneira que só nós sabemos fazer, ao contrário dos cientistas, as ainda secretas e obscuras relações enre o corpo e a mente, esmiúcem o funcionamento do animal em todas as suas interações" ["in order to understand human nature, it is necessary that all artists excommunicate [sic] the body and investigate—in the way that only we know how to do, contrary to the method of scientists—the still secret and obscure relations between body and mind, minutely observe the functioning of the animal in all his interactions"] (141-142; 465). [8] In religious terms, to excommunicate means to exclude from membership/communion in the body of the (Catholic) church, but here Fonseca's use of the prefix "des" signals a reversal; indeed, to "un-excommunicate" would mean a reintegration of the sacred and profane into the body (and the body politic) itself and a reconfiguration of the nature of man to reflect the essential animality of humanity, by penetrating the gritty realism and psychological censure of our urges and impulses.

Indeed, he promotes the representation of the pornographic as a necessary catharsis, contradicting the assumption that we could somehow be sullied by reading obscene literature or that we could learn pathological ("morbid" or "antisocial") behaviors from it:

> O erro me parece ser a pressuposição de que as inhibições sejam necessárias ao equilíbrio individual. Parece-me mais verdadeiro o oposto—as inhibições sem possibilidade de desopressão podem causar sérios males á saúde dos indivíduos. Uma sábia organização social deveria impedir que fossem reprimidos esses comunicativos caminhos de alívio vicário e de redução de tensão. As alternativas para a pornografia são a doença mental, a violência, a Bomba. (139)
>
> [The mistake seems to me to be the presumption that inhibitions are necessary to individual balance. The opposite seems truer to me—[inhibitions?] without the possibility of release can cause serious damage to the individual's health. A wise social organization should prevent the repression of these communication channels that provide vicarious relief and the reduction of tension. The alternatives to pornography are mental illness, violence, the Bomb.] (464)

The bandit-poet reflects on the nature of pornography: "Mas basicamente a pornografia que ainda existe hoje é resultado de um latente preconceito antibiológico da nossa cultura" ["But basically the pornography which still exists today is the result of a latent antibiological prejudice in our society"] (140; 464). Accordingly, he laments the loss of connection that we have with the body, in which direct vulgar language has been replaced by euphemism and metaphor [9]:

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> Mas quando os defensores da decência acusam alguma coisa de pornográfica é porque ela descreve ou representa funções sexuais ou funções excretoras, com ou sem o uso de nomes vulgares comumente referidos como palavrões. O ser humano, alguém já disse, ainda é afetado por tudo aquilo que o relembra inequivocamente de sua natureza animal. (138)
>
> [But when the defenders of decency accuse something of being pornographic it is because it describes or represents sexual or excretory functions, with or without the use of words commonly referred to as 'swear words.' The human being, someone has already said, is still affected by everything which reminds him unequivocally of his animal nature.] (463)

Indeed, the bandit-poet also acknowledges the power of language as resistance: "o uso de palavras proibidas é uma forma de contestação anti-repressiva" ["the use of prohibited words is a form of antirepressive response" (140; 464). However, it is not only obscene, vulgar language, but also shocking ideas meant to astonish those who uphold standards of decency that can challenge hegemonic ideologies and practices. When the bandit-poet revises his shocking original proclamation, "[a]dopt a tree and kill a kid," to the no-less-shocking version, "adote um animal selvagem e mate um homem" ["adopt a savage animal and kill a man"] (142; 466), he challenges us, as readers, to question social values—is human life devalued such that these proclamations actually represent a raw, uncensored reality? Is our environment in such peril that it will not survive our capacity to consume it? Could a more posthuman approach allow us to recognize the animal aspects of ourselves and the interconnectedness between ourselves and our environment? The true threat to human decency here is not in the bandit-poet's pronouncement, but rather in the experience of living under dictatorship itself.

Also telling is the fact that the "fictional" author of "Intestino Grosso" concludes by proposing a "New Religion," which he names "Mystic Cannibalism," with gestures toward Oswald de Andrade's "Manifesto Antropófago" ["Cannibalist Manifesto"] of the Semana de Arte Moderno [Modern Art Week] and to Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal": "Vai chegar o dia em que a melhor herança que os pais podem deixar para os filhos será o próprio corpor, para os filhos comerem. […] Está havendo um terrível desperdício de proteínas. Swift e outros já disseram coisa parecida, mas estavam fazendo sátira. O que eu proponho é uma Nova Religião, Superantropocêntrica, O Canibalismo Místico" ["The day will come when the greatest inheritance that parents can leave their children will be their own body, for their children to eat. […] A terrible waste of protein is going on. Swift and others already said something similar, but they were making satire. What I propose is a New Religion, Superanthropocentric, Mystic Cannibalism"] (142-143; 466). On the one hand, Swift proposes the cannibalism of the youth as a satiric solution to overpopulation, poverty, and starvation, and, in effect, asks the Irish to sacrifice the future of their people for the sake of momentary satiation; to violate their own religious, moral, and ethical

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codes; and to reduce themselves to "barbaric" practices in order to survive. Oswald de Andrade, on the other hand, reclaims cannibalism as an indigenous practice and as a metaphor for a modernist aesthetic particular to Brazil, in which the artist devours cultural elements that he/she encounters and discerns what is worth incorporating and what should be eliminated as waste. In contradistinction, what Fonseca imagines is a dystopic future in which cannibalism becomes the only option because there is literally nothing left to consume. His reference to "[a] terrible waste of protein" is equivocal—at the same time that Fonseca proposes that children subsist on the bodies of their parents, he is critiquing the wasting of human lives (as in the "miserable people without teeth" and those who oppose the military dictatorship) and a culture in which consumption has become the ultimate human act. As Elizabeth Lowe remarks, "Anthropophagic imagery, in its function of manifesting the city as organism, is further developed in Fonseca's narratives from the image of the tooth to that of the wound. Just as the underdog is toothless, so it is he who is 'bled' by society" (Lowe 144). Literally reviling, metaphorically rich, and satirically satisfying, the proposed consumption of one's predecessors for the benefit of one's own future subsistence represents a world in which the new generation devours the old traditions and ideologies, finds a bit of nourishment, survives abject poverty, and eliminates what has no longer has "use" value. In a way, this counterrevolutionary movement has the potential to reverse the patterns established under dictatorship, in which new ideas and political challenges were silenced through the torture, disappearing, and murder of those who voiced them.

When asked if he would feast on his own parents, the bandit-poet sardonically turns the various forms of food preparation, but, ultimately concludes that: "É uma questão de gusto" ["It's a matter of taste"] (143; 466). And yet, the question remains: How can Fonseca's toothless characters possibly participate in such a cannibalizing act? Can the bandit-poet be anything other than a starving artist or presume to create art with nothing but the vulgar material that surrounds him/her? Grounded in the dogmatic and fostered by the faith of its adherents, Mystic Cannibalism aligns language, body, and urban landscape and advocates for a pornographic aesthetic. The bandit-poet divides pornography into four distinct categories: 1) "Pornografia da Vida" ["Pornography of Life"] (142; 465); 2) "A Morte Pornográfica" ["Pornographic Death"] (142; 466); 3) "Pornografia de Gorer" ["Pornography of Gorer" (142; 466); and 4) "Pornografia Terrorista" ["Terrorist Pornography"] (141; 465). Whereas "Intestino Grosso" engages directly, in its very title and organizing metaphor, with the "Pornography of Life," namely, "ligada aos órgãos de excreção e de reprodução, à vida, às funções que caracterizam a resistência à morte---alimentação e amor, e seus exercícios e resultados: excremento, cópula, esperma, gravidez, parto, crescimento" ["linked to the organs of excretion and reproduction, to life, to the functions that characterize resistance to death—feeding and love, and its exercises and results: excrement, copulation, sperm, pregnancy, labor, growth"] (142; 465), it references, metaphorically, Pornographic Death

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and the Pornography of Gorer, which deal with "a morte como um processo natural, resultante da decadência física" ["death as a natural process, resulting from physical decay"] and "[a] outra morte—dos crimes, das catástrofes, dos conflitos, a morte violenta" ["[t]he other death—by crime, catastrophe, conflict, violent death"] (142; 465-466). The kind of pornography, however, that informs the bandit-poet's Mystic Cannibalism and "O Cobrador's" Christmas Manifesto is Terrorist Pornography; on the subject, the former writes: "Exemplos destacados desse gênero são os livros do Marquês de Sade e de William Burroughs, que causam surpresa, pasmo e horror nas almas simples, livros onde não existem árvores, flores, pássaros, montanhas, rios, animais—somente a natureza humana" ["Distinguished examples of this genre are the books by Marquis de Sade and William Burroughs, which cause surprise, revulsion and horror in simple souls, books where there are no trees, flowers, birds, mountains, rivers, animals—only human nature"(141; 465). Terrorist Pornography, as described in "Intestino Grosso," terrifies us with the discovery of an otherness within us, the darker side of humanity, and the truth that we do not want to admit, namely, the horrors of which human beings have been and could be capable. In scatological terms, Terrorist Pornography is precisely the thing that requires our analysis; in other words, only by examining that which is censored, discarded, or trashed in the name of art (and preserving its decency), can we understand the nature of and the values embedded within art itself.

Within "Intestino Grosso," Fonseca anticipates the critique of his own work as pornographic via the interviewer's commentary on *Intestino Grosso*, the "fictional" novel referenced within the short story of the same name: "Mas outras também já disseram que o livro não passa de um pirão de vulgaridades gratuitas, erotismo cru e ações grosseiras, desnecessárias e fúteis, temperado por uma mente suja" ["But others have also said that the book does not go beyond a mishmash of gratuitous vulgarities, crude eroticism, and gross actions, unnecessary and futile, tempered by a dirty mind" (140-141; 465). Indeed, such a description could easily encapsulate a preliminary reading of "O Cobrador." This oversimplified reading of Fonseca's work is complicated by the observable shift in "O Cobrador's" rationale for committing murder and the scale of his operations—no longer the Pornography of Gorer, the story of "O Cobrador" shifts to Terrorist Pornography:

> Leio para Ana o que escrevi, nosso manifesto de Natal, para os jornais, Nada de sair matando a esmo, sem objetivo definido, Eu não sabia o que queria, não buscava um resultado prático, meu ódio estava sendo desperdiçado. Eu estava certo nos meus impulsos, meu erro era não saber quem era o inimigo e por que era inimigo. Agora eu sei, Ana me ensinou. E ou meu exemplo deve ser seguido por outros, muitos outros, só assim mudaremos o mundo. É o síntese do nosso manifesto." (182)
>
> [I read Anna what I sent to the newspapers, our Christmas manifesto. No more killing at random, without a definite objective. I didn't know what I wanted, didn't seek out a practical result, my hatred was being wasted.

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I was right in my impulses, my error was not knowing who the enemy was and why he was the enemy. Now I know; Anna taught me. And my example must be followed by others, many others. That's the only way we will change the world. That's the gist of our manifesto.] (25)

Their manifesto serves to publicly justify their governing logic, thus systematizing their violent acts, unifying their intentions, and consolidating their hatred, by putting them all to more "efficient" use. Here, "O Cobrador" laments that his violent impulses led him to "waste" his "hatred," as opposed the more obvious wasted lives and mutilated bodies that populate the text. These seemingly random attacks on the individuals that cross "O Cobrador's" path and offend him with their privilege are later substituted with a more clearly articulated ideological stance and a larger-scale terrorist mission once "O Cobrador" solidifies his relationship with Ana, a sexual partner in crime who provides him with unconditional acceptance.

> Tenho uma missão. Sempre tive uma missão e não sabia. Agora sei. Ana me ajudou a ver. Sei que se todo fodido fizesse como eu o mundo seria melhor e mais justo. Ana me ensinou a usar explosivos e acho que já estou preparado para essa mudança de escala. Matar um por um é coisa mística e diso eu me libertei. No Baile de Natal mataremos convencionalmente os que pudermos. Será o meu último gesto romántico inconseqüente. (181)
>
> [I have a mission. I always had a mission and didn't know it. Now I do. Anna helped me to see it. I know that if everyone who's fucked over did like me, the world would be better and more just. Anna taught me how to use explosives, and I think I'm now prepared for that change in scale. Killing one at a time is a mystical kind of thing, and I'm free of it. At the Christmas dance we'll kill as many as we can conventionally. It will be my final romantic, inconsequential gesture] (25-26)

Contrary to the expectation that "O Cobrador," who is an outlaw and outcast, could somehow be redeemed or reformed by romance, he is instead made more fervent, self-aware, purposeful, justified, and grandiose in his commitment to violence. We are also faced with the very real possibility that "O Cobrador," himself, represents the abject poverty and criminality that the capitalist economy and urban civilization views as "useless waste material." Fonseca's work challenges us to read scatologically. Once we do, the notion that the large intestine rids the body of "useless waste material," an analysis of which allows us to understand the health of the body, can be readily applied to pornographic fiction, which has a cathartic function, in allowing fiction and fantasy to displace actual sordid acts, and also a revelatory function, in regards to the nature of the body politic by the "useless waste material" that it rejects. Only by reading "O Cobrador" through "Intestino Grosso" is the complexity and magnitude of Fonseca's scatological theory of crime fiction revealed.

Endnotes

[1] Unless noted otherwise, translations are mine. Luciana Paiva Coronel refers to this aesthetic as "o brutalismo" or brutalism, which she argues is "uma forma simbólica complexa, multifacetada e nada gratuita, capaz de expressar literariamente e mesmo de enfrentar criticamente a pratica violenta consolidada no pais naquele período histórico [ditadura militar]" [a complex symbolic form, multifaceted and nothing gratuitous, capable of expressing literarily and at the same time confronting critically the violent practice integrated in the country in that historical period [military dictatorship]] ("A Representação da violência na ficção de Rubem Fonseca dos anos 70: O brutalismo em questão," 183). In another article, "Literatura em combate: A ficção de Rubem Fonseca dos anos 70," Coronel refers to Fonseca's work as "uma literatura excessivamente auto-referenciada e indigesta" [an excessively self-referential and indigestible literature] (9). Marcelo Frizon, while exploring the interesections of violence and comedy in Fonseca's fiction, writes "Diferente do que alguns críticos argumentam, como rechaçado pelo próprio autor no trecho da entrevista reproduzido acima, sua literatura trabalha não com um realismo ou hiper-realismo, mas com um naturalismo à moda de Aluísio de Azevedo. As personagens, nas narrativas de Rubem Fonseca, possuem um ímpeto violento, uma agressividade exacerbada típicos [sic] dos excluídos nas grandes cidades" [Different from what some critics argue, as it is rejected by the author himself in the selection of the interview reproduced above, his literature functions not in terms of realism or hyperrealism, instead it invokes naturalism in the style of Aluísio de Azevedo. The characters, in the narratives of Rubem Fonseca, possess a violent impetus, an aggravated aggressivity typical of those excluded in large cities] (9). According to Elizabeth Lowe "The dialectical opposition of reality and imagination is fundamental to the role of the artist in founding the city. By creating a fissure between text and context, he is able to denounce urban reality with his mythical vision. This fissure is central to Rubem Fonseca's work. It has been observed that while his short stories capture the 'reality' of Rio de Janeiro with great linguistic and psychological accuracy, they also answer more to the image the city makes of itself than what it really is" (176). Antonio Rediver Guizzo describes Fonseca's aesthetic as "Concisa, contundente, perturbadora—a literatura de Rubem Fonseca caracteriza-se pela afronta direta ao leitor, além de desnudar, nos menores detalhes, as novas formas de violência que acometem a sociedade contemporânea" [Concise, convincing, disturbing—the literature of Rubem Fonseca is characterized by a direct affront to the reader, besides exposing, in the minutest details, the new forms of violence that attack contemporary society] (29). Pere Comellas, in "Rubem Fonseca e o policial *noir*," claims that Fonseca's work has as its political aim to "épater les bourgeois" [shock the bourgeoisie] (53) and "[n]o mundo sem ligações de Fonseca não é possível uma ordem restaurada. Não há esperança de justiça. Pelo contrário, as personagens agem convictas de que se alguma coisa não tem lugar no mundo é justiça. Quando muito, procura-se vingança, e em geral é uma vingança insatisfatória" [[i]n Fonseca's disconnected world it is not possible to restore order. There is no hope of justice. On the contrary, the characters act convinced that if there is one thing without a place in this world, it is justice. At best, revenge is sought, and in general it is unfulfilling] (55).

[2] The official English translation of "O Cobrador" as "The Taker" does not completely capture the nuances of the term in Portuguese, which is closer to the idea of a tax or debt collector.

[3] Bad/missing teeth are used as literal and metaphorical descriptions of people that are marginalized by their poverty or criminal behavior, and those who are forgotten or ignored by society. In "O Cobrador," such examples include the woman whom he "mercy fucks"; his old, decrepit neighbor Dona Clotilde; a suicidal girl who lives in the marble building; and a black man with two-three teeth. Camellas refers to this group of people without teeth as "os despossuídos" ["the dispossessed"] (56).

[4] On the topic of manifestos, Elizabeth Lowe writes in *The City in Brazilian Literature* that the literary response to the crisis of dictatorship was "a wave of literary manifestos, either built into the literary text, prefacing it, or developed in independent articles, interviews, and round-table discussions" (107-108). Furthermore, Lowe characterizes "Rubem Fonseca's story manifesto 'Intestino Grosso'" as "one of the most important documents of contemporary Brazilian literature. The author [Fonseca] steadfastly refuses to give interviews, insisting that everything he has to say is in his books. Yet in 'Intestino Grosso' he offers the consolation prize of a simulated interview on which the hand of his cynicism and wit lies very heavy. Fonseca touches on many subjects of fundamental interest to the counterculture writer. His first objection is to the 'culture of development.' Not only literature, but all of Brazilian culture, has been infected by the psychology of development. He uses a discussion on pornography, in ironic rebuttal to the censors who have accused him of being a pornographic writer, as a metaphor of the corruption of Brazilian thought and society" (110). According to Christopher J. Ballantyne, "Fonseca has frequently been judged as pornographic, immoral, or

insensitive" (12), a categorization that he reclaims with pride as he confronts the censors.

[5] In fact, Ballantyne also links the large intestine metaphorically with the cityscape: "The *intestino grosso*—that scatological yet eminently visceral emblem for Fonseca's mythology of authorial origin—which begs deciphering is none other than the metropolis itself: its discordant textures and infinite motion bowels from which the writer's word is borne" (4).

[6] Ballantyne understands Fonseca's critique here as an "implicit rejection of 'literature' [that] constitutes an act of rebellion aimed primarily at a fraudulent authority which derives a normative model for writing from a prescribed canon that is spatially, temporally, and aesthetically incommensurate with the world he inhibits" (3). I would certainly agree that Fonseca critiques those literary traditions that are far from Brazilian urban life, but also, at the same time, reveals the sordid system that produces and discards "miserable people without teeth."

[7] On another metaphorical level, "the miserable people without teeth" are unable to consummate; they represent those who are sexually impotent, unattractive, and undesirable, and, as such, their bad/missing teeth become an outward sign of their abject poverty, marginality, and, in some cases, disposability.

[8] The translation of "desexcomunguem" should be "un-excommunicate."

[9] Ballantyne provides an elegant explanation of the function of metaphor in Fonseca's work: "The metaphor thus becomes a euphemism; its purpose is not to name what cannot be named, but to name, through an established system of enciphering, that which should not be named. The genesis of the metaphor thus situates itself in the precise intersection between social norms, which prescribe the limits between 'good' and 'bad' behaviors, and verbal norms, which distinguish 'good' words from 'bad' ones. The space where the prohibited extra-linguistic event coincides with the proscribed verbal event constitutes the dangerous terrain whose circumvention the metaphor makes possible. Premised upon this dual repression, the metaphor defines itself as a socially sanctioned figural code; its purpose, to isolate and thus neutralize the threat of contagion that breeds beyond the limits of 'decency'" (14). Furthermore, he concludes that, "[c]onsequently, Fonseca, rather than defiguralizing the figure through his stress on its literal component, achieves precisely the opposite effect, he remetaphorizes the cliché" (Ballantyne 15-16).

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