

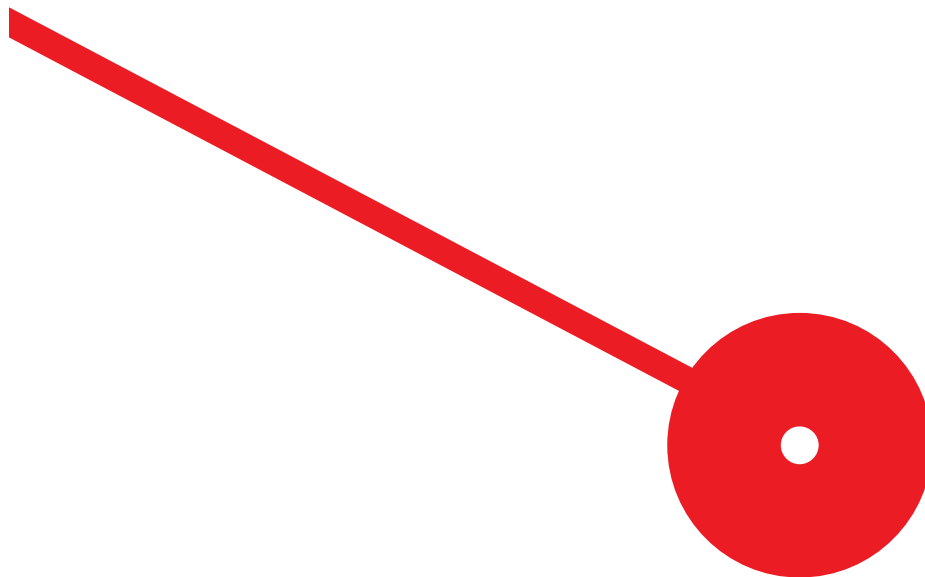


Is there a film in this text?

The commercial success of Rubem Fonseca's cinematic literature

Helena Isabel da Silva Lopes

09/2021

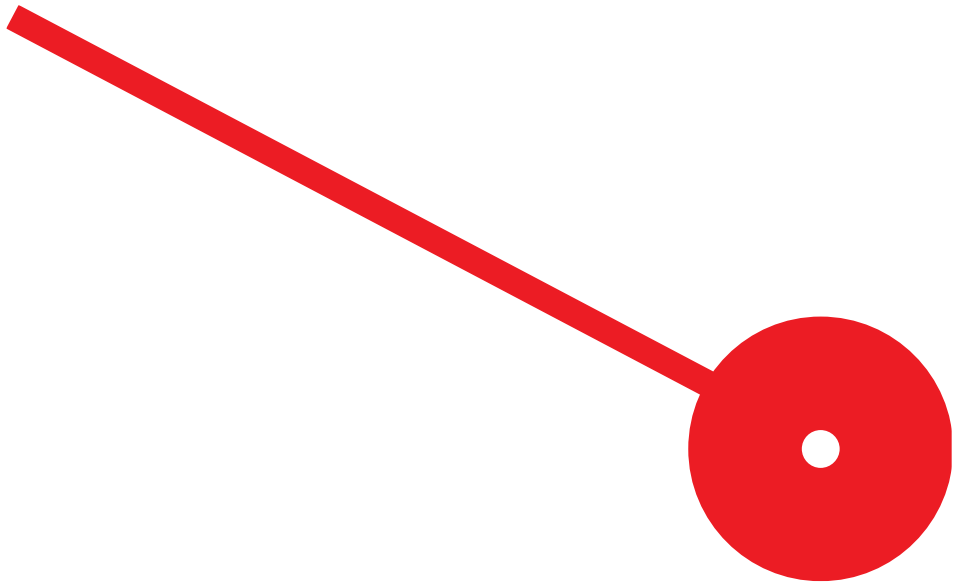




Is there a film in this text? The commercial success of Rubem Fonseca's cinematic literature Helena Isabel da Silva Lopes

Dissertação de Mestrado

**apresentada ao Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração
do Porto para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Intercultural
Studies for Business, sob orientação das Professoras Doutoradas
Maria Manuela Veloso e Maria Helena Guimarães Ustimenko.**



Dedication

To the memory of my mother I leave the offering of this *toucinho-do-céu*, as the one eaten by John Berger's mother's ghost in *Here is where we meet*, in which *saudade* is defined as "the sorrow of being too late".

To the memory of Miguel Ramalhete Gomes, for his intelligent love suffused with altruistic empathy and infinite kindness.

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the language of film in Rubem Fonseca's literary fiction. Fonseca's literature's complicity with the language of cinema is examined through the appropriation of mass film narrative conventions, the observance of screenplay guidelines and the literary recreation of an illusionist rhetoric of film characterized by fluidity, transparency and immediacy. Effective in producing speed and readability, Fonseca's assimilation of a cinematic rhetoric subsumable in David Bordwell's notion of *continuity system* constitutes a cornerstone of his modality of literary realism, sometimes capable of producing *effects of real*. Unveiled by means of a transmedial and intercultural approach, the psychological operations of mental imagery during the consumption of this intermedial artifact classified as *cinematic literature* in the age of post-cinema are described.

Fueled by cinema, the accessibility of Fonseca's *broadbrow* fiction is framed in a postmodernist protocol of reading capable of crossing the border between high and lowbrow audiences, thus closing a sociologic gap between elites and masses. After assessing the commercial success of Fonseca's books in Portugal and Brazil, the monography proceeds to exhort publishing houses to extend the marketing of his books to low and middlebrow audiences, with a view to fulfilling the sales potential this research finds in Fonseca's ingeniously salable transmedial recipe.

A strategy for the measurement of the author's value as an *intangible asset* of *Sextante*, Rubem Fonseca's Portuguese publishing house, is proposed. The microeconomic benefits of such monetization of Intellectual Capital for the company are highlighted. The benefits of increasing the sales of Fonseca's *broadbrow* literature at the macroeconomic level are also emphasized with regard to the generation of wealth and increase of sustainability through the extension of literacy.

Key words: Cinematic literature; Rubem Fonseca; Intellectual Capital; Sustainability.

Resumo

Esta dissertação tem como objecto a linguagem cinematográfica na ficção literária de Rubem Fonseca. A cumplicidade da literatura Fonsequiana com a linguagem fílmica é reconhecida na sua apropriação de convenções narrativas do cinema de massas, obediência a regras do argumento e recriação literária de uma retórica fílmica ilusionista caracterizada por valores de fluidez, transparência e imediatez. Eficaz em produzir velocidade e legibilidade, a assimilação Fonsequiana de uma retórica cinematográfica – subsumível na noção de David Bordwell de *sistema de continuidade* – constitui a trave-mestra da modalidade Fonsequiana de realismo literário, por vezes capaz de gerar *efeitos de real*. Expostas mediante uma análise transmedial e intercultural, as operações psicológicas da imagem mental durante o processo de consumo deste artefacto intermedial classificado como *literatura cinematográfica* na era do pós-cinema são alvo de descrição.

Catalisada pelo cinema, a acessibilidade da ficção *broadbrow* de Fonseca é enquadrada num protocolo de leitura pósmoderno capaz de atravessar a fronteira entre públicos eruditos e menos literatos, fechando assim o hiato sociológico entre elites e massas. Após aferir o sucesso comercial da obra de Fonseca em Portugal e no Brasil, a monografia exorta os editores literários a estender o *marketing* destes livros a leitores menos literatos, com vista a preencher o potencial de venda que este estudo encontra na receita transmedial e engenhosamente lucrativa de Fonseca.

A dissertação termina propondo estratégias de mensuração do valor do autor enquanto *bem intangível* da Sextante, editora de Rubem Fonseca em Portugal. Os benefícios microeconómicos de tal monetização de Capital Intelectual para a empresa são salientados, assim como os benefícios macroeconómicos da comercialização da literatura cinematográfica e *broadbrow* de Fonseca a nível da geração de riqueza e promoção da sustentabilidade através da extensão da literacia.

Palavras chave: Literatura cinematográfica; Rubem Fonseca; Capital Intelectual; Sustentabilidade.

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Introduction

This dissertation takes as object the language of film in the Brazilian contemporary writer Rubem Fonseca's literary fiction.

The popular concept of ekphrasis will not be instrumentalized to analyze this intermedial phenomenon, as what I will propose to call Fonseca's cinematicity does not fit most definitions of ekphrasis, forged as they have been to account for literature's dialogue with plastic arts. Even Liliane Louvel's broader definition of ekphrasis as "the inclusion of a work of art within a text" (2011, p.15) would not be workable, as the object of this dissertation is the literary emulation of an entire language, with narrative conventions as well as rhetorical traits, and not only one "work of art".

The development of this thesis will not resort to the cinematographic adaptations of Fonseca's novels, as the phenomenon falls beyond the scope and length of this work for the reasons explained in 2.1. The qualitative methodology employed to argue for the cinematic quality of Fonseca's fiction will include both theoretical and empirical research in Literature, Film and Psychology Studies.

This monography will begin by adopting Stanley Fish's pragmatic and antifoundationalist epistemology to make possible the acknowledgement of the presence of cinema in some literature. Marie-Laure Ryan's cognitivist narratology will be convoked for borrowing its anti-essentialist conception of medium, also shared by Marshall McLuhan and Francesco Casetti. In the first chapter, mechanisms of *showing* in literary fiction will be studied throughout a wide range of Intermediality experts and Word and Image theorists, such as W. J. T. Mitchell, Christopher Collins and Mieke Bal. Key concepts by Media Studies experts such as Marshall McLuhan and Bolter and Grusin will be scrutinized and optimized to encompass the specific reality of *cinematic literature*. Pier Paolo Pasolini's semiotic grammar of the cinematographic screenplay will be adapted to the process of doing a cinematic reading of literary fiction. Both theoretical research on mental imagery and scientific empirical studies on the active role of mental imagery production during the reading activity will be surveyed to define and describe the specific visual operations of *cinematic literature*.

After building epistemological ground for locating the intermedial reality of cinematic literature, defining it, and describing its psychological operations, Rubem Fonseca's literary fiction will be framed into this concept, according to its specific postmodern cultural and historical context. The second chapter will seek to demonstrate

in detail Rubem Fonseca's debt to the rhetoric and narrative conventions of cinema, by resorting mainly to the technical Film Studies apparatus synthesized by David Bordwell's notion of *continuity system* as a transmedial solution effective in enhancing the realism, immediacy and readability of the novels, and therefore in increasing their salability. To the extent that it is an intermedial approach which uncovers the lucrative cinematicity of Fonseca's literature, the hermeneutic operation which unveils the commercial potential of Fonseca's novels is also an intercultural one: "interculturalism [is not] an attribute of the object, [but] a hermeneutic option, an epistemological approach" (Sarmiento, 2014, p.606); "only intercultural analysis can give [an object] this character, through a paradigm of hybrid, segmentary and heterogeneous thinking" (*Ibidem*).

The third chapter will employ literature from emerging fields of studies in Economics, Accounting and Business to argue for the possibility of monetizing Rubem Fonseca's Intellectual Capital, as well as for further marketing his ingenious transmedial recipe for commercial success to low and middlebrow market segments the writing of Fonseca is accessible to, but which, according to the evidence presented in the Appendix, do not yet consume his books. Chapter 3 will also propose a strategy for the measurement of Rubem Fonseca's value as an intangible asset of *Sextante*, Rubem Fonseca's Portuguese publishing house. The microeconomic benefits of such monetization for the company will be highlighted. The benefits of increasing the sales of Fonseca's *broadbrow* literature at the macroeconomic level will also be emphasized.

To enhance the credibility of such argumentation, I have collected an in-depth interview with the Literary Director of *Sextante*, which assesses the commercial success of Rubem Fonseca's books both in Portugal and in Brazil, enumerates their retailers, estimates the number of Fonseca's Portuguese readers and segments his target market. Besides quoted throughout the monography, its transcript can be found in the Appendix, as it provides empirical evidence of the arguments developed during the course of this dissertation.

1 Cinematic literature: what, how and when?

A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

1.1 How can we say there is *film* in a novel?

If 'film' be a mental construction, then it can exist in literary text, because the subject can integrate it in the reading of a novel as a memory or an imaginative projection. We can say there is film in literature from the point of view of an epistemological position that refers the notion of text to its reception more than to its material medium.

In a parodic gesture to Stanley Fish's seminal essay "Is there a text in this class?" (1994, pp.303-321), the title of this dissertation foreshadows that the cinematic character of Rubem Fonseca's fiction is not an inalienable property ascribed to it in an essentialist manner, but rather a reading hypothesis that can be legitimated by an *interpretive community* (cf. *Ibidem*). Fish's answer to the question is 'yes, there is a text in this classroom, but it is not the handbook the pupils are carrying. It is *the shared experience of reading it* that the students bring with them to the classroom.'

In his conception of text, Fish undervalues the material aspect of 'text' in favor of the *temporal*, or otherwise said, *processual*, character of the mental construct elaborated by the reader throughout a progressive deciphering experience. Fish actually considers literature "a kinetic art" (p.43), and, in the reading act, allows for the production of "mental imagery" which he calls "physical" and endows with a "spatial", "experiential reality" (p.37).

Fish equates the meaning of the text with the reader's experience of it, that is, its effect. After semantic decomposition, Fish envisages a second level of experience he characterizes as an emotional reaction to the experience of meaning, an act of intellection and interpretation (p.5). This secondary operation will have different results according to the upbringing and education of the reader, as will the process of imagining characters and sequences of a novel as if they were cinematographic images.

In Film Theory, like Stanley Fish in Literary Studies, James E. Cutting (2016, p.1714) also poses a second *fabula*, posterior to the construct shared by the screenwriters, which would be the chain of events confabulated by the spectator in her processing of

what Shklovsky (1990) called the *syuzhet*, Seymour Chatman (1978) called *discourse* and David Bordwell (2008) called *narration*. By this we can see that film theory's epistemological need to locate its subject (film and its components) in the spectator's mind instead of in the material medium of celluloid is akin to Fish's spotting of the literary text in the reader's mind instead of on the material medium of the page. Both Fish and Cutting make way for the transmedial proposal of this dissertation: tracking the cinematic flow of Fossequeian literary fiction. This angle can contribute to Fossequeian criticism by reading Fonseca's appropriation of cinematographic rhetoric as a strategy to increase its readability – and in turn its salability – in the cultural context of an audience whose shared interpretation strategies have been forged by regular contact with the film industry.

1.1.1 A multimedial novel

Similarly to Stanley Fish, the influential narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan defines narrative through its meaning, as a “cognitive construct, or mental image, built by the interpreter in response to the text” (2004, p.8). Ryan reminds us that the stuff that the reader's memory of a verbal text is made of comprises not only words and abstract propositions but also visual images, which are mainly used to store settings, the appearance of the characters, and certain striking events or situations:

cognitive research suggests that the mental representation of a story involves various types of images [...]. *Certain aspects of narrative could be stored* as words (for instance, memorable replies of characters) or *as visual images* (the *setting*, the *appearance* of characters, the *map* of the narrative world and some striking *actions* and situations, such as Emma Bovary making love to Léon in a carriage storming in full gallop through the streets of Rouen) (p.12; my emphasis).

Through a cognitive and reader-oriented approach, she considers narrative as a “multimedia construct” and calls these verbal and visual components “mental media”: “while its logical structure is probably stored as propositions, which in turn can only be translated through language, other types of images, and consequently other ‘mental media’ enrich the representation in ways that remain inaccessible to language” (p.12). By employing the concept of ‘medium’ to refer to the visual informational patterns cognitively stored in the mind, Ryan is not simply taking poetic license. She is taking the same side in the definition of ‘medium’ we have been entrenching ourselves in since grounding our methodology on Stanley Fish's pragmatic and antifoundationalist approach. Ryan is particularly echoing Marshall McLuhan's seminal idea that “the

‘content’ of any medium is always another medium” (1964, p.32), thus exposing the hybrid character of any medium:

the content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. If it is asked, ‘What is the content of speech?,’ it is necessary to say, ‘It is an actual process of thought, which is in itself nonverbal’ (p.33).

Set forth in the 60s by the electric era, McLuhan’s inexorably relational view of media seems to me increasingly pertinent in the present context in which the rapid succession of media fostered by digital technologies compels us confront each medium with the other inhabitants of a teeming mediascape.

1.1.2 A ‘cinematic’ novel¹

The influence of film in “post-cinema Euro-American [literary] fiction”² is self-evident in writers who are thought to have honed their literary skills through their biographical experience as script-writers – such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nathanael West, Graham Greene and Rubem Fonseca. One can also consider that writers such as William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John dos Passos, or Salman Rushdie are indebted to film in that they estrange from literary conventions by foregrounding what could be called a ‘cinematic style or diction’. Some cultural theorists, such as Arnold Hauser (1999), claim the idea of analogical cinema pervades aesthetic modernity as its most emblematic medium, which suggests that any modern literature could record the traces of the cinematograph as a producer of culture: “with [D. W. Griffith and early modern film] American society became a cinematic culture, a culture which came to know itself, collectively and individually, through the images and stories that Hollywood produced” (Denzin, 1995, p.24). If in modernist literature we can already find an acculturation of the reader-spectator to film (cf. 1.3.1), by postmodernism the process has been completed to such extent that cinema has become the novel’s paradigm of realism and verisimilitude (cf. 2.4): “the postmodern is a visual, cinematic age; it knows itself in part through the reflections that flow from the camera’s eye” (p.1).

¹ Sections 1.1.2 to 1.1.9 contain material from a chapter published by myself: Lopes, H. (2012a). The cinematograph in the novel. In R. C. Homem (Ed.), *Relational designs in literature and the arts. Page and stage, canvas and screen* (pp.109-120). Amsterdam: Rodopi.

² I borrow this historical category that encompasses Western literature produced after the advent of the cinematograph from Gautam Kundu (2007, p.73).

Such phenomena can only be said to occur if contemporary readers are themselves acculturated to film (cf.1.2.2). It is my belief that, ever since the mass diffusion of cinema, the imagination of the novel's reader has become indebted to film:

[the post-Flaubert reader] must learn to read a verbal language that embodies a seemingly unmediated visual language. And it is the understanding of this [...] that constitutes [...] an experience [...] that every twentieth-century reader who has learned how to watch a film or a television set can take for granted as part of his upbringing in a visual cultural (Spiegel, 1976: 27).

As I will endeavor to argue, when the *I* of the reader becomes a film-viewer, the *eye* of the reader is inevitably coached by the visual rhetoric of film.

In this monography, I shall keep the adjective 'cinematographic' to denote the operations of the cinematograph invented in 1896, including film as it survives in digital platforms, resorting to the term 'cinematic' to tackle the cinema on the page, i.e., qualifying as 'cinematic' the literary property that relates to cinema virtually and through the chain of interpretive mental operations described by Ryan. Since 'the cinematic' is a figural dimension of certain literary texts which establish a formal relation to film while not necessarily sharing a thematic or institutional bond with it, they couldn't be called 'cinematographic' unless metaphorically. The cinematic is the film on the page, whereas the cinematographic is the film on the screen.

As it will be clearer when, in Chapter 2, we demonstrate the eclipse of the narrator in thrall to the primacy of an aural and kinetic scenic visuality, we fully subscribe to David Lodge's definition of cinematic literature as a sacrifice of narrative possibilities explored by the 19th-century novel in thrall to others typical of cinema:

a cinematic novelist [...] is one who [...] deliberately renounces some of the freedom of representation and report afforded by the verbal medium, who imagines and presents his materials in primarily visual terms, and whose visualisations correspond in some significant respect to the visual effects characteristic of film (1986, p.96).

It is in the wake of this tradition – shared with essayists like Edward Murray in *The cinematic imagination: writers and the motion pictures* (1972), Wheeler Winston Dixon in *The cinematic vision of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (1986), Steven G. Kellman in "The cinematic novel: tracking a concept" (1987) and David Seed in *Cinematic fictions: the impact of the cinema on the American novel up to the second world war* (2009) – that I

employ the expression ‘cinematic literature’ to designate literary fiction prone to elicit mental images that resemble shots and sequences of film in the absence of a real-life cinematograph. The cinematic images created by the reader in response to certain works of literature would generally speaking be similar to the by-product of film viewing, that is, to the audio-visual text the cinema spectator processes while watching a film. The main differences are, firstly, that the cinematic imaging of the novel reader is more *discontinuous* than the imaging of an actual film viewer, because not all passages of what I call a cinematic novel will *lend themselves* to a cinematic re-enactment. Secondly, the images produced by novel reading will not be as clear-cut and detailed as real film-images, but rather *sketchy* and more open to the reader’s subjectivity:

literary narrative has a kind of power over details that is not enjoyed by cinema. That is the power of noncommitment. A novel can say simply “He went walking”, leaving unspecified the appearance of “he”, the vigor and speed of his stride, the environment through which he walked. A film rendition would have to add descriptive details (Chatman, 1990: 40-41).

I thus call ‘cinematic literature’ to any prose fiction that repeatedly lends itself to a cinematic reading, that is, to a novel or short story or poem that tackles the reader’s cinematographic imagination and encourages her to recreate certain passages of that narrative as though they were film sequences.

1.1.3 Early insights

As early as 1973, Alan Spiegel forged the notion of *cinematographic form* in literature to acknowledge the impact of film on novel-writing from the first quarter of the twentieth century onwards (cf. Spiegel, 1973). Spiegel (1976) then develops the concept of *concretized form* to encompass literary traits effective in producing novelistic modalities of representation reminiscent of film language. These literary elements include the prevalence of dramatization over authorial commentary (p.5), or, as Seymour Chatman (1978, p.32) would put it, of *showing* over *telling*, and the consequent impression of the action unfolding by itself independently of authorial intrusion (cf. Spiegel, 1976, p.22). Let us recur to Rubem Fonseca’s prose to illustrate the enduring utility of Spiegel’s remarks, starting with an ingenious visually dramatic solution to spare the narrator from telling an epidemic has been looming over the city: “an Imperial soldier posts a banner

on the wall: YELLOW FEVER – BE CAREFUL.” (1994, p.15; my translation).³ Spiegel also ascribes to cinema the prevalence of the adventitious visual detail (cf. 1976, p.18; pp.90-108) over the invisible qualities of an object (cf. p.42). In Rubem Fonseca’s fiction, stock characters are often defined by quirky gestures or accessories that commodify a habit proverbial of their role in the plot: “Ledoux had a weak voice and strong French accent. He took an asthma inhaler and used it rapidly. [...] again, the inhaler.” (2005, p.17).⁴

Spiegel further remarks how the dramatization of “the observer’s slow, tentative, often erratic [...] motion from the state of apprehension to the state of comprehension” (1976, p.57) is eventually replaced by a passive, affectless, mechanical way of seeing also known as “camera-eye” (p.54), and prone to anatomizing motion (pp.109-130). Notice how this *establishing shot* (cf. 2.2.2) of a character’s location denotes the landscape as drily as a camera, while the narration foregoes the verb in the first sentence and proceeds in the present tense: “André Rebouças by the sea, in Madeira island. The ocean is an immobile and shapeless mass. Dark clouds move slowly in the sky” (Fonseca, 1994, p.217).⁵

Lastly, Spiegel recognizes a structural affinity with cinema in the novel’s increasingly *concrete* relation to space and its consistent choice of angles of vision (cf. 1976, pp.26-37). The ocular field of vision thus constructed is then decomposed into successive views to resemble cinematographic montage (cf. p.60). Observe how the job-hunting protagonist of the short story “The book of panegyrics”, by Rubem Fonseca, which significantly opens with the epigraph “One can either see or be seen”, is immersed into a setting which, however briefly sketched, concretely denotes the position and movement of each figure in such a manner that each sentence resembles a shot:

a woman opens the apartment door on *Delfim Moreira* Avenue, and I say I came because of the ad. She tells me to come in. An enormous living room. The windows are open and the very blue sea is visible outside. (...) A man is standing at the window, and he turns

³ Except for the translated books, which I quote from the official translation, the translation of Rubem Fonseca’s excerpts into English is of my responsibility. Quotation in its original language: “Um soldado do Império cola um cartaz na parede: FEBRE AMARELA – CUIDADO.”

⁴ Quotation in its original language: “Ledoux tinha uma voz fraca e forte sotaque francês. Tirou do bolso uma bombinha contra a asma e usou-a rapidamente. [...] outra vez a bombinha.

⁵ Quotation in its original language: “André Rebouças em frente ao mar, na ilha da Madeira. O oceano é uma massa cinzenta informe, imóvel. Nuvens escuras deslocam-se lentamente no céu.”

around when I come in. He comes toward me. // 'It's to take care of my father. Do you have any references?' (2008, p.97).

According to Spiegel, the cinematographic form in literature would neither stem solely from direct contact with film nor uniquely from writers biographically engaged with the medium but it would also – and inevitably – reach the modern writer through literary intertextuality:

most contemporary writers who practice cinematographic form [...] practice these forms because it suits their expressive purposes to do so and because the literature they have read and admired, the cinematic literature of the recent past, acts as both a formative context and stimulus for their own activities. The reason why this literature came to be the way it is [...] has probably had more to do with changes in philosophic attitude and cognition than with the advent of the motion picture (1976, p.186).

Spiegel's method of mapping the evolution of visuality in literature not only from the direct influence of coetaneous visual media but also from inside the literary canon confronts the critic with a literary past that has been selectively ransacked by the contemporary writer for literary techniques that have been ingeniously fashioned to work as analogues of filmic conventions and therefore appeal to an audience of readers who are also cinema goers.

Cultural theorists Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz (1995) seem to validate Spiegel's suggestion that cinematic literature is indebted to the whole cultural context of cinema:

[Cinema] arose from and existed in the intertwining of modernity's component parts: technology mediated by visual and cognitive stimulation; the re-presentation of reality enabled by technology; and an urban, commercial, mass-produced technique defined as the seizure of continuous movement. Cinema forced these elements of modern life into active synthesis with each other; to put it another way, these elements created sufficient epistemological pressure to produce cinema (p.10).

1.1.4 Dangerous liaisons: transmediality

It is perhaps not by accident that Marie-Laure Ryan has resorted to *Madam Bovary* as an example of a narrative that tugs at word and image simultaneously (cf. 1.1.1). Indeed, Spiegel (1976) traces the emergence of concretized form in literature back to Flaubert (1821-1880):

Flaubert's audience must finally learn to think through its eyes. The words that convey the concretized narrative, for the most part, refer the reader to objects in the external world that he can see as he reads along; that is, the words have been chosen to make him grasp subjectivity largely by means of visual images (pp.24-25).

Around thirty years after Marshall McLuhan's claim that "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium" (1964, p.23), W. J. T. Mitchell asserts the hybrid character of all media:

the image/text problem is not just something constructed "between" the arts, the media, or different forms of representation, but an unavoidable issue *within* the individual arts and media. In short, all arts are "composite" arts (both text and image); all media are mixed media, combining different codes, discursive conventions, channels, sensory and cognitive modes (1994, pp.94-95).

According to this perspective, even a non-illustrated novel processes itself through text and image, and this essential hybridism evinces itself in the cinematic novel. Designating the specter of all possible verbo-visual relations through the notion of *image-text*, Mitchell reserves the formulation *image/text* patent in the last quotation to highlight the agonistic aspects of the relation between text and image, the "problematic gap, cleavage or rupture in representation" (p.89, n.9). He furthermore forges the concept of *imagetext* to encompass "*composite, synthetic works* [...] that combine image and text" (*Ibidem*; my emphasis). Although the intermediality cases analyzed by Mitchell in this volume do not contemplate the relation between film and literature, Rubem Fonseca's cinematic novel appears to me as a paradigmatic example of *imagetext*, since, as Chapter 2 shall try to illustrate, its logical-discursive materials coalesce with the cinematic imagination they stimulate, triggering a reading keen on *synthetizing* word and moving image.

1.1.5 Visions of the literary

But when [Saint Ambrose] was reading his eye glided over the pages and his heart searched out the sense but his voice and tongue were at rest.

Augustine

Like Marie-Laure Ryan (cf.1.1.1), Christopher Collins considers literary reception dependent on two functions: on the one hand, an *abstract-propositional function*, that relates to the logical-discursive reasoning engaged in the comprehension of a text; on

the other hand, a *concrete-imaginal function* that encompasses the operations of visual imagination elicited by a verbal text (cf. 1991, pp.1-2).

I argue that, while the novel as a genre tends to rely mainly on what Collins calls the *abstract-propositional function* of reading, the cinematic novel draws heavily on what Collins calls the *concrete-imaginal function* of reading. If the “mental media” that Ryan refers to inform the decoding of any narrative, including the non-illustrated literary narrative which is the object of this study, it is likely that their contribution is enhanced by narratives that stimulate one’s visual creativity, such as the cinematic novel.

In his work on word and image, Christopher Collins considers that traditional literary interpretation has neglected or even repressed the *concrete-imaginal function* of literature: “literary interpretation has therefore come to be considered a means by which images, the particular percept-like representations evoked by language and scanned by the inner eye, are either sequestered from or assimilated into abstract-propositional discourse” (p.2). Collins refers to the type of criticism thus described as ‘critical interpretation,’ which he defines as interpretation restrained by the need of reaching inter-subjective conclusions. He then proposes an alternative brand of interpretation, which he calls ‘enactive interpretation’ (cf. pp.102-05). This method would focus on an early stage of the reading process which would consist in the elusive and predominantly *visual* sketching of exploratory concepts that repeatedly outline provisional meanings. As a subjective reading performance, Collins’ ‘enactive interpretation’ seems similar to the secondary interpretive operation described by Fish in 1.1, which is characterized as a processual experience that brings together emotion and the cultural background of the reader, and therefore has been marginalized by institutional criticism. Collins actually identifies reading with a performance and the reader with an artist who converts a linear input into a multifaced representation (cf. p.121) which, as a performance, varies according to reader and to reading (cf. p.2). Though Spiegel is not a source for Collins’ research, it is interesting to remark how similar the fleeting process described by Collins as ‘enactive interpretation’ is to Spiegel’s early attempt at depicting a preliminary imagistic stage of the reading activity.⁶

⁶ “because the visual images are numerous and succeed one another on the page in a kind of unbroken visual stream, without pause for authorial comment or reflection, we tend to see the images in concretized fiction slightly faster than our minds can grasp their significance or their precise relation to one another. (This is true not only of Flaubert’s fiction but also, for example, of Chekhov’s, Babel’s, Hemingway’s, and, of course, Joyce’s.) Because of this mental delay, we also tend to see the images not once but twice: first

‘Enactive interpretation’ appears to be grounded mainly on what Collins defined as the *concrete-imaginal function* of the reading process, whereas ‘critical interpretation’ seems to be grounded on what Collins calls *abstract-propositional function*. ‘Enactive interpretation’ would be a response to the estrangement effect of a text, and it would lie in a reading performance based on mental imaging that responds immediately to the visual cues inscribed in verbal language: “literature [...] depends for its realization on the reader’s power to convert words into affectively charged imagery – landscapes, rooms, faces, physical movement – and through such imagery to form complex conceptual structures” (Collins, 1991, p.149).

I argue that it is during this primary stage of reading that the interior cinematograph of the contemporary reader operates. Readers acculturated to what Norman K. Denzin (1995) named a ‘cinematic society’ are likely to tap heavily into their mnemonic archive of filmic images to re-enact certain visual features of a literary text in a cinematographic manner. That would mean that certain literary passages are now mentally processed by a reader who is also a cinemagoer with resort to patterns developed through the experience of film. The response of post-cinema readers to certain literary passages could be described as an intermedial protocol of reading into which one does not necessarily enter willingly. As I will endeavor to explain in 1.2.2, it does not seem necessary that all readers are conscious of the influence of cinema on their imagination for a cinematic reading of a novel to take place (cf. Spiegel, 1976, p.81).

Collins considers that, in oral speech, the presence of the speaker outshines the verbal imagery. In written speech, by contrast, the focus of the visual activity of the reader moves inwards, from optical imagery to mental imagery, from the perceptual to the imaginal level: “whereas the visual data of orality is perceptual and processed by the outer eye, that of literacy is imaginal and processed by the inner eye” (1991, p.17). Writing then allows a development of subjective imagination without the constraints of oral performance, creating habits of construction of visual referents in the absence of their corresponding optical object. This reading process is stimulated by texts that appeal to visual

in their immediate visual otherness; then, by a kind of spontaneous and coordinating mental reflex, we see them again, but this time in their continuity and coherence. We see Emma [Bovary] suck her fingers; we see Emma bite her full lips; we see Charles touch Emma; we see Charles returning to the farm; we see *how* this relationship happens before we fully know what it is that we see. Our second view is always an act of understanding; we immediately see the images as ordered images; we grasp the “Idea” embodied in their arrangement” (Spiegel, 1976, pp.26-7).

imagination, triggering a hypertrophy of the mental pictorial referent that suffuses language and which Collins, after Charles Sanders Peirce, names *imaginal interpretant*:

as a representation of an absent referent, the [Peircian] concept of interpretant implies an imaginative act, albeit a momentary apprehension of an ‘idea’; when this idea assumes the form of a visual schema or image, I propose to refer to it as an “imaginal interpretant” (p.5).

By producing in the reader mental imagery of cinematographic contours, Rubem Fonseca’s literature privileges an *imaginal interpretant* I shall qualify as *cinematic*, to the extent that it prompts the reader to summon mental images similar to the ones produced by the visioning of a film, yet in the absence of the cinematograph. Notwithstanding the absence of the cinematographic device, cinema as a medium functions as an interpretant system of Rubem Fonseca’s literature, by way of a reading protocol which activates the cinematographic imagination of the cinephile reader.

1.1.6 A psychology of visual reading

O cinema torna [...] compreensível [...] essa espécie de cinema em miniatura que temos na cabeça.

Edgar Morin

Fredric Jameson’s metaphor about the inscription of the cinematograph on the spectator’s body is illustrative of an intermedial contamination that some take far more literally: “film is an addiction that leaves its traces in the body itself. This makes it inconceivable that an activity occupying so large a proportion of our lives should be assigned to a specialized discipline” (1992, p.2).

Research on human sight based on James J. Gibson (1979) suggests that visual perception is not only representational, but that it also evolves according to the subjects’ need of adjustment to their environment (cf. Anderson, 2005, pp.1-6). This assumption underlies Joseph and Barbara Anderson’s claim that cinema transforms the cognitive schema of the individual (1980, p.93). Whether or not we agree to some sort of biological change, it is at least believable that the repeated experience of film shapes the cultural paradigms of visual perception. After all, the constant exposure to audio-visual media so prevalent in Western mass cultures has to eventually take its toll on our viewing *and* reading habits.

My point is that an audience of readers who are also spectators approaches the novel with a previous set of interpretive strategies partly acquired to decode the language of film. Contemporary novel readers not only tap into their experience of deciphering film syntax to fill out the diegetic gaps in the written narrative, but also resort heavily to their cinematic imagination when filling out the *visual* gaps of a literary narrative. In other words, literary passages that appeal to visual imagination are now mentally enacted much to the resemblance of film sequences. The reader's mind could then be said to be endowed with a private cinematographic apparatus that stages aspects of the novel in a cinematic fashion: "texts [...] are notated scripts composed to be played by readers [...] that, though scripted in a public code, [...] are performed on a private, inner stage" (Collins, 1991, p.2).

1.1.7 Anatomising the literary image

In the age of new media [...] we writers of texts are the guardians of the last residues of [...] the grammar of time, [...] the guardians of difference.

Alexander Kluge

The literary property this research tries to tackle is a cinematic version of what Mieke Bal calls 'figuration', that is, the generative capacity of the literary text to produce "visual images, artistic or banal, explicit or implicit, around which the writing forms itself or deforms itself into what we can think of as properly visual writing" (1997, p.4).

The last thing intermediality theory needs is yet another coinage to clutter its lexicon and multiply the ambiguity of its tried concepts. Still, I will suggest precisely this. I propose calling *para-cinematographic vision* to the reader's mental activity of imaging a literary text in resemblance to filmic shots or sequences. The prefix 'para-' means to reserve the fundamental difference between the real-life optical experience of film and the virtual visual experiences prompted by verbal language, while foregrounding their common denominator. Para-cinematographic vision would mean a visual experience in perception induced by verbal images that trigger the reader's cinematic imagination:

[figuration in literature] is a visualizing aspect of the text, but it remains an effect of language. Literature, after all, works within the medium of language. If we take into account this self-evident fact, then each visual image is first of all a verbal image and refers only indirectly, at the level of its meaning, to the visual images of other categories. Thus we could say that metaphors are verbal images of mental images, while *descriptions*

are verbal images of perceptual images. Both the mental images and the perceptual images are capable in turn of referring to *graphic images*, which *are visible*, but *only by means of a chain of mediations*. The optical dimension is often interposed, less as an image than as the means for an image, in order to underline even more insistently the fact that these images are, after all, the products of language (p.4; my emphasis).

Para-cinematographic vision would be composed precisely of perceptual film-like images elicited by the verbal images produced throughout the decoding of a literary text. Mieke Bal's emphasis on the verbal mediation of literary images may seem to be at odds with Spiegel's and Collins' stress on the immediacy of the visual experience of reading, but I believe their theories remain complementary in analyzing an experience that is *felt* as immediate in spite of being *produced* by several mediations: "mental imagery, however, even when it is prompted by conventional written signs, enacts itself on an inner stage and resists external authority. It is a presence that it is at the same time an absence" (Collins, 1991, p.61).

As we shall see in more detail in 1.1.9, the cinematic images produced by para-cinematographic vision are *visual*, although not visible, and remain *perceptual*, although not optical, as any virtual visuality that takes place at the level of mental imagery (cf. Ryan, 2001; Rogers, 2005). Animated by sound and movement, cinematic images are produced in the virtual place where Collins considers the imaginal response to a written text takes place:

between [the realms of the oral and of the written] lies the small, dimly lit antechamber, the inner sanctum where words whisper and images appear and disappear, the visionary place one enters every night in dreams, the inner stage the reader sets (1991, p.73).

1.1.8 A semiotics of the cinematic image in literature

En regardant l'image, je la textualise toujours de quelque façon, et en lisant le texte, je l'image.

Jean-Luc Nancy

In his 1965 essay «The screenplay as a 'structure that wants to be another structure'», Pier Paolo Pasolini provides a semiotic unravelling of the filmic screenplay which, to my mind, can be used to describe the steps through which the reader makes meaning out of the cinematic novel. Pasolini envisages the screenplay as "a continuous allusion to a potential film" (1988, p.187), in that "the author of a screenplay asks his addressee for a particular collaboration: namely, that of lending to the text a 'visual' completeness which

it does not have, but at which it hints” (p.189). I think the same could be said about the protocol of reading that the cinematic novel establishes. Pasolini’s semiotics divides the written linguistic sign into three components: the phoneme, the grapheme, and a third visual component that he calls ‘the kineme’. The screenplay would foreground the kineme inscribed in language, therefore allowing “the reader to see the kineme in the grapheme, above all, and thus to think in images, reconstructing in his own head the film to which the screenplay alludes as a potential work” (p.192).

I suggest that contemporary readers of novels go through a similar process, in that each sketches a virtual film in response to certain literary passages which lend themselves to a cinematic sketching. When this particular filmic visuality gains precedence over the other elements of the written word, the linguistic sign becomes what Pasolini (1976) calls an ‘image-sign’, that is, an image that relates perceptually to the imagery of dreams and memories. Because Pasolini’s ‘image-signs’ and his semiotic category ‘the kineme’ work also as components of his semiotics of film, they are useful concepts to pin down the stage of narrative decoding that is common to film-viewing and a cinematic reading of literature.

The main difference between reading a screenplay and doing a cinematic reading of a novel would be that the screenplay’s reader *willingly* commands her cinephile imaginary because of being aware of the cinematographic intention of the text, whereas the reader of a cinematic novel *unconsciously* taps into her cinematic imagination, even when not recognizing any intermedial intention in the novel.

1.1.9 A screen in the brain: the cinematic mental image

The creator in letters aims at a moving picture – moving to the eye, to the mind, and to our complex emotions.

Joseph Conrad

To legitimate Pasolini’s proposal, one has to explore the concept of mental image, that is, the visual perception of something that is not before your eyes, such as the images projected in the mind by dreams and memories. Joseph and Barbara Anderson’s research in cognitive psychology appears to corroborate Pasolini’s intuition. Anderson and Anderson’s (1996, p.353) ecological theory considers that the mental images which gain visual shape in our brain in the absence of their objects, such as the images produced by dreams and hallucinations, are indeed *acts of perception*, but of a type of perception they

classify as *non-veridical*, that is, an experience of perception that does *not* produce enough information to be interpreted by the brain as reality. As Ellen Esrock (1994, p.152) reports, “experiments have shown that the formation of visual imagery requires use of the same processing channel that is used for the visual perception of words on a page”.

Like the phantom limb that supports Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1945) phenomenology of perception, the phenomenon of the afterimage, that is, the lingering perception of an image that has just vanished, is a documented phenomenon that can testify to the occurrence of a retinal image in the absence of its optical referent (cf. Sartre, 1936; Morin, 1982). Before research on the phi phenomenon and flicker fusion disproved persistence of vision as a hypothetical cause for the illusion of movement fabricated by the cinematograph, it was believed that the afterimage was responsible for the spectator’s eye blending the several static photograms film is composed of into an apparently moving film sequence. As Mary Ann Doane (2002, pp.69-82) points out, this theory made the mental image produced by film dependent on a relation of indexicality with the actual cinematograph. It is now more probable that the spectator’s perception of movement in film no longer lies solely in the retina but is also supplied by the brain (cf. Anderson and Anderson, 1980). If the visual images triggered by cinema are not exclusively based on retinal perception, but exceed the mere immediate response to the stimuli of cinema viewing, it is likely that film-grounded imagery can be induced in a mind acculturated to cinema by the very stimuli of a cinematic piece of literature.

Ellen Esrock agrees with William Gass that “a visualizing reader generally makes extratextual assumptions. Any proposal that the reader confine himself rigorously to text-determined imaging is simply not possible” (1994, p.158). Unlike Gass, Esrock does not consider the subjective overspecification of the referents summoned by the verbal text as an undesirable downside of the reading experience. Esrock admits that the realm of mental imagery indeed dangerously brings to the interpretive process both the reader’s intentionality (p.159) and her repertoire of cultural representations (p.154). The impossibility of standardizing the visual reading experience into a shared intersubjective construct is probably one of the reasons why this feature of the reading experience has been so neglected by mainstream criticism, as both Fish and Collins regret: “people differ in their abilities to visualize and, more generally, in their styles of reading” (p.183).

literature, which would produce “difficult”, “obscure”, and therefore elitist texts: “in that age of transparent technology, literature evolved parallel technologies of its own, difficult, obscure, before readers had formed habits of adequate patience, adequate attention” (Kenner, 1987, p.10).

In *Modernist montage. The obscurity of vision in cinema and literature*, P. Adams Sitney argues modernists “stress vision as a privileged mode of perception, even of revelation, while at the same time cultivating opacity and questioning the primacy of the visible world” (1990, p.2). As David Seed observes, it is in the core of this paradoxical relation to visibility that modernist literature’s absorption of cinema takes place:

the emerging techniques of film and the experimental methods of novelists in the period of Modernism [...] both grew out of a shared tradition of narrative and both were extensively preoccupied with what Joseph Conrad called the ‘general fundamental condition of visuality’ (2005, p.48).

If, as we have seen, literary modernism is riddled with difficulty and obscurity which are liable to generate estrangement effects, this estrangement is the byproduct of an assimilation of cinema and of other contemporary technologic novelties by literature. Independently of the impression of ‘transparency’ that film, in the words of Kenner, would induce in the movie theatre, the emulation of cinema in the modernist literary page was defamiliarizing. In *Cinematic modernism*, Susan McCabe explores Gertrude Stein’s conviction that she was doing in literature what cinema was doing in film (cf. 2005, p.56), and the notion that words “must function as shocks in the age of cinema” (p.18). The appropriation of film by modernist literature has thus contributed to a poetics of discontinuity, estrangement and elitism (cf. Veloso, 2010, pp.153-155) antithetical to the poetics of continuity, readability and salability we shall find in Rubem Fonseca’s postmodernism, in which the reader has been acculturated to the grammar of cinema to such extent that it is felt as transparent (cf. 1.3.6), that is, invisible (cf. 2.1.2) in direct proportion to its familiarity.

For Andreas Huyssen, even the repetition of avant-garde codes in a postmodern context does not accomplish the effect produced at the beginning of the 20th century, especially when it comes to values of shock and novelty:

most of the gestures which had sustained the shock value of the historical avant-garde were no longer [...] effective. The historical avant-garde’s appropriation of technology

for high art (e.g., film, photography, montage principle) could produce shock [...]. The postmodernist espousal of space-age technology and electronic media in the wake of McLuhan, however, could scarcely shock an audience which had been inculturated to modernism via the very same media (1981, p.33).

Indeed, even when Rubem Fonseca blows us with jump-cuts (cf. 2.1.6.2) and sharp, elliptic montage (cf. 2.3), we feel these jolts as familiar, because we have been used to be thus nudged by the rhetoric of cinema for a long time. They no longer carry the shock value they might have had in modernism. The social-historical of acculturation of the reading audience to film from the 60s onwards goes hand in hand with a progressive domestication of cinematic editing techniques throughout which David Bordwell's *continuity system* (cf. 2.1.6) is honed to invisible editing, reflected in the transparency of the filmic in the postmodern cinematic novel:

in certain ways Dos Passos embodies the last resurgence of the bold technical experimentation that marked the modernism of the twenties, but in comparison with its predecessors, his famous technique also reveals an *intellectual softening, a dilution and simplification of the very montage procedures* that once appeared in forms of *concentration and difficulty* (Spiegel, 1976, p.177; my emphasis).

1.3.2 The cinematographic intertext according to Riffaterre: from the ungrammaticalities of modernism to the constants of postmodernism

Michael Riffaterre approaches intertextuality from a semiotic position capable of hosting the dialogue between heterogeneous sign systems such as literature and film, as he recognizes in the literary text the potential for producing a non-tropological image, described as “the segment of text or sentence that we perceive as a complete or fragmentary sensory representation”, a sign or linguistic system of signs which makes “us feel or imagine we actually perceive the object, be it an actor, an action, or a thing” (1994, p.3). Riffaterre (1984, p.162, n.18) reserves the term *meaning* for a semantic-heuristic level of reading, relative to the linguistic relations between word and referent, while he circumscribes the intertext to the semiotic sphere of *significance*, i.e., the hermeneutic relation which the text establishes with structures of its cultural context, and which frequently undoes its semantic-heuristic purely linguistic referentiality. In this manner, within a literary context, referentiality ceases to be a linguistic property to reside “in the reader, in the eye of he who looks – [...] it is a rationalization of the text operated by the

reader” (1982, p.93; my translation).⁷ By uprooting intertextuality from the strictly linguistic sphere, Riffaterre creates a theoretical space which welcomes the cinematographic intertext, that verbo-visual referent inscribed in the retina of the cinephile reader.

For Riffaterre, an intertext is traceable by two paths: firstly, by the perception of *ungrammaticalities*, i.e., anomalies in the linguistic code or deviations from the author’s idiolect or current sociolects which disturb verisimilitude (1980, p.627); secondly and alternatively, by the perception of *constants* in the narrative subtext, i.e., the repetition of the same meaning throughout various representations, which retrospectively outline themselves as variants or tautological derivations of the same archetype (1990, pp.xvii-xviii).

We can thus consider the cinematographic intertext broke through modernist literature producing *ungrammaticalities* that engendered effects of shock, estrangement and opacity, whereas it is indexed in Rubem Fonseca’s postmodern fiction as *constants* which foster a familiarization of the reading experience, endowing Fonsequian prose with values of fluidity, continuity and readability. Therefore, our focus in Chapter 2 will fall upon rhetorical isotopes comprised by David Bordwell’s *continuity system* as subtexts that share the same cinematographic imaginal interpretant (cf. 1.1.5).

As observed in the last Spiegel quotation, literary history evinces a progressive domestication of the ungrammaticalities produced by the cinematographic intertext, until we reach Rubem Fonseca’s postmodernism, in which the assimilation of film promotes *readability*, understood as a set of traits capable of facilitating and accelerating the reading process (cf. Barthes, 2002; Suleiman, 1980). When we talk about Fonseca’s postmodernism as a factor of ease and speed, it is important to separate the postmodern streak prone to fluidity and transparency we will be tackling through Bordwell’s notion of *continuity system* from the here least quoted and most emblematically postmodern apparatus of self-reflexivity and meta-literarity also present in Fonseca’s literary work, which contrarily promotes moments of difficulty and opacity. In the words of Hans Bertens, “postmodernism is either a radicalization of the self-reflexive moment within modernism (...) or an explicit *return to narrative and representation*. And sometimes it

⁷ Here as in all other quotations from reference sources which are either in Portuguese or French, the translation into English is of my responsibility.

is *both*” (Bertens, 1995. p.5; my emphasis). Although Rubem Fonseca’s literary fictions contain self-reflexive moments – such as the hypermediatic *O selvagem da ópera*, which will be analyzed in 2.1.3 – and metaliterary passages in which narrators ramble about the literary canon, the diegetic structure colonized by the grammar of film is the aspect of his work where we can locate this postmodernist streak grounded on a return to straightforward narrativity and transparent visual-kinetic representation.

1.3.3 The readability of Fonseca’s cinematic literature

In her article “Redundancy and the ‘readable’ text”, Susan Rubin Suleiman (1980, pp.119-20) explores the Barthesian concept of ‘readable’ in the *roman à these*, genre which can be related to the corpus in that it falls under the same modality of the realist novel. It is under the broader scope of novelistic realism that Suleiman develops the concept of *redundancy* as a defining trait of the Barthesian ‘readable’. By arguing realist narrative presents a high index of redundancy, Suleiman follows Barthes’ thought in *S/Z* more closely than she admits, as we shall try to demonstrate: “the readerly is an effect based on the operations of solidarity (the readerly ‘sticks’)” (Barthes, 1974, p.23).

Realist novel tends to explore the redundancy between what a character *is* and what a character *does*. In other words, when the character is a stereotypical sketch, its features guide the reader to an accurate and univocal interpretation. Thus, there is redundancy if the actantial function of that character replicates his features. This function includes not only *actions*, but also the *comments* of characters that constitute “correct readings” of the text (Suleiman, 1980, p.134).

Not only does Rubem Fonseca’s fiction host a gallery of stock characters (cf. 2.1.10) we can classify as stereotypes, in that their actantial role is overdetermined by their characterization, but also in the narrative economy of Fonseca we can find at every turn this redundancy between character, action and discourse which makes the novel particularly economical and accessibly readable.

For René Audet (2007, pp.11-12), the so-called postmodernist *return to narrative* would be better described as a return to fictionality and *readability*: “the return to a more limpid prose, the setting up of a fiction which does not make transgression its guiding principle, but the renewed pleasure of fabulation” (p.11). Grounded on storytelling, Rubem Fonseca’s literature takes part in this return to fictionality which promotes readability and accessibility.

1.3.4 The *readerly* as naturalization

In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes defines the *readerly* in opposition to the *writerly*, the latter being a producing force of pure semiosis, infinitely disseminator of meanings. Encompassing “the enormous mass of our literature” (1974, p.5), the *readerly* text would characterize itself by the obedience to a representative (instead of productive) classical model. Still according to Barthes, the *readerly* text is “tabular (and not linear), but its tabularity is vectorized, it follows a logico-temporal order” (p.30); it is teleologic: “by participating in the need to set forth the *end* of every action (conclusion, interruption, closure, dénouement), the readerly declares itself to be historical” (p.52); it is polysemic, but only in the scope of a limited plurality of meanings.

These meanings are accessible by means of the play of connotation, which produces finite meanings, always returning to “the hearth of denotation” (p.7), which would be emblematic of “the closure of Western discourse” (*Ibidem*). The reversibility between connotation and denotation would produce, from an ideological perspective, an illusion by which “the text pretends to return to the nature of language, to language as nature” (p.9), representing “the collective innocence of language” (*Ibidem*). The ideological purpose of this technique is “to naturalize meaning and thus give credence to the reality of the story: for (in the West) meaning (system), we are told, is antipathetic to nature and reality” (p.23). The *readerly* therefore presents itself as a means to camouflage the fundamental negativity of language examined by Barthes in *Camera Lucida*: “it is the misfortune (but also the voluptuous pleasure) of language not to be able to authenticate itself. The noeme of language is perhaps this impotence, or, to put it positively: language is, by nature fictional” (1982, pp.85-87). Naturalization by the play of connotation is only possible because “the significant data released [...] in a homeopathic rhythm are carried [...] by a purportedly ‘natural’ medium: language” (1974, p.23). Paradoxically, language, which is but an arbitrary system, “is employed to [...] naturalize [the] production [of secondary meanings] and authenticate the story” (*Ibidem*).

In the case of Rubem Fonseca’s *readerly* text, it is the smooth, eventful storytelling and the imagistic fabric of his discourse – all factors reminiscent of mass cinema – that are called to authenticate and naturalize his realist prose, enhancing its readability.

1.3.5 Readability through the cinematographic image

To the extent that Fonseca's literary text conquers its illusion of naturality by means of an appropriation of the rhetoric of film, it can be said that its readability is mediated by cinematographic visuality. Peter Brooks, for example, asserts that sight has always been the main sense of literary realism (2005, p.3; p.71), and further considers postmodernism as predominantly visual for having TV as its most influential medium (p.221). As it turns settings more realist and characters' perceptions more vivid, the moving image authenticates Rubem Fonseca's fiction, naturalizing a language which the burden of meaning has loaded with artifice. By appropriating image, the word often seeks to pocket its denotative power:

the closer the text to the image, the less it seems to connote it; caught as it were in the iconographic message, the verbal message seems to share in its objectivity, the connotation of language is 'innocented' through the photograph's denotation (Barthes, 1977, p.26).

Not only does the specific nature of the image promote a naturalization that fosters readability and the invisibility of codes, but also the intermedial condition of cinematic literature contributes to enhance an illusion of the naturality of the artifact, camouflaging its productive mechanisms:

two codes set side by side in the same sentence [...], a common device of the readerly [...] form an apparently *natural* link; this nature [...] is fulfilled each time the discourse can produce an elegant relation [...] between two codes. (...) Brought to the surface of the discourse, the codal citation there loses its identity, it receives like a new garment the syntactical form deriving from the 'eternal' sentence, which form [...] enthrones [...] in the vast nature of *ordinary* language (Barthes, 1974, p.197-8).

While Barthes refers here to the *glissando* between two of the five codes he uses to analyze the Balzac's short story in *S/Z*, this reasoning could apply to the relationship between word and image in cinematic literature. Their co-presence fosters the illusion that both word and image uproot themselves from their specific sign systems to produce a transparent report of 'the real', which determines the invisibility of the medium of film in the cinematic novel in the view of the majority of readers, who experience the effect of cinema without awareness of the intermedial operation: "alongside each utterance, one might say that off-stage voices can be heard: they are the codes: in their interweaving, these voices (whose origin is 'lost' in the vast perspective of the *already-written*) de-originate the utterance" (p.21).

No matter how well camouflaged, the language of cinema in Fonseca's fiction is instrumental in enhancing its readability. The appropriation of codes from a mass medium and cultural industry that continues to be more consumed and influential than the novel could only work to extend the audience of Fonseca's books beyond the highly literate. The author's subtle and successful manipulation of filmic rhetoric in the context of a competitive mediascape seems the fulfillment of the injunction 'If you can't beat them, join them'. Upon analysis, cinema reveals itself a paradigm for emulation, the touchstone of Rubem Fonseca's readability and, as I shall argue in Chapter 3, the currency which explains the success of his sales and raises their potential.

1.3.6 The transparency of cinematic literature

Subsumable in the notion of *immediacy* we will explore throughout Chapter 2, the notion of *transparency* is recurrent in the criticism Colin MacCabe raises towards the classical realist novel (MacCabe, 1974) and cinematographic realism (MacCabe, 1986): they both share a transparent rhetoric that disguises itself as ideologically neutral, to the extent that is dematerialized:

one of the fundamental preconditions of some representational, or 'realistic,' narrative discourse is to be found in the deliberate effacement of the traces of producer and consumer, and that the viewing eye, faced with representational discourse, has a vested interest in ignoring its own presence (Jameson, 2008. p.65).

Rubem Fonseca's literary features soon highlighted in Chapter 2 – namely the construction of settings and scenes through a dry, elemental and moveable *camera-eye* gaze, the eclipse of the narrator and the editing of sequences according to continuity rules that seek to produce an impression of *invisible editing* – seem to us to endow the realist representation with an impression of transparency, not only on account of its visuality, but also with its ideological consequences of effacing the origin of speech, thus smuggling a fictional construct as the natural flow of events. What is validated by the readers of his work is the uniqueness of such a currency: like the air, the more untouched by risk factors to its pureness, the more valuable.

2.1.1 *Híbrida energia: Rubem Fonseca's cinematic literature as a remediation of film*⁸

In their book *Remediation – Understanding new media* (1999), Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin consider media evolution determined by the desire to reach an impression of reality, so as to grant the user an increasingly realistic psychological experience of the medium. Bearing in mind above all new digital media, Bolter and Grusin propose the concept of *remediation* to explain the development of media, arguing their evolution follows a logic according to which each medium which is invented or remodeled appropriates the main characteristics of a preceding medium, optimizing its effect of real. Thus photography would remediate painting, and cinema would remediate photography by adding it sound and movement. The authors themselves resort to the allegory popularized by Harold Bloom to psychoanalyze this phenomenon, spotting a certain *anxiety of influence* as trigger of *remediation*, in that each young medium would fund their originality in overcoming a strong predecessor (cf. Bolter & Grusin, 1999, p.49). The logic of *remediation* also works inversely, as an older medium like literature can evolve by appropriating strengths of a more recent medium like cinema, as is the case of Rubem Fonseca's literary fiction.

In Rubem Fonseca, the smuggling of narrative and formal conventions of cinema can be seen as a *remediation* of the novel before the new hierarchy of media observable in the second half of the 20th century. The prevalence of cinema in cultural imagination creates a reading audience familiar with audiovisual rhetoric. As a film watcher, the reader of novels creates narrative expectations which are indebted to cinematographic fiction and builds reading mechanisms acquired through her experience of film. Rubem Fonseca tackles this intermedial reading competence through an ingenious manipulation of narrative conventions shared with the rhetoric of mass film, namely flat and stock characters, formulaic narrative gags and stereotypes. Among other strategies that shall be exemplified, external focalization and denotative language frequently trigger a modality of *showing* which encourages the reader to imagine certain passages as film sequences.

⁸ This chapter contains material previously published by myself: Lopes, H. (2012b). Energia híbrida. A literatura cinematográfica de Rubem Fonseca. In I. Morujão & Z. Santos (Eds.), *Literatura culta e popular em Portugal e no Brasil* (pp.93-101). Porto: Afrontamento.

2.1.2 The invisibility of cinema on the literary page

In “Hybrid energy. Les liaisons dangereuses”, Marshall McLuhan suggests the hybrid quality of an artifact works to camouflage the formal presence of both codes involved: “all media come in pairs, with one acting as the content of the other, obscuring the operation of both” (1964, p.60). So not only is the hybridity inherent to the genesis of media invisible unless foregrounded by an intercultural and comparatist analysis, but also it contributes to make their operations invisible: “the content or uses of [...] media are [...] ineffectual in shaping the form of human association. Indeed, [...] the ‘content’ of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium” (p.24). This happens because, to replicate an allegory used by the author, the content of a medium works as a juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind (cf. p.32). In fact, McLuhan considers that the numbing side-effect characteristic, for him, of the power of media, is enhanced by the presence of the appropriated medium as content:

the effect of the medium is made strong and intense just because it is given another medium as content. The content of a movie is a novel or a play or an opera. (...) The content of writing or print is the speech, but the reader is almost entirely unaware either of print or of speech (*Ibidem*).

In their analysis of contemporary remediation, Bolter and Grusin seem to inherit McLuhan’s characterization of media as doubly suited for *multiplicity* and *transparency*: “our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them” (1999, p.5). Gary Gnosko’s opinion validates this perspective, when he points out that McLuhan’s famous phrases themselves began operating as “globally recognizable jingles for the work of multinationals trading in digital commodities” (1999, p. 10). In his case, the invisibility of traces of mediation is, thus, a consequence of an ultimate understanding of what hybridism brings over in the desired message.

2.1.3 *O selvagem da ópera as remediation through hypermediacy*

Media’s tendency for multiplication is not always congruent with the desire to ensure its invisibility, so Bolter and Grusin distinguish two basic strategies of remediation: *immediacy*, which seeks to erase the fingerprints of representation, and *hypermediacy*, which invests on foregrounding the implied codes.

Let us start with *hypermediacy*. An example of *remediation* by *hypermediacy* would be the evolution of TV news, throughout which the simple face-to-face of the anchor with the spectator was festooned with changing captions announcing future soundbites. Live coverages often break up the screen in a plurality of multimedia windows which resemble the TV image to a website (cf. Bolter & Grusin, 1999, p.189; p.224). This plurality of simultaneous multimedia tools contributes to give the viewer a sensation of *fullness* and *satiety* of the experience, thus abundantly exemplifying the notion of *hypermediacy* (cf. p.53). In contemporary TV news, the multiplication of media brings about a protrusion of the mediacy which is paradoxically made to serve an impression of live and direct presence. It is to the extent that it makes the illusion of reality depend on the enjoyment of media that contemporary TV news establish a modality of *hypermediacy*.

The narrator of *O selvagem da ópera* (1994), by Rubem Fonseca, ostensibly claims a cinematographic genre when he presents the historical novel the reader has in hands as the “basic text of a film” (p.32), destined to serve as a support for a film screenplay. Publisher João Rodrigues confesses he enjoys doubting whether Fonseca’s directions and cues typical of a screenplay mean the author wished what never happened: to have this novel adapted into film, which is why he never asked him that when given a chance (cf. Appendix, p.5). By not even mentioning TV and film adaptations when asked about the possible cinematicity in Fonseca’s literature, Rodrigues seems to agree with me that there are pleasures to be enjoyed in the realm of the cinematic dimensions of the literary which are independent from and fall beyond the practice of adaptation. Even without the full accuracy of a film script, the self-conscious narrator of *O selvagem da ópera* sews technical suggestions for camera movements and editing choices, rambles about filmmaking and regularly vents his own editing choices:

I left out all the conductor’s childhood, not only because I don’t like children or puppies in cinema (I leave them to Walt Disney), but also because those films that linearly tell a guy’s life from birth till death are rather dull. (...) Of course everything can be sorted later, in the editing (p.31).⁹

As Petar Petrov comments regarding this novel, “all strategies employed by the narrator reveal a particularly *ironic* posture, both in terms of speech and discourse,

⁹ Quotation in its original language: “suprimi toda a infância do maestro, não só por não gostar de crianças e cachorros no cinema (deixo-os para Walt Disney), mas porque esses filmes que contam linearmente a vida de um sujeito do nascimento até sua morte são todos muito enfadonhos. (...) É claro que tudo pode ser resolvido depois, na montagem.”

outlining a critical distance towards the matter portrayed and a sharp awareness of the literary production act” (2000, p.96). Indeed, in *O selvagem da ópera*, literary self-reflexivity allies itself to explicit reference to technical and narrative codes of cinematographic practice to thicken the presence of mediation. In this novel, the pleasure of reading is created by the density of an anti-illusionist representation, therefore this blend of intermediality seems to me to function in a modality of *hypermediacy*.

2.1.4 Fonseca’s literature as *remediation* through *immediacy*

However, the appropriation Rubem Fonseca’s literary fiction makes of cinema is mostly grounded on the modality of *remediation* Bolter and Grusin consider more frequent: *immediacy*. Let us take as an example the videogames in which the user adopts the subjective point of view of a character in the game: they can be seen as remediating the cinematographic camera by adding it interactivity. To thus appropriate cinema’s audiovisual realism conventions and use technological innovation to optimize them allows an *immersion* into the fictional world superior to the one made possible by film (cf. Bolter & Grusin, 1999, p.48). To this modality of *remediation* which seeks to grant the subject an experience as *immediate* as possible of the represented objects, Bolter and Grusin attribute the logics of *immediacy*. In this mimetic strategy, the impression of presence of the objects would be caused by the erasure of the fingerprints of mediation. The effect of real would be, in contrast to what happens in *hypermediacy*, founded in the illusion of the medium’s transparency.

In fact, the presence of typically cinematographic conventions in most Rubem Fonseca’s literary works no longer foregrounds the interference of the cinematographic medium, contributing instead to endow the narrated experience with a more immediate character. In these fictions, cinema fosters the readability of the novel without its presence being easily intelligible in the text. In the case of this discreet assimilation of cinema which I shall relate to the concept of *immediacy*, it is not necessary – or even desirable – that the reader be aware of the presence of film to enjoy the visuality of its prose. It will be enough that she has been exposed to audiovisual rhetoric for her reading competences to qualify her to spontaneously decode transmedial narrative strategies.

Portuguese novelists (as well as artists from other nationalities) who seek to increase their readability and extend their audience in the business of the cultural industry of literature.

3.2.3 Only formal hybridism can save us from narcosis: factors contributing to Fonseca's sustainability

One of the most common causes of breaks in any system is the crossfertilization with another system[...]. Artists in various fields are always the first to discover how to enable one medium to use or to release the power of another.

Marshall McLuhan

In the popular quotation indented in 2.1.2, Marshal McLuhan seems to me to offer us two distinct examples of media hybridizations. On the one hand, when he reminds us that “the ‘content’ of writing or print is speech” (1964, p.32), we could call this first example *1) a genetic hybridization*, in that writing, as a representation of oral speech, depends structurally and since its origin on its appropriation. In this, it is distinctive of, on the other hand, the adaptation of a novel or play by the parallel and independent medium of cinema, circumstance which I propose to call *2) a thematic hybridization*: “the content of a movie is a novel or a play” (*Ibidem*).

Notwithstanding the existence of outstanding works which undergo a process of intersemiotic translation by devising cinematographic equivalents of *formal* properties of the literary text adapted, most frequent practices of adaptation remain an appropriation of limited aspects of the *content* of the literary text adapted, without inclusion of its medium. In terms of communication theory, it can be said that the literary content of most cinematographic adaptations is restricted to its *message* function. Now McLuhan considers that the true impact of media comes from the structural functioning of its device, which imposes specific standards to the user's perception. Thus the thematized content not only acquires a secondary importance, but also, by virtue of its visibility, would distract the user of the true origin of the effect of the medium (cf. McLuhan, 1964, p.24, in 2.1.2): “our conventional response to all media [...] is the numb stance of the technological idiot. For the ‘content’ of a medium is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind” (p.32). Thus, both in what I have called *1) genetic hybridization* and *2) thematic hybridization*, the hybrid quality of the artifact contributes to camouflage the formal presence of the two codes involved, as a result of a content/container logic.

However, in the seminal “Hybrid Energy: *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*”, McLuhan appears to contradict himself, by proclaiming media hybridism as a privileged ground to gain awareness of the structural properties of the media: “media [...] are ‘make happen’ agents, but not ‘make aware’ agents. The hybridizing or compounding of these agents offers an especially favorable opportunity to notice their structural components and properties” (p.57). This novel position can be explained by McLuhan’s belief that the experience of various media strengthens the user against the surreptitious action of a hegemonic medium: “subliminal and docile acceptance of media impact has made them prisons [...]. [E]ach of the media is also a powerful weapon with which to clobber other media” (pp.34-35). Therefore, McLuhan now foresees in hybridism a potential of resistance against the subliminal effect that had been amplified by a content/container logic:

the hybrid or the meeting of two media is a moment of truth and revelation from which new form is born. For the parallel between two media holds us on the frontiers between forms that snap us out of the Narcissus-narcosis. The moment of the meeting of media is a moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our senses (p.63).

I believe the apparent incompatibility between McLuhan’s thought exposed in 2.1.2 and this new proposal can be solved by the differentiation of examples of hybridizations referred by the author in this article – such as the presence of jazz and film in the poetry of Eliot, or the construction of poetic effects in Yeats stemming from oral language – and elsewhere – such as the contamination of newspaper’s idiolect and anticipation of the cinematograph in Dickens (1997, pp.268-9). The three are examples of appropriations in a single device consolidated as an independent medium which exceed thematization in that they try to assimilate structural traits of the appropriated medium. To this extent, I propose to distinguish them as 3) *formal hybridizations*, such as the formal presence of film in the literary rhetoric of Rubem Fonseca. Only these will be capable of producing ‘hybrid energy’ and provide awareness, reverting the hypnotic effect McLuhan necessarily attributes to simple media, and thus effectively increasing the sustainability of reading communities.

To conclude, Fonseca’s cinematic literature’s value and wealth as an intangible asset increases in direct proportion to its *broadbrowness*, that is, its postmodern ability to cross the border between high literary art and the popular conventions of mass film, thus closing the gap between high and lowbrow audiences.

4 Conclusion – A transmedial recipe for commercial success

4.1 Overall conclusions

This dissertation began by concluding it is possible to acknowledge the presence of cinema in some literature if a reception-centered epistemological paradigm is adopted, as well as an approach to the concept of medium more based on its cognitive pattern and cultural form than on the materiality of its device. Following cognitivist narratology, as well as resorting to both theoretical research on mental imagery and scientific empirical studies on the active role of mental imagery production during the reading activity, Chapter 1 defined cinematic literature as literary fiction which tackles the reader's cinematographic imagination and is therefore prone to elicit mental images which resemble shots and sequences of film. It has been concluded that these images are more discontinuous and sketchier than the ones produced by actual optical exposure to the cinematograph, but remain visual and perceptual. Chapter 1 finished by concluding that, in this age of post-cinema, exposure to film across all platforms remains high, therefore the postmodernist reader remains influenced by the discourse of cinema, resorting, even if – and particularly – unconsciously, to interpretive and pictorial skills acquired throughout his consumption of cinema.

By means of transmedial and intercultural tools, Chapter 2 has technically demonstrated Fonsecaian literary fiction's complicity with the language of cinema. This assimilation operates itself through the appropriation of mass film narrative conventions, the observance of screenplay guidelines, and the literary recreation of an illusionist rhetoric of film characterized by fluidity, transparency and immediacy, subsumable in David Bordwell's influential notion of *continuity system*. Committed to producing speed and readability, Fonseca's literature's cinematicity constitutes a cornerstone of his modality of literary realism, to the point of the latter depending on an importation of horizons of verisimilitude specific of cinema (cf. 2.4).

While the Appendix testifies to the health of Fonseca's sales in Portugal, Chapter 3 concludes the monetization of Fonseca's Intellectual Capital is possible, feasible according to the means of *Sextante* as a branch of *Porto Editora*, and would be lucrative both at the microeconomic level, adding value to the company, and the macroeconomic level, generating wealth by increasing the sustainability of communities.

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Appendix – Interview with João Rodrigues, *Sextante*'s literary director

Sextante was created in 2006, and became part of *Porto Editora* in 2010, which is when Rubem Fonseca's copyright is bought. In 2010, *O seminarista* is released in Portugal at the same time as in Brazil. What follows is the edited transcript of a face-to-face in-depth interview (cf. Seidman 2006: 15-27), which took place at *Restaurante Firmino* in 17th February 2020, i.e., during the infamous *Correntes de Escrita* literary festival which brought COVID-19 to the North of Portugal. Interviewing here was used as a qualitative technique, not a method (cf. Seidman 2006: 9-14). As it is known, Rubem doesn't give interviews, but he spoke generously to his Portuguese publisher throughout lunches. So a lunch meeting seemed the best way to recapture this knowledge.

Helena Lopes – In a book-length study, Professor Lurdes Sampaio claims that detective fiction novels used to be treated by Portuguese publishing houses and translators as second-rate literature, that is, as pieces of entertainment that could be freely edited instead of works of art to be preserved in its entirety. Would your long experience in the Portuguese editorial business corroborate this researcher's conclusion?

João Rodrigues – Forty or fifty years ago, everywhere in the world, not only in Portugal, but namely in Spain and France, descriptions were edited out, especially in detective fiction, because they're not part of the action. In Portugal, one good example would be Raymond Chandler's *The long goodbye*, which has been terrifically translated into Portuguese by Mário Henrique de Leiria. In *Sextante*, we have just republished its unabridged version.

HL – Was the editing out the translator's or the editor's decision?

JR – It was usually an editorial choice. Why publish a whole book of detective fiction if the depictions slow down the plot? A further argument would be to save paper, as printing was expensive. These days, in the book industry, twenty more pages or so don't make any difference... The translation, however not yet properly paid, costs half the book or more. So the proofreading and editing work is a lot more precise these days.

HL – But Rubem Fonseca's books don't rely too much on descriptions, do they?

JR – No, it's useful matter only.

HL – Do you adapt the text to European Portuguese?

JR – No, I publish the original text free of alterations. I leave even the diacritics in Antônio (laughter).

HL – Not even in syntax, you don't move around personal pronouns?...

JR – No, I consider Brazilian Portuguese simply another variety of the same language. I know some Portuguese editions make small changes (not to mention in the past: Jorge Amado would even have semantic changes!), but not *Sextante*. My reviewers are under strict instructions to respect the Brazilian text. I don't even adjust them to the New Orthographic Deal. The only thing we correct is typos (laughter)! And I do the same with other Lusophone cultures: I publish the Timorese Luís Cardoso de Noronha exactly as he writes.

HL - How would you assess Rubem Fonseca's commercial success in Portugal?

JR - Rubem Fonseca is the best-selling fiction author of *Sextante*. I wish Don DeLillo, Peter Carey or Ismail Cadaré sold as much! Of course non-fiction sells more: self-help and amusement books. We have few readers for demanding fiction.

HL – How many readers of Rubem's books do you estimate we have?

JR – The number of regular and demanding readers has remained the same for forty or fifty years... It has never really increased! In the last 10 years, we have published 10 books by Rubem. Together, they have sold 18 000 books. In the fiction industry, 18 000 buyers is not bad at all for our country! If we take into account the sales by *Campo das Letras* as well, which used to publish Rubem before *Sextante*, Rubem Fonseca will have sold over 30 000 copies in Portugal: that is editor's word!

HL – Which sells more: the novels or the short stories by Rubem?

JR - The novels sell more, as it is usual in Portugal.

HL – When do you think he sold more?

JR – In Portugal, his sales reached its peak in 2012, when Rubem came to *Correntes de Escrita* here in Póvoa. It was great that he came here. Journalists took interest. Francisco José Viegas, who publishes with us and is Rubem's buff, came up with a fun slogan: “É Rubem, é bom”, and we used it (laughter)! We sold many volumes of *O seminarista*,

which had just been released, and we republished the novel *Bufo & Spallanzani*, which sold splendidly. I was already his Portuguese publisher then and showed him around. As José Rubem rarely goes anywhere, I think it was his homesickness for the Douro of his parents, two Portuguese who only met and got married in Brazil, that prompted him to take this destination. I sensed he felt it would be his last chance to be in Portugal. José Rubem seems to have some sorrow for the lost connection to the North of Portugal where his family is from, some telluric nostalgia. Hence the references to Portuguese food and drink in his books, which he told me to have been items from his mother's home. For example, he told me his mother would put Port wine into the chicken soup. In his acceptance speech of *Correntes'* prize, he read a Camões sonnet beautifully; those are memories too - his father would often recite Camões.

HL – References to Portuguese literature are also very explicit in Rubem's books. Few contemporary Brazilian writers are so brazen in doing it.

JR – Yes, and the measure to which he quotes Portuguese authors is very politically incorrect in Brazil, because of the colonial issue.

HL- In Rubem Fonseca's autofiction *José* (2011), the protagonist remembers how, as a child, he would sneak into film theaters without paying to see matinées. It is known that José Rubem, the writer, is an avid cinephile and ingenious screenwriter. Do you consider that cinematographic culture somewhat fuels Rubem's writing, for example in terms of editing techniques?

JR – Yes! Rubem writes *O Selvagem da ópera* as if it was a screenplay for a movie, with directions and cues. I never asked him if he really wished it to be actually adapted into film or not, and I enjoy having that doubt.

HL - Earlier we agreed Rubem Fonseca would never have passages edited out because his descriptions were short; everything was action and “useful matter”, in your own words. Even outside the case of *O selvagem da ópera*, do you think his knowledge of screenwriting shapes his narrative strategies, for example in his indirect characterization of characters?

JR – Yes! *Crimes of August*, *High art* are very structured not by images that might be worth a thousand words, but by the gaze. He relies on words that actually follow and *show* gazes.

HL – Who are those 18 000 readers? Who do you reckon is the target audience for Rubem Fonseca in Portugal?

JR – I reckon they are mainly educated men in their 40s or over. Very young people don't read him. Male readers, at least over their 30s. I hear a lot of journalists saying they like Rubem Fonseca.

HL – Why male readers?

JR – The themes are hard and might seem machista. I know it is ironic and self-conscious, but it is characteristic of the detective story tradition, in the line of Chandler and Hammett. That's probably why I think they appeal to men of a certain generation. He is very politically incorrect in his unforgiving clichés, including with women characters... But there are women who sing praise to his fiction and read him too.

HL – Why do you think he appeals to that age segment? Is it a generation raised by the cinematograph, in particular by north-American classical film? Because the younger generations were raised by tv and the internet, especially digital natives...

JR – Now that you mention it, yes! And the French film noir will have played its influence on them too: just think of Rubem's *O doente Molière*.

HL – Besides gender and age, you describe his readers as “educated”. Educated in literature, film, or both?

JR – I think Rubem's readers are cinephile, so educated in both literature and film.

HL - Do you think one has to be very well-read to appreciate his mass culture thematics and visual style?

JR - They don't *have* to be well-read, but they usually *are*.

HL – So Rubem is what “educated” people read when they are on holidays from being intellectual? A guilty pleasure?

JR – (laughter) Yes, I guess that is also characteristic of the detective story genre! But male readers. Women prefer thrillers for that purpose.

HL – Is the style of Rubem particularly accessible, readable?

JR – Yes, the rapid, syncopated style... It is dry and clear. I think both the themes and the style explain his commercial success. He really knows how to grab a reader. Then

there are certain cultural ingredients that please the Portuguese reader: references to food and music, sometimes Portuguese, like Port Wine and *Periquita*, from the author's childhood memories. He is very skilled.

HL – In the *New York Times*, Tomás Eloy Martínez wrote “No writer is more cinematographic than Fonseca. Transitions from sequence to sequence occur without further explanations, naturally.” Do you also consider the continuity of this scenic succession reminiscent of cinema's grammar?

JR - I understand that a person who reads him says that.

HL – Who would you put Rubem in the same family with? Why?

JR – José Cardoso Pires, for example. They have both learned with the north-Americans like Hemingway the way of telling a story very effectively, with that clarity, dryness and rhythm...

HL – When you mention Hemingway, you quote a particularly visual writer, who practically works with montage. Each sentence could be a shot...

JR – Yes, but, above all, I think the structure of the book works like a film, with flashbacks and fast-forwards... Both José Cardoso Pires and Hemingway loved film. It might be a bit of a cliché, but I like that idea of certain fictions being cinematographic, and Rubem would definitely fit that label. Both the harshness of the themes and the impudence with which he treats them concur to his allure.

HL – What is the commercial success of Rubem in Brazil?

JR – He sells more, of course, a lot more than in Portugal. When “Feliz ano novo” was released, his short stories influenced many Brazilian writers with his style. I think the Brazilian Tabajara Ruas, which I also published in Portugal, and who is very cinematic too, was very influenced by Rubem.

HL – You refer to “unforgiving clichés” when it comes to characters in Rubem's fiction – dwarfs, hired guns and the like. Is it possible that those stock characters come from film as a mass genre?

JR - Most certainly. Cinema was so powerful and connected itself so much to literature that it opened up new possibilities and gave lessons to writers. Cinema proved that stories that used to be told by means of slow-reading three hundred-page long tomes that meant

to while away the reader's time could be told in much fewer words. The plot of *Gone with the wind* can be told in another manner, we don't need all those pages. There was a necessary and inevitably positive cross-fertilization between literature and film. Cinema brings a new culture, a new way of looking, a rush, a different speed... Life is faster, so it has to be told faster. And the adequation of words to that is a lesson that was certainly taught by film.

HL – What kind of bookshops sell Rubem's books?

JR – *Continente* remains the largest retailer of books in Portugal and all publishers' best client in terms of turnover, but not in variety of books. So the great authors of *Sextante* go to *Fnac*, *Bertrand*, *Almedina*, *El Corte Ingles*... We do business with small bookshops too, but these large groups represent the greatest share of Rubem's market. As I told you before, Rubem is not a bad sale at all... We get letters of eager readers asking when the next book by Rubem is going to be published in Portugal as soon as they notice it has been published in Brazil. Books are a wicked business: we settle on a price out of which 60% is for the distributor, who in turn gives 30% or 40% to the bookseller. But in all Southern European countries, the bookseller can send back the amount of unsold books, so when the distributor places a number of books in an outlet, they are not sold yet. They might come back to the publisher's warehouse after months, having incurred all these expenses... It is penible and devilish! But the book is paid for as soon as you sell half the printed copies, and every Rubem's book I have published in Portugal sold above that line. I have always made money with them.

HL – Do you think Rubem's relation to film may make him more accessible, more sellable, more commercial?

JR – Commercial in a good sense, touch more people, sell more books? Maybe, because in our modernity, readers were fashioned by film, so they like it when writing shapes itself to accommodate what cinema taught us. Readers like that the words of the novelist bring them images. They want the narrator to pull them into a book as if they were inside a film. This shuttle between film and literature is an old story: to establish itself narratively, cinema stole a lot from literature. Now, literature steals from cinema. So the answer is "yeah"! I hope you can find good examples.