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# Neutering Neoliberalism: Masculinities and Gore Capitalism in Rubem Fonseca's Crime Novels

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Neutering Neoliberalism: Masculinities and Gore Capitalism in Rubem Fonseca's Crime  
Novels

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## Dedication

This project is dedicated to Elena, my beautiful wife, and Lucía Elena, our beautiful daughter. May we continue to grow together, wherever we go together!

## Acknowledgements

I want to thank Jorge Camacho for his expertise, patience, time, and strategic guidance ever since the fall semester of 2012, when I began my doctoral studies, and when he began to graciously field my questions about Academia, Literature, and Cultural Studies. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Maria Mabrey for convincing me that I am capable of saying something worthwhile about a text; to Francisco Sanchez and Lucile Charlebois for inspiring me to return to graduate school in 2011, and for their steady encouragement and generosity along the way. I am especially grateful to Raúl Diego Rivera Hernández for giving me a tremendous head start on the *novela negra* and for guiding me towards the essential texts of this project. I also hereby acknowledge the tireless, unconditional effort, without which I would not have finished, that Andy Rajca has put forth, in his advising me and in his living example. I want to express my gratitude for Matt Childs, whose willingness to be a part of this project comes from a genuine interest and love for Brazil and Brazilian Portuguese. Lastly, yet, perhaps the most important acknowledgement for this dissertation, I must thank Marc Demont for his endless sharing of ideas, for his listening to and honestly criticising my proposals, and for his patience in answering every single one my naïve questions, all while offering countless explanations, in laymans terms, with a very thick, authoritative, confidence instilling, French accent.

## Abstract

This study presents close readings of Rubem Fonseca's *Agosto* (1990), *A grande arte* (1983), *Bufo & Spallanzani* (1985), and *O seminarista* (2009), to suggest they condemn Neoliberalism's role in creating a global culture of violence, as they problematize its rhetoric of domination and uncover its heteropatriarchal, consumerist ideology, disguised as fact or 'common-sense.' The four chapters are divided according to the different theoretical concepts that accompany the four principal texts' common critique of Neoliberal masculinity, as it functions to uphold the interdependent hierarchies of race, class and gender. Fonseca's texts also imply the reader's' complicity in a global culture of violence, whose conditions for honoring masculinities become the discursive turning point at which one either attenuates or contributes to the normalization of racialized, gendered, and/or epistemological violence.

This dissertation also finds that all four novels speak in place of Fonseca's famously silent, ambiguous position on his own role, during the early 1960's, when he was a corporate executive for a multinational company and allegedly penned screenplays for documentaries in an industry-led propaganda bombardment that swayed Brazil's public opinion towards the coup of 1964 and initiated twenty years of brutal military dictatorship. Through their characters' representations of performing and/or constructing masculinities, the novels abjure Neoliberalism and hold its ideology of domination responsible for Brazil's scandalous violence that the federal government in 2015 estimated to be upwards of sixty-thousand homicides per year.

## Preface

Paulo S. Pinheiro opens his article, entitled, “Violência, crime e sistemas policiais em países de novas democracias” (1997), by narrating the following incident:

Em meio à Avenida Cabo Branco no centro da cidade do Rio de Janeiro, três homens roubam um banco. Ao fugirem, são assaltados por guardas da segurança do banco que lhes roubam o que têm e matam um dos ladrões durante a briga que se segue. Os ladrões do início da história, cujas armas eram roubados, decidiram dar queixa à polícia, na tentativa de no mínimo recuperar as armas perdidas - o que aconteceu quando as guardas foram presos. No mesmo dia, seis outros bancos foram assaltados no Rio de Janeiro, mas apenas um assalto foi registrada na polícia. No Brasil ... os criminosos parecem confiar mais na polícia do que os empresários” (43). ‘In the middle of Cabo Branco Ave., in downtown Rio de Janeiro, three men rob a bank. Upon fleeing, they are assaulted by the bank's security guards, who rob what they have and kill one of the thieves during the ensuing struggle. The thieves, whose weapons had been stolen, decided to file a complaint with the police in order to at least recover the guns they lost- which happened when the guards were arrested. On the same day, six other banks were robbed in Rio de Janeiro, but only one robbery was reported to the police. In Brazil ... the criminals seem to trust the police more than business owners do.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As this document fulfills requirements for the Spanish program degree, I provide translations only for citations in Portuguese, which are my own, unless otherwise indicated. Translations not found immediately after quoted Portuguese text appear in the footnotes on the same page as the quotation.

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## Introduction

Towards the objective of gaining a better understanding of the causes and conditions of Brazil's social violence, reading and writing about crime novels may seem like an inefficient course of study. I have found the opposite to be true. I study Fonseca's work because of its unique ability to depict, clarify, and emphasize connections that are not always clear, yet, nevertheless exist between violence, masculinity and economic policy. In this dissertation, I propose that Rubem Fonseca's novels entitled, *Agosto* (1990), *A grande arte* (1983), *Bufo & Spallanzani* (1985), and *O seminarista* (2009), implicate a neoliberal version of masculinity, as the principal generator of endless social violence worldwide, but especially in Brazil.<sup>2</sup> These novels depict race, class, and gender as interdependent social constructions, yet, they specifically denounce the conditions by which society honors masculinity as the behavioral, discursive, and micropolitical turning point at which the subject either attenuates or contributes to the normalization of violence.

This cultural study considers Fonseca's narrative work as cultural productions, and since, when making social critiques, he is not the only author to use the politically charged medium that is the crime novel, this section begins with a brief review of how

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<sup>2</sup> June 2015 statistics from SEADE (*Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados*) say urban violence in Brazil has killed over one million people in the last thirty years (Sergio 9). In 2012, Brazil reported 56,000 homicides, which was 11.4 % of all those worldwide. If one includes the homicides that go unreported, the yearly estimate in Brazil is 60,000 per year (Sergio 5). The statistics show the problem is getting worse, as the number of deaths per 100,000 inhabitants has increased from 22.2 in 1990 to 26.9 in 2013 (Sergio 9). Also, Martha Huggins offers details and statistics on racialized violence in the public and private sectors of policing in Brazil (113-23).

the genre (and its relatives) became a useful medium for Latin American writers, followed by a look at the previous scholarship on Fonseca.

This project began out of my interest in the *novela negra*, which is a term that I have found associated with Latin American crime novels that also encompasses the sub genres known as the *neopolicíaco* and the *narconovela*. In *Poética del relato policíaco* (2006), Ivan Martín distinguishes the *novela negra* from the detective novel. For Martín the narrative focalization in the *novela negra* typically comes from the criminal,<sup>3</sup> and its story lacks a serious investigation, which means it lacks a detective and, therefore, does not meet the required formula of the detective story (16, 223).<sup>4</sup> The fundamental plot requirements of the detective story are that a crime be alleged and that an investigation of that alleged crime take place. Each of the four novels selected for analysis could, arguably, fall within the detective novel category, yet, they also, arguably, match Martín's definition for *novela negra*. Fonseca's work seems to intentionally blur lines between genres, as discussed later in this section.

Martín and Mempo Giardinelli mention that, according to Fereydoun Hoveyda, the detective genre can be traced back to an ancient anonymous Chinese manuscript about the life of a seventh century judge named Ti who presided over the emperor's court and was responsible for carrying out investigations (Giardinelli 20, Martín 140), but both Martín and Giardinelli also infer that Edgar Allen Poe is most often credited for authoring

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<sup>3</sup> In my referring to focalization, I employ techniques for narrative analysis in Mieke Bal's *Narratology* (10-11).

<sup>4</sup> Martín's definition of the *novela negra* fits what Tony Dilfer calls the crime novel (1-3). Incidentally, *novela negra* is also a commonly used translation for crime novel and/or the hardboiled detective novel. Greg Forter's definition of the crime novel includes both the hardboiled detective novel, which must have a detective, and the "inverted detective novel" or roman noir," which does not require a detective (233). Giardinelli's study, entitled, *El género negro* (1983), includes analyses of works that fit either category.

the first detective story in 1841 when *Graham's Magazine* published “The Murders of Rue Morgue” (Giardinelli 21, Martín 139). Murder is the crime most commonly investigated in the detective story, which, according to Ernest Mandel, is characterized by an attitude about death that was tied to the bourgeois ideology of competition and new at the time of its onset: death suddenly demanded an explanation and an investigation (Mandel 57-9).

Martín's review also mentions the detective genre's French antecedents in the documented life of Eugène François Vidocq, a criminal turned police, who inspired early XIX Century French realists like Honoré de Balzac y Émile Gaboriau. Poe's Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin, a French aristocrat living in Paris (and no longer rich), is the inherently astute, amateur detective who marks the ‘analytical phase’ of the genre's ‘evolution.’ In this phase, solving the puzzle (e.g., victim found in a room locked from the inside), is purely a demonstration of the detective's love for a process that requires his extraordinary mental ability (Kracauer 115-17). Dupin's brilliant mental capacity, according to Jon Thompson, “exists as a projection of aristocratic ideals found in the antebellum South” (48).

If Poe's analytical phase projects aristocratic values, the next phase, known as the ‘empirical phase,’ projects those of the bourgeoisie, which coincides with the genre's explosion in popularity. Thompson notes its underlying values of modernity: the protection of private property, a social hierarchy of distinct classes, and a justice system protecting the middle and upper echelons of society from the criminal class that threatened their ideology of social order (3).<sup>5</sup> Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's scientifically

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<sup>5</sup> Scotland Yard was established in 1829.

knowledgeable and always eccentric detective, Sherlock Holmes, is the most recognizable name of the empirical phase, was allegedly inspired by Gaboriau's scientific investigator, Monsieur Lecoq, and first appears in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887).

Agatha Christie's detective Hercule Poirot most notably represents the third 'psychological' phase of the genre. Instead of relying on observation, endless knowledge, and scientific investigation, Poirot interacts with witnesses and/or suspects and enters into the criminal's mind. Next, Joseph T. Shaw's *Black Mask* magazine inaugurated the fourth phase, known as the 'hardboiled,' during the Prohibition years of the 1920's with its *noir* series, whose contributing authors include Dashiell Hammet and later, Raymond Chandler. In contrast with Christie's whodunnits that take place mostly in the European countryside, the hardboiled detective employs his street smarts and physical strength (or lack thereof) as he roams about the chaotic urban environments of American cities wrought with organized crime and corruption.

Most importantly for Latin American readers and writers, the hardboiled story lacks much of the first three phases' Manichaeism, which was incompatible with the reality of Latin American readers and writers (Trelles 83), and an easy target for the parodic style of Jorge Luís Borges, who, along with Bioy Casares, mocks nearly every famous detective story published to date in *Seis problemas para don Isidrio Parodi* (1942), written under the pseudonym Honorio Bustos Domecq.<sup>6</sup> Unlike Holmes and Poirot, the hardboiled detective (e.g., Hammet's Sam Spade) toes the line of criminality

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<sup>6</sup> In the early years of Latin American detective fiction, publishing houses required writers to use English pseudonyms: "se relacionó la verosimilitud de estas historias con la procedencia anglosajona de sus autores, héroes y ambientes" (Trelles 83).

himself, and the mysteries he solves do nothing to restore order to a hopelessly corrupt society, which is an example of how the genre becomes a medium for social critique.

Ilan Stavans notes that American hardboiled detective novel, and Chester Himes in particular, inspired the more socially conscious Spanish language hardboiled novel, the *neopolicíaco*, during the student movement of 1968 and in response to events like the massacre at Tlatelolco and the assassination of Che Guevara (Stavans 95). Giardinelli points out that the hardboiled has poignantly depicted the relationship between capitalism and increasing crime (93). In particular, Giardinelli offers appreciative criticism for Rafael Bernal's *Complot Mongol* (1969), a Mexican crime/detective novel that, according to the *neopolicíaco*'s most celebrated living author, Paco Ignacio Taibo II, inaugurated the *neopolicíaco* sub-genre. Taibo II claims to have been influenced by politically charged American writers like Chester Himes (Stavans 145). Cuba's Leonardo Padura describes the *neopolicíaco* as follows: "no tiene por qué ser misterioso para generar el propósito último de esta literatura: la sensación de incertidumbre, la evidencia de que vivimos en un mundo cada vez más violento, la convicción de que la justicia es un concepto moral y legal que no siempre está presente en la realidad" (6).

With the rise of narco-states in Latin America, and Mexico in particular during the late 1990's, the *neopolicíaco* has given way to another widely recognized Spanish language sub-genre, the *narconovela*, whose writers, according to Diana Palaversich, "are unanimous in critiquing the corruption in the Mexican police and government.... [And] eager to expose the symbiotic link between narcos and state officials..." (85).<sup>7</sup>

Palaversich classifies Élmer Mendoza and his series with Culiacán police detective Edgar

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<sup>7</sup> Mendoza mentions his regard for Fonseca in an interview with *novela negra* specialist Rodrigo Pereira (339).

‘Zurdo’ Mendieta (2008-2013) within the *narconovela* sub genre. However, a point I elaborate further in chapter one of this study is that much earlier, in 1983, Fonseca’s *A grande arte* depicts Brazil’s socially embedded symbiosis between the drug trade, state officials, and legal industry. Staying very much within the *narconovela*’s thematic tendencies, Fonseca’s *O seminarista* (2009) (discussed at length in chapter four) depicts a culture of violence characterized by a growing indifference towards violence. In general, the *narconovela* indicates that this indifference is an essential condition for embodying an ultra-violent masculinity that has tormented Latin America, especially in recent decades. It also points to a common cultivator of this new ultra-violent masculinity: a military re-masculinization effort during the Cold War, discussed further in the next section and in both chapters two and four.

Fonseca’s novels become didactic texts for readers who expect stories with mystery, intrigue, suspense, crime, violence, sex, and drugs. The Fonsequian narrative utilizes all of those “low brow” elements to lure unsuspecting readers towards more political, theoretical and philosophical themes that challenge one’s breadth of knowledge from all fields, especially literature. With respect to *A grande arte* and *Bufo & Spallanzani*, Nelson Vieira considers Fonseca’s infusion of references to classical works onto the popular crime/detective genre, an assault on authoritarian, elitist discourse (110). Vieira suggests that Fonseca’s ambiguous, doubling characters are incompatible with socially constructed binaries; and that they resist oppressive and repressive discursive power on a level that the binary discourse of a Marxist critique misses (111). In support of his argument, Vieira cites Merquior’s “Em Busca do Pos-Moderno” (1980), and says,

“Merquior singles out Fonseca as one of [Brazilian posmodernism’s] principal proponents (qtd. in Vieira 38-41).”

Ligia Chiappani contests Fonseca’s reception by critics who say his work reflects the formulae of the American hardboiled detective novel, and uses “higher” culture, so that it belongs in a category ‘B,’ between the categories of best-seller (labeled as ‘C’) and Literature (‘A’) (49). She notes that academics find a metalinguistic dimension in Fonseca’s work, as it problematizes violence and language (50), and she finds parallels between Fonseca and hardboiled pioneer Dashiell Hammett, not just in their social critiques, but also in their real life experiences with crime and corruption, as both were detectives to varying degrees during their lives (58). I contend that Fonseca’s real life experience as a business executive has had more impact on his work than his short eight months on the street as a police officer, and I elaborate on the importance of that claim towards the end of this introduction.

Hilfer notes how the crime novel’s political critique stems from its lacking a detective that stands for justice and ensures, “the reader’s absolution from guilt.” Without a ‘good’ detective, “the reader of the crime novel is maneuvered into various forms of complicity” (Hilfer 2-3). The texts’ objective representations of a subjected society indicate an intention to provoke different thought patterns, in order to have readers contemplate their complicity in the constructions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and the production of knowledge, to the point that readers’ perceptions of reality become altered. The text implicates the readers for their role in maintaining social orders that lead to violence, which is part of what makes the texts so alarming. Francisco Marín refers to

Fonseca's all inclusive indictment in that, "El analista es analizado, y el observador es culpable como lo es el propio asesino" (46).

Critics loathe placing Fonseca's work in a specific literary genre; yet, they often discuss its denouncing an unfair reality and debate its compatibility with the formulae of the detective novel and/or the crime novel. For example, Silva notes that, although *A grande arte* has the required elements of a detective novel, "as narrativas circundantes vão bem mais além" (75).<sup>8</sup> Marín emphasizes that, "Es un error creer que Fonseca es un autor policial," and that his novels parody the detective and crime genres (46). Similarly, Elizabeth Ginway argues that Fonseca intentionally crosses over genre formulae (712-13), yet, in her analysis of *A grande arte*, she points out that Fonseca pays homage to both Poe, who initiated the detective genre, and Borges, who was the detective genre's first critic (by way of parody) in Latin America (718).

Ginway indicates elements of *A grande arte* that pertain to crime fiction's genre formula and how the text, "explores the psychology of the criminal, and paranoia and pathology predominate over reason and order" (721), which influenced this study's analyses of the texts' representations of thoughts with respect to violence, gender performance, and also race. Ginway takes note of the various ways in which Fonseca pays homage to Machado de Assis, which, "leave literary clues in order to take a wide aim at society, ... black characters who play significant roles, reminders of the social other whom society attempts to repress or exclude" (716).

Francisco Marín calls the author's narrative style, "una absoluta desolación... del lado de la amoralidad" (42). Silva considers such amorality to be a conduit for resistance

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<sup>8</sup> "... the stories [within the story] that surround those elements [of detective fiction], go way beyond them".



against an oppressive ruling class: “o escritor, ao romper os limites da referida moralidade, estaria em luta clandestina contra essa classe” (37).<sup>9</sup> Silva constructively ridicules the arguments in the judges’ written opinions from the censorship ruling against *Feliz ano novo* (17-29),<sup>10</sup> and he proposes that its prohibition was due to the text’s undermining the ideology of the ruling class, who the dictatorship was in power to protect (12). However, he asks the following question about Fonseca’s most well-known protagonist/narrator from *A grande arte*, Mandrake: “Que busca nas mulheres que tanto procura? Provas sucessivas e eternamente insuficientes de que ele não é homossexual?” (88).<sup>11</sup> Silva’s associating Mandrake’s womanizing with an effort to hide homosexuality does not do the text quite enough justice, because it ignores that his womanizing turns into a paradoxical queering of conventional masculinity. In chapters two and three, I further examine the text’s intent to parody heteropatriarchal masculinity with both Mandrake and Gustavo’s professed philandering.

## One Nation under God, Indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for Heteropatriarchal Masculinity and Neoliberal Capitalism

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<sup>9</sup> “the writer, by breaking the limits of the [the State’s version of] morality, would be in a hidden fight against that ruling class.”

<sup>10</sup> Silva says that, according to Lygia Fagundes’s deposition, a friend of a politician (*ministro*) noticed his son reading *Feliz ano novo*. The concerned father alerted the *ministro* who gave a copy of the book to his assistant to read and highlight parts he found scandalous, which led to the book’s censorship (28). Silva’s *Rubem Fonseca: proibido e consagrado* (1996) offers analyses of Fonseca’s work up to *Vastas emoções e pensamentos imperfeitos* (1988).

<sup>11</sup> “What is he searching for in all these women he chases? Repeated, insufficient proof that he is not homosexual?”

The following quotation from *Y.N. Harari's Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (2014) succinctly summarizes how the concept of masculinity is to be understood in this dissertation: "A man is not [Homo] *Sapiens* with particular biological qualities such as XY chromosomes, testicles, and lots of testosterone... Males must prove their masculinity constantly, throughout their lives, from cradle to grave in an endless series of rites and performances" (Harari 151-2). The discussions in the coming chapters around characters and their gender performance rely heavily on textual representations of masculinity that indicate both "and endless series of rites and performances" and a "different sort of repeating" from heteropatriarchal gender practices.

Some key examples of conventional representations of gender encountered in "mainstream" discourse in Brazil are the following terms that Andrea Cornwall offers in her study from the early 1990's in Salvador, Bahia:

The hegemonic version of masculinity portrays strong, capable and virile protectors. The term *homem*... carries with it explicit reference to how 'real men' are expected to behave in bed: as *ativo* ('active') and as *comedor* (literally 'eater'; insertor)... *Mulheres* ('women') are represented as those who inspire or are the subjects of the actions of others, and are portrayed in sex as in life as acted on, as *passivo* ('passive')... (119).

RW Connell notes that masculinities are often life-long projects that mold to the whims of their socio-historical context, and they often display regional characteristics.<sup>12</sup> A current global pattern that repeats most often within marginalized demographics,

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<sup>12</sup> For more information, see Connell, Raewyn and James W. Messerschmidt. "Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & society* 19.6 (2005): 829-859.

demonstrates how versions of masculinity that are honored, and, therefore, aspired to by boys, are also very violent. Both Sayek Valencia and Connell mention the border region between the U.S. and Mexico as an example where this is the case.<sup>13</sup> Rio de Janeiro, where Fonseca's novels take place, is arguably another example of a violent 'border region,'<sup>14</sup> where young men from the favelas often aspire to a violent version of masculinity. Due to the violent drug trade being one of the few opportunities to earn an income, a young male's willingness to engage in violence is often viewed as a pathway to status gained through one's fulfilling the heteropatriarchal convention of being a provider.

Maria Lugones explains that the conventional heteropatriarchal gender practices in the America's are a product of early capitalism. Europeans imposed not only their social constructs of race and class onto their enslaved subjects in the Americas, but also their versions of gender. Lugones argues that the discursive duration of heteropatriarchal conditions for society's determining what makes a male 'man' and a female 'woman' are due largely to gender's continued place as antecedent for biology's male/female dimorphism (193-99). Lugones's problematizing the conventional concept of gender and signaling its origins in early capitalism's Atlantic slave trade period resonates with David Harvey's questioning the 'common sense' rhetoric of neoliberalism (defined below).

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<sup>13</sup> "Masculinities - Raewyn Connell Interview at Women's Worlds 2011." Interview by Greg Macdougall. [Http://www.womensworlds.ca](http://www.womensworlds.ca). MM of Common Cause Media, 21 Aug. 2011. Web. 21 Oct. 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Like many borders, this one is imaginary, but instead of dividing nations, the division is between privileged protected citizenship and the precarious struggle of survival. The former, like those residing in Rio's *zona sul* ('south side'), enjoys services like plumbing, electricity, waste management, health care and educational opportunities. Few or none of these services extended to the favelas that surround the cosmopolitan city, which forces the inhabitants to scurry and improvise make-shift services, including their own version of policing.

Lugones and Harvey's critique of an ideology that maintains current power structures is also present in Fonseca's thematic of society's need to reevaluate its conditions for honoring masculinity.

Neoliberalism, according to David Harvey, is a theory of global economic policy promoted by the world's strongest economies that is favorable to their own elite class and to that of the developing economies whose governments agree to "liberate individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills ... [maintain] strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade...., [and] if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary" (2). The "state action" to create markets is the most notable double standard of neoliberalism, because such government intervention contradicts its tenet of free trade. The ruling class of the developing economies targeted for large scale engineering projects, foreign investment and free trade agreements is often situated to profit considerably. Neoliberalism's claim that the economic growth spurred by these various projects and investments are to the benefit of the majority, has long been questioned and economists now (in 2016) agree that, not only does greater inequality result from the initial growth produced by neoliberal policy, but also that this inequality is detrimental to the entire country's long term growth (Furceri et al. 38).

Neoliberalism gained popularity in the 1980's after the rise and fall of Keynesian economics and with the help of, "advocates [who] occupy positions of considerable influence in education (the universities and many 'think tanks'), in the media, in corporate boardrooms and financial institutions, in key state institutions ... and ... institutions such as the ... World Bank" (Harvey 3). Through the strategic use of tradition

based cultural ideology, the media, and the discursively centralizing idea of ‘common sense,’ “neoliberalism has become a hegemonic discourse with pervasive effects on ways of thought and political practice, to the point where it is now part of a common sense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world” (3).<sup>15</sup>

Neoliberalism has also become a matter of ‘common sense’ in Brazil, but not because it is an unquestionable economic policy that benefits everyone. During the early 1960’s, big domestic and multinational industry, threatened by President João Goulart’s proposals for reform, meticulously planned a purge of right wing rhetoric that resonated with judeo-christian based nationalism. Disguised as Brazil’s safeguard against an imminent threat from communism, industry villainized the government’s role in the economy, despite the fact that such opposition to reform favored only the privileged classes. The swaying of Brazilian public opinion towards this allegedly nationalist (yet truly technocratic) economic policy occurred quite similarly to how neoliberalism became ‘Washington politics’ to the exclusion of alternative forms of foreign and domestic economic policy.

In Brazil, this fast tracked production of compromised knowledge, especially to the uneducated masses, appeared as the logos, or, for the pious, it was the unquestionable “Word of the Lord.” The most influential group in Brazil responsible for this epistemological barrage was the “Instituto de Pesquisas e Estudos Sociais” ‘Institute of Social Studies and Research’ (IPÊS), which operated in major cities throughout the

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<sup>15</sup> I understand hegemony according to Antonio Gramsci, in *Selections from Prison Notebooks* (1971), and therefore, hegemonic discourse develops according to the ideology “which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. It is the discourse of institutions and corporations, “which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes” (526).

country to establish a parallel government that was led by corporate executives of Brazilian and multinational companies and high ranking military officers. IPÊS's main objectives were to promote foreign investment, eliminate protests and wage strikes, and to carry out the coup of 1964 against Goulart. All were objectives most favorable to IPÊS's financial contributors, who also consisted of Brazilian and multinational corporations and individuals who felt that their fortunes were under threat from the political left.

What is most interesting for the present study, is that among these multinational corporations in Brazil, whose executives participated as acting members of IPÊS, was the Canadian electric company, named, "Light," where Rubem Fonseca served as CEO when IPÊS began to operate in 1962 (Dreifuss 245-6).<sup>16</sup> Armand Dreifuss documents his years of research on IPÊS in his dissertation, entitled, *State, Class and the Organic Elite: the Formation of an Entrepreneurial Order in Brazil 1961-1965* (1980),<sup>17</sup> and he claims that Fonseca, was not only among the hundreds of financial contributors to IPÊS (354), but that Fonseca also wrote and/or edited its newspaper editorials and film scripts when he was a leader of the IPÊS branch called the "Grupo de Opinião Pública" 'Public Opinion Group' (GOP) (298).

Also, Denise Assis's *Propaganda e cinema a serviço do Golpe: 1962/1964* (2001) (*Propaganda and Film at the Behest of the Coup: 1962-1964*), cites IPÊS documents in order to allege Fonseca's having authored the screenplays of their documentary films

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<sup>16</sup>According to Dreifuss's study, the Brazilian *Serviços de Informação Nacional* (SIN) ('National Intelligence Agency'), used information that a branch of IPÊS (GLC) had gathered, to locate, torture, and/or disappear thousands from the political left: "The GLC also tapped about 3,000 phones in Rio alone.... the GLC kept files on 400,000 people" (Dreifuss 291).

<sup>17</sup> He published his dissertation as a book in Portuguese entitled, *1964: A Conquista do Estado* (1981).

(324).<sup>18</sup> According to her research, these films were shown in movie theaters throughout Brazil before the main attractions in the years leading up to the coup of 1964, and they (and, therefore, their screenplays) had an enormous impact in swaying public opinion (hegemonic discourse) towards the ouster of President Goulart, due to their power to emotionally move the middle and upper classes, “sem as quais não haveria apoio ao golpe” ‘without whom, there would not have been support for the coup’ (763).<sup>19</sup> Lastly, according to Pacheco, journalist Oswaldo de Camargo’s article “O homem que fareja tesouros brasileiros” ‘The man on the scent of Brazilian secrets,’ in *Jornal da tarde* (São Paulo, 1986), Fonseca was a former advisor to the notoriously ruthless General Golbery during their concurrence at IPÊS (qtd. in Pacheco 19).<sup>20</sup>

Although the author emphatically denies his having anything to do with the military government (qtd. in Pacheco 19-20), Fonseca has admitted that his participation in IPÊS made him, “uma especie de entreguista” ‘somewhat of a sell-out’ (qtd. in Pacheco 18). The Fonsequian novel’s representations of the human condition, especially that of the villains, indicate that “selling-out,” and other reprehensible acts, are not without their surrounding social context that cause one to compromise or even lose his or

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<sup>18</sup>Although the name of the screenwriter never appeared in the documentaries credits, Assis cites her conversations with Domício da Gama, who claims that Fonseca had an important role in IPÊS, especially as a writer, and that he must have been the author of the screenplays for the IPÊS documentary short films (307, 754, and 763). At seventy-eight years old (when Assis conducted her study), Domício was one of the few surviving members of IPÊS who would say anything. He was an ex-marine whose main job at IPÊS was to, “research the finger pointers,” from the political left (732).

<sup>19</sup> “Assis holds that based on their calculated objectivity on a wide variety of topics, the narration during the films reflect ‘good’ writing. She also points out that the films had the highest quality of sound possible (for their time) and cutting edge direction from the famous French director Jean Manzon (579).

<sup>20</sup> According to Golbery’s obituary in the NY Times, he, “was considered the mastermind behind the military coup that toppled President João Goulart in 1964,” after which Golbery became “... the first head of the National Intelligence Service, which he called the ‘Ministry of Silence’” (NY Times ‘87).

her sense of morality. My thesis, then, is based on the premise that no one would know how to better critique neoliberal knowledge through a more innovative and inclusive discourse, than he who at one time promoted its agenda, performed its version of “man,” and then began to question whether it was beneficial for the majority of the population, as promised.

Following the coup of President Goulart in 1964 and the subsequent implementation of the right wing military dictatorship, whose economic agenda favored the Brazilian elite, their corporations, and multinational interests, Brazil saw a massive influx into its major cities of marginalized rural populations who were unable to compete with large, often multinational, agricultural businesses or who were forced and/or coerced off their land by large, often multinational, mining companies that capitalize on Brazil’s abundant natural resources. The mass migration from the interior to urban centers has resulted in systematic racialized violence that targets Brazil’s most vulnerable: racial minority groups, the rural poor, syndicalists and abandoned street kids (P.S. Pinheiro 44).

Paulo Pinheiro mentions the bank robbery incident (quoted in the preface) in order to illustrate the gap between the law, as it is written in the democratic constitution of 1988, which protects against racism and violations of “basic human rights,” and the law that is enforced in, “uma democracia sem cidadania” ‘a democracy without citizenship’ (44-5). Brazil’s blend of public and private sector policing delegitimizes statistics that track the day to day urban violence in a country that, according to current estimates taking into account unreported homicides, averages sixty thousand murders a year. Both Pinheiro and Martha Huggins have reported on the ambiguity that clouds the role of those extrajudicial, private security firms, whose presence highlights how the



privileged classes can determine who are the criminals and who are to be protected, often to the detriment of the marginalized, especially young black males who are the largest demographic represented in the total number of reported homicide victims and police shooting victims. One assumes the same is true for the victims left unreported.

Three of the four novels that are analyzed in this study were published during Brazil's long "transition to democracy," officially taking place with the elections of 1985. The transition was, according to Marcos Del Roio, simply another period in Brazilian history when capital reclaimed political power and cleared the path for neoliberalism: "em torno de 1988-1989, as classes dominantes brasileiras se unificaram em torno do projeto dito neoliberal, que em sua completude pressupunha uma 'democracia de mercado' para o capital, mas que para os trabalhadores mais parecia um "fascismo liberal" (12-13).<sup>21</sup> A severe increase in violence during the 1980's and 1990's coincided with this transition to neoliberalism: "Between 1979 and 1997, the homicide rate in Brazil increased from 11.5 murders per one hundred thousand ... to 25.4" (Huggins 113). The correlation between violence and neoliberalism is strengthened by the country's infamously severe income inequality that is, "so embedded in Brazilian history" it is considered "natural" (Balleza 35). When neoliberalism in Brazil had fully bloomed in 1989, the result was income inequality that was worse than ever. The average income of the top 10% was thirty times greater than the average income of 40% of the population. The top 1% earned 16% of the country's total income (Balleza 35).

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<sup>21</sup> "... by about 1988-1989, the ruling classes united around the so-called neoliberal project, which, in every aspect presupposed a market based democracy for capital, but for workers seemed more like 'liberal fascism'" (Del Roio 12-13). This is from Milton Pinheiro's collection of essays *Ditadura: o que resta da transição* (2014) 'Dictatorship: What Remains from the Transition'.

In reaction to this blatantly normalized social injustice, Fonseca's male protagonist/narrator parodies and critiques society's honoring a version of masculinity that is conditioned by the accumulation of financial and material wealth, sexual conquests, and one's ability to practice indifference and extinguish feelings of empathy or pity towards others. The historical repetition of the conditions for masculinity that are present in Cornwall's 'sexually prominent provider' mirror the repetition and coloniality of an antiquated idealization of free trade, which, despite its role in historical atrocities like slavery, forms the basis for misleading arguments in favor of neoliberalism that completely ignore its impact on income inequality and contributions to social violence. Therefore, money, sex, and indifference towards humanity are the conditions represented in these novels for what I am calling a 'neoliberal masculinity.'

My claim, that *Agosto*, *A grande arte*, *Bufo & Spallanzani*, and *O seminarista* denounce neoliberal masculinity and call for new conditions for constructing masculinities, coincides with Deonísio da Silva's observation, that Fonseca's texts depict a troubled reality that the narrator, whom Silva considers to be the voice of the author, wants to fix (52). However, given the inclusivity of gender performance, I contend that Fonseca's critique of how society constructs and honors masculinities exposes the readers's complicity in creating the aforementioned troubled reality. My readings expand on Silva's point, that Fonseca's representations of sexualities serve as a form of resistance in the class struggle (37), yet, I focus more on how they problematize the interdependence between society's constructions of race, class, and gender, as well as neoliberalism's dependence upon the hierarchies and value systems of those social orders' matching those established and maintained by the market.

This problematization disrupts and challenges a hegemonic discourse that the novels present as socially detrimental and ultimately violent. Intrinsic to their impact on hegemonic discourse, the four novels offer, what Judith Butler calls, “a different sort of repeating” (*Performative Acts*, 520),<sup>22</sup> in their representations of new conditions for building masculinities that are based more on the reality of their socio-historic context and less on the heteropatriarchal conventions of gender in Brazilian society. Certainly some of Fonseca’s characters represent violent conditions for constructing masculinities, but because the spectacle of violence in these novels is not glorified but instead nauseating, repeating that violent masculinity in the text is one way the novels critique gendered violence and parody society’s absurd conditions for masculinity. Other characters, by contrast, are more aware of their own performativity in “being a man,” and because they inevitably invoke readers’ self-identifying in the social critique, since no one entirely escapes gender performance, these are Fonseca’s representations with the most potential for affecting discourse beyond the novels.

This critique of society through representations of masculinities is one of the channels through which Fonseca dialogues with Valencia’s critique of neoliberalism in *Capitalismo Gore*:

es hora de pasar la pregunta... hacia el campo de la masculinidad para descentrarla y hacer construcciones de ésta más aterrizadas en la realidad y en la

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<sup>22</sup> Also, I understand ‘gender performance’ according to Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), which proposes that the terms ‘gender’, ‘sex’ and the binaries male/female, homosexual/heterosexual are social constructions performed through the styled repetition of acts. Butler undermines assumptions that biology is purely responsible for these binaries, most notably in her saying, “since I was sixteen years old, I have been being a lesbian,” which does not disregard altogether the possibility of inherent sexuality, but demonstrates the performativity of “being a lesbian,” and therefore problematizes the degree of difference to which hegemonic discourse allows the homosexual/heterosexual binary (171-90).

encarnación [‘embodiment’] de las masculinidades individuales que comprueben que tampoco se nace hombre sino que se puede devenir a través de un proceso en todo momento modificable (183).

The various characters’ embodying a variety of gender practices that contrast so distinctly with one another, denounces the impossibility of practicing society’s conditions for heteropatriarchal masculinity in Brazil’s socio-political, economic relationship with neoliberalism. Both Valencia and Fonseca emphasize the increased difficulty in the fulfillment of market-conditioned masculinity for people who do not belong to the privileged classes, yet are still subjected to the false reality established by marketing campaigns.

Valencia’s *Capitalismo gore* (2010) denounces neoliberalism’s having effectuated a change in the epistemology of violence and brought upon a global culture of violence, whereby the subject gains access to social status if he or she meets the demands of hyper-consumerism, regardless of how these demands are met:

con capitalismo gore nos referimos al derramamiento de sangre explícito e injustificado (como precio a pagar por el tercer mundo que se aferra a seguir las lógicas del capitalismo, cada vez más exigentes), ... la desregularización impulsada por la globalización – la creación de doble marcos o estándares de acción que permiten la precarización laboral mundial, al mismo tiempo que alientan el surgimiento de prácticas gore, ejecutadas por sujetos que buscan el cumplimiento de una de las reglas más importantes del liberalismo para hacerse de legitimidad económica y de género y, por tanto, social: encarnar la figura del *self-made man* (15, 30).

Valencia's ideas gave way to the reading proposed in this study's first chapter, entitled, "Assassins of the Brazilian 'Racial Democracy' in *Agosto* and *A grande arte*," in which I argue that, via their murders, both novels parody neoliberalism's myths that IPÊS fused into Brazil's hegemonic discourse and represented as absolute truths. Some of these are the "self-made man," the natural equilibrium of free markets, and "the survival of the fittest," which, the text implies, is an erroneous application of misinterpreted evolutionary epistemology to social conditions, such as poverty and crime. The assassins derail those individual narratives, through the texts' representing their individual performance in the social construction of masculinity, as well as their methods of survival in the neoliberal economy, and together they debunk the more hegemonic, convenient myth (for those who are white and privileged) that Brazil is a racial democracy.<sup>23</sup>

Fonseca's texts implicate the reader's complicity in this normalization of violence, but they also obliterate the binary of guilt and innocence, and many other binaries, like fact and fiction. These disruptions question the validity of knowledge and are frequently portrayed through the Fonsequian detectives. For homicide detective Alberto Mattos, discovering the truth determines the activities of his job, yet the novel depicts the arbitrariness of truth, especially truths that institutions consider to be

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<sup>23</sup> I understand 'race,' as a taxonomic method that historically has marginalized groups of Homo sapiens, which acquired discursive dominance before Darwinian evolution and 21st century genetics, yet which continues to linger in Western discourse, despite its having been debunked by science. According to the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, "Pure races, in the sense of genetically homogeneous populations, do not exist in the human species today, nor is there any evidence that they have ever existed in the past" (714). I refer to a characters as 'racist,' when their part in dialogue, or their inner monologue, indicate an adherence to (Blumenbach's) pseudoscience from the 18th century, which puts 'Caucasians' atop a hierarchy that is structured according to a set of observable physical characteristics (nowadays referred to as 'phenotypes') that, contrary to what the hierarchy indicates, are irrelevant to the cognitive capacity of Homo sapiens (Gould 69, 401-412). However, I understand the need for a functional vocabulary, and therefore, I use taxonomy such as black, white, indigenous, and 'mixed' in this dissertation.

historical facts. When Mandrake assumes the role of a detective, his law partner Wexler chastises him for being concerned with the truth, because his job is not to discover the truth, but to defend the client (35).

In *Agosto*, Mattos offers his perspective about how the process of a murder investigation can be counterintuitive to empirical logic: “havia uma lógica adequada à criminología, que nada tinha a ver, porém, com premissas e deduções silogísticas à la Conan Doyle.... o conhecimento da verdade e a apreensão da realidade só podiam ser alcançados duvidando-se da própria lógica e até mesmo da realidade” (109).<sup>24</sup>

Mattos’s investigations’ starting point, in this next quotation, indicates the relationship between violence and the performance of a neoliberal masculinity: “A única coisa que aprendí nesses anos todos é que em crime de morte só há duas motivações. Sexo e poder.... Só se mata por dinheiro ou por boceta ... ou as duas coisas juntas. Assim é o mundo” (45-6).<sup>25</sup> He makes little progress in his investigations until he interviews people,<sup>26</sup> and then he becomes something like a human polygraph/lie-detector machine (60). None of the detectives in these four novels have much use for empirical evidence, forensics, or an established investigative protocol.

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<sup>24</sup>“Había una lógica adecuada a la criminología, que nada tenía que ver... con premisas y deducciones silogísticas a lo Conan Doyle. En su lógica, el conocimiento de la verdad y la aprensión de la realidad sólo podían ser alcanzados dudando de la lógica misma e incluso de la realidad” (Manuel Seabra 119).

<sup>25</sup>“Lo único que he aprendido en todos estos años es que en un asesinato sólo hay dos motivos. Sexo y poder.... Solo se mata por pasta o coño ... o por las dos cosas juntas. Así es el mundo” (Manuel Seabra 52).

<sup>26</sup>Waldemer calls his investigative activity “predominantly a compendium of mistakes, spurious leads, and false conclusions” (34).

For example, in *A grande arte*, police detective Raul (Mandrake's friend) cannot make heads or tails of his suspects' behaviors and therefore lends little confidence to logic or reason when investigating a homicide:

Um sujeito chamado Epifânio esquartejou a mulher, colocou os pedaços dentro de uma mala e saiu de casa. Não conseguiu largar a mala em lugar algum. Ele não tinha motivo lógico para matar a mulher, mas matou. E tinha todos os motivos lógicos para deixar a mala em um dos muitos lugares por onde ele andou, mas não deixou, foi até São Paulo, de ônibus, e voltou pelo mesmo trajeto, para casa com a mala, e a mulher dentro da mala. Você me entende agora? (33).<sup>27</sup>

In this fragment, Raul's reasoning for distrusting logic goes deeper than equating science (like forensics) with ruling class ideology, although there are certainly parallels to be drawn between distrusting positivist logic (like science) and distrusting the corrupt State for whom these detectives (and positivist logic) work.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>“A guy named Epifânio cut his wife up into little pieces, put the pieces in a suitcase, and left the house. But he couldn't manage to leave the suitcase anywhere. He had no logical reason to kill his wife, but he had killed her. And he had every logical reason in the world to leave the suitcase in any one of the many places he found himself, but he didn't, he took a bus to São Paulo and came home the same route, with the suitcase, and the wife inside the suitcase. Now you understand what I mean?” (Watson 26).

<sup>28</sup> In an important study about gender, in forensic detective fiction, Joy Palmer refers to Ludmilla Jordanova's argument about a gendered history of science, “marked by a drive to penetrate, uncover, and know ... under the probing scrutiny of the masculine gaze,” and Palmer notes how feminist critics of the detective genre consider it “defined by its masculinist drive to know,” due to its “legacy of positivist knowledge ... with the detective functioning as the very epitome of ratiocinative logic” (56). In Palmer's analysis of Patricia Cornwell's work, she respects the author's expertise in the field of forensic medicine, but Palmer is skeptical of the author's allegiance to scientific prose: “Cornwell's appeal that her work be read as factual, not contrived, certainly points toward a larger cultural tendency to conceal how these scientific discourses participate in the narratives of cultural formation” (58). I understand these “narratives of cultural formation” to be privileged class ideology. Fonseca's prose also gets extremely scientific and highly technical at times, yet the attention that his narrators give to the history of philosophy enables their scientific diatribes that extra bit of epistemological consideration that perhaps Cornwell is missing in order to be shielded from a critique like Palmer's.

Palmer also (cautiously) mentions the possibility of a gender subversion in Cornwell when the scientific gaze (she also calls it the ‘positivist gaze’) comes from the female forensic scientist/detective Dr. Scarpetta (instead of a male detective/scientist) (62), but she says Cornwell's use of (what Edleman would call) the *sinthomosexual* villain character-type “significantly undercuts” any liberating gender discourse that the

In his narration about a particular act of feminicide, Raul's point is that humans often have no idea why they kill or behave in a certain way, which indicates the ambiguous yet very real connections between behavior/gender performance and the underlying psychological, 'disturbing' conditions (e.g. repression and the death drive) that Freud first spoke of and that Greg Forster cites in his critique of American hardboiled detective novels.<sup>29</sup>

Certainly the woman's body, being inexplicably hacked up and toted from Rio to São Paulo and back in a suitcase, makes more sense to discuss in a psycho-social critique than a comparison of different types of detective fiction, yet the two methods of literary analysis are more related than one might think. Forster refers to the American hardboiled version of the detective novel as the "most resolutely masculinist" (of detective or crime fiction) and says it "resides ... in its preoccupation with violence" (11); it is "a genre whose commitment to masculine prowess is notorious," and its stories "abject and 'feminize' their men only by first imagining them through the normative conventions they inherit" (4). Fonseca's texts first imagine their men through neoliberalism's normative conventions, and then, similar to what Forster observes in the American hardboiled detective novel, they queer them. Likewise, the Fonsequian male detective's "anti systematic experience of breakdown" shows the limits of Freud's theoretical

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novel may produce with respect to sexuality (57). I elaborate on the *sinthomosexual* villain character-type below.

<sup>29</sup>In *Murdering Masculinities: Fantasies of Gender and Violence in the American Crime Novel* (2000) Forster discusses the dissolution of self (which Hilfer also mentions [2]) and the reinventing of masculinities in the American hardboiled detective novel. Forster's study relies on Freud, Lacan, Silverman, and Bersani to make a psychoanalytical case for studying the genre that challenges Freud, arguing that since these popular novels are a medium in which the act of gender (and its socially constructed masculine fantasies) are so overtly personified (214), they can be considered as valuable "non-theoretical 'knowledge'" that teaches beyond the "limits of theoretical speculation," exposing "disturbing conditions" about ourselves (3-5).



speculation, but, as Forter says, this psychoanalytic theory illuminates the texts as much as viceversa (6).<sup>30</sup>

The next fragment from *Agosto* depicts gender performativity in the unfortunate social manifestation of domestic violence. A female victim (of her husband's belligerence) begs police detective Mattos to drop the charges against her husband. Mattos's boss has also told him to forget about the incident, and claims that it would just get thrown out of court:

“Eu já pedi desculpas,” sussurrou humilde a mulher... “Ela está arrependida, sabe que errou, pediu desculpas, o senhor não ouviu?,” disse o advogado. “Esse crime é de ação pública, não me interesse a opinião de vítima. Vamos continuar o flagrante.” “Doutor, ela chamou o meu cliente de broxa. Algum marido pode ouvir a própria esposa chamá-lo de broxa sem perder a cabeça ...!” “Ninguém mais autorizado a chamar um sujeito de broxa do que a própria mulher,” disse o comissário (3).<sup>31</sup>

Whether she is being forced to try and get the case dropped, or sincerely wants to, is never clarified, but either way, this fragment depicts both the lawyer and the female victim's role in the maintenance of violent gender relations. The scene posits normalized, patriarchal domestic violence against Mattos' challenging this violent, yet, tragically,

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<sup>30</sup>I speculate Forter calls the conditions Freud exposes “disturbing” because our discussing them openly, conjures a fear of losing what we think is our rank in the collectively imagined, socially constructed hierarchy of masculinity which of course relies on the participation of women too, that is, it includes subjects whose chromosomal makeup is XX, XY, or whatever the individual case may be. So, in the interest of protecting our place in social orders like gender, we cautiously and conveniently turn to fiction for this valuable insight. As Joy Palmer says, “these popular and reassuring narratives become safe spaces where cultural anxieties may be confronted, negotiated, and ultimately resolved” (59).

<sup>31</sup> “Ya le he pedido que me disculpas- susurró humildemente la mujer?... Ella está arrepentida, sabe que hizo mal, pidió disculpas, ¿No la oye?” dijo el abogado. ‘Este delito es de acción pública, no me interesa la opinión de la víctima...’ ‘Doctor, le dijo a mi cliente que es un pichafría. ¿Es que alguien puede oír de su propia esposa llamarle pichafría sin perder la cabeza? ¿Eh? ¡Por favor!’ ‘Nadie más autorizado a decir que un hombre es un pichafría que su propia mujer,’ dijo el comisario” (Manuel Seabra 42).

common version of gender relations, which requires him to defy everyone present: his boss, the wife beater's lawyer, the victim, and the discourse that his socio-historical context regards as 'common sense.'

This depiction of Mattos's unwavering application of the law to protect not just one but all spouses, suggests an alternative, innovative form of masculinity that advocates for feminism. In saying, "ninguem mais autorizado a chamar um sujeito de broxa do que a própria mulher," he refers not only to her right to freely speak, but to freely inform her husband she is not happy with his erectile dysfunction. This politicized, "transfeminist" representation of masculinity, again, speaks to Valencia:

La cuestión de la creación de nuevos sujetos políticos construidos desde el transfemenismo abre de nuevo el debate sobre la necesidad, la vigencia y el reto que supone que los sujetos masculinos se planteen otras configuraciones y condiciones bajo las cuales construir sus masculinidades, que sean capaces no sólo de ejecutarlas sino de crear un discurso de resistencia a través de ellas (182).<sup>32</sup>

Among the intentions of the four texts that I examine is that the unsuspecting readers' reality be altered. They strive toward this objective through their "queering" of characters who, at varying degrees, aspire to neoliberalism's hegemonic version of masculinity. This sort of resistance, or, "queerness," has far less to do with one's sexual orientation, according to Lee Edelman's polemic, and far more to do with one's resistance to social orders, such as race, class, and gender, and the queer's "insisting on the inextricability of such resistance from every social structure" (3). One way the novels carry out such a

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<sup>32</sup>"El prefijo *trans* hace referencia a algo que atraviesa lo que nombra, lo re-vertebra y lo transmuta,... una transformación que lleva a la creación de anudaciones epistemológicas..." Valencia 178)

deconstruction is their portrayals of the more nauseating aspects of violence. Another is how they problematize the conventional male sexual fantasy in their representing more true-to-life details of sex.

The second chapter of this study, entitled, “Masculinity Act: Castration and Violence in *A grande arte*,” examines the text’s representations of queerness to determine the ways they undermine discourse that is permeated by neoliberalism. The characters’ representing an incongruity, between their gender practices and those of hegemonic discourse, denounces Reproductive Futurism and parodies its society’s need for a “sinthomosexual” character type, in both fiction and in reality.

Edleman argues that society’s obsession with the future leads to repeating the past’s violence (31). He denounces the allegiance from both the left and the right to ‘Reproductive Futurism’ which maintains social conservatism in the name of ‘The Child.’ Reproductive Futurism adheres to an ideology seeking the elimination of that which threatens The Child: “feminists, queers, and those who support the legal availability of abortion” (22). Reproductive Futurism especially marginalizes that which it names “homosexual.”

Edelman’s concept of the *sinthomosexual* is named in part after Lacan’s term *sinthome*, which is an archaic spelling of the French word for ‘symptom’ whose status as an obsolete signifier bestows unto itself an aura of recognition as a sign, signaling its own arbitrariness and that of language. The term recognizes the crisis of language (the impossibility of representation, the lack of [or the excess] of meaning), which cuts off direct relation with the world and with the unconscious. Since the politics of futurism depend upon reproduction as a result of heterosexuality, as opposed to homosexuality

(which is seen as a negation of the Order of the Child), it demands that society name and humiliate that which does not reproduce (45).

The *sinthomosexual*, then, is the term Edelman gives to that which “denies the fantasy structure, realizes the *jouissance* that derealizes sociality and threatens the total destruction of the symbolic universe ... [and] provides occasion for communal access to the negativity of a *jouissance*, for which, as its embodiment, the *sinthomosexual* must be reviled” (45). The fantasy structure that Edelman refers to is that of futurism and the Child. I understand *jouissance* to be what the phallus signifies, which is an imaginary undetermined object which represents what would (if it were not imaginary) fulfill the lack produced by the signifiers that signify the subject of Reproductive Futurism. Therefore, the *sinthomosexual* embodies the phallus according to Lacan.

Due to *A grande arte* and *Bufo & Spallanzani*'s numerous representations of concepts that Lacan discusses in *Écrits* (1966), the “subject,” to whom this dissertation refers, is to be understood according to Lacan's interpretation which indicates that the subject is not irreducible and is, therefore, subjected to its signifier: “it is from the Other [the locus of Speech] that the Subject receives even the message that he emits” (305). I understand Lacan's “Speech” to be hegemonic discourse. The subjection of the subject to the locus of hegemonic discourse, according to Lacan's theory, is not linear but circular (300). Similarly, Michel Foucault's “Power/Knowledge” claims that society and its institutions subject the subject to its language that is unavoidably permeated (and therefore, so is the subject) with its own metonymies and metaphors. The distribution and circulation of what society considers ‘knowledge’ reproduces power through the network of discourse, which establishes norms, most of which concern gender practices, that

society polices (93). The signifier-subjected subject leads Lacan to conclude that knowledge derives its verifiability from itself (306), which is crucial to Fonseca's critique of knowledge that I examine further in chapters one and three.

The importance that Lacan gives to the unconscious castration complex, discussed further in chapter two, acknowledges that knowledge is bound to power, especially in the subject's either accepting his castration, which for Lacan is so crucial that without it, he will not "identify himself with the ideal type of his sex, or respond ... to the needs of his partner in the sexual relation, or even accept ... the needs of the child who may be produced...." (281). Edelman's queer theory points to where Lacan's invoking "The Child" here, on his own concept's behalf, is already an indication of the power that Reproductive Futurism exerts over the theoretical knowledge that he produces in *Écrits*.<sup>33</sup>

Chapter three, "Knowledge, Class-privileged Power, and Gender in *Bufo & Spallanzani*," adds to three points Chiappani makes about the portrayal of female characters in Fonseca's work: first, that they are only sex objects, second, that they seduce men, and third, that they take men to self- destruction (58-59). The chapter discusses female characters that represent, to varying degrees, independently "empowered" or, according to Cornwall's study, "masculine," women. It analyzes women who are builders of the males' masculinities, and argues that, through allegory and paradox, the text uncovers relationships between social class and gender performances.

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<sup>33</sup> Yet, Lacan's picking up Freud's work on the crisis of language's manifesting in the unconscious, takes the signifier/signified opposition back to the lack that is inevitably produced within the subject in signification. The lack initiates the need for a signifier whose function is, "to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier." This signifier is, of course, Lacan's conceptualization of the "phallus" (285), which is related to the subject, "without regard to anatomical difference of the sexes" (282). I understand Lacan's term *jouissance* to refer to the lack that makes the locus of hegemonic discourse insubstantial (317).

Additionally, the four novels condemn materialism in the form of hyper-consumerism,<sup>34</sup> which the texts juxtapose against Brazil's poverty and violence. The latter are portrayed through textual representations of discourse that deems poverty and violence as necessary inconveniences of 'progress,' and symptoms of race, class, and/or gender inferiority. In sum, the novels indict the social construction of knowledge or 'common sense,' that considers violence to be, a necessary condition of the global era (Valencia 119).

Given its symbiosis with war and the war industry, neoliberalism is what Lacan might call a, "ruse of reason upon which it has twice collected its share" (*Écrits* 324, Fink). In chapter four, entitled, "*Necroempoderamiento, Morality, and Survival Value in O seminarista,*" the text's representations of the global cocaine industry, its vigilantes, bosses, and its various levels of management that stretch into the heart of the "legitimate" economy, connect Brazilian drug violence to that of Mexico. Chapter four indicates how *O seminarista* dialogues with Valencia, in order to argue that it portrays human urges to practice morality, but these are subjected to the markets' demands, which force the subject to use violence in order to survive in gore capitalist Brazil, whose rapidly growing marginalized populations honor an ultra-violent masculinity, called *el sujeto endriago*.

Its conditions are the same as those I have designated for the neoliberal masculinity, but the *endriago*'s masculinity is a more violent, ostentatious, ruthlessly inhuman, extremist version: "se basa en la obediencia a la masculinidad hegemónica,

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<sup>34</sup>I understand hyper-consumerism according to Gilles Lipovetsky in, "La Felicidad Paradójica. Ensayo Sobre La Sociedad Hiperconsumista."

capitalista y heteropatriarcal, con la cual pretende legitimarse y alcanzar el peldaño de lo hegemónico y entienden la disidencia de manera distópica y violenta” (173). Also, I refer to Richard Dawkins’s postulates about human behavior, in which he agrees with evolutionary psychologists that humans have a genetically inherent ‘sense of morality.’

In gore capitalism, that innate morality is no match for the manifestations of *biomercado*, which is Valencia’s term for the market’s controlling the subject physically, from within the body, and *necroempoderamiento*,<sup>35</sup> which permits that subject to yield to the market’s incessant calls for hyperconsumerism. The *endriago* subjectivity also applies to characters from *Agosto* and *A grande arte*, and Valencia borrows its name from Marie Louise Pratt’s *Globalización, Desmodernación y el Retorno de los Monstruos* (2002) (who borrowed from Amadis de Gaula). The *endriago* that Fonseca’s texts (especially *O seminarista*) build coincide with the following description from Valencia:

un empresario que aplica y sintetiza literalmente las lógicas y las demandas neoliberales más aberrantes .... se sujetan al poder en la medida en que han internalizado las demandas del hiperconsumo exigidas por el capitalismo global, a la par que sienten como propio el discurso heteropatriarcal basado en la detención de poder como factor de legitimación identitaria y pertenencia social (Valencia 143-4).

These murders emphasize how explicit violence, aside from being an essential business tool, grants the *endriago* a certain degree of social acceptance and approval from its marginalized group. What drives the proliferation of the drug industry in Brazil and

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<sup>35</sup> “Denominamos *necroempoderamiento* a los procesos que transforman contextos y/o situaciones de vulnerabilidad y/o subalternidad en posibilidad de acción y autopoder, pero que los reconfiguran desde prácticas distópicas y autoconfirmación perversa lograda por medio de prácticas violentas” (Valencia 206).

Mexico is a combination of pressures, namely poverty, hyper-consumerism, and heteronormative gender expectations, for the men, include their being the family provider.

The willingness of characters, especially villains in *A grande arte*, *Agosto*, and *O seminarista*, to carry out violence in the streets of “civil” society allows for the subject to fulfill the conditions required of his masculinity. Sex, violence, and greed are where the neoliberal and *endriago* type masculinities overlap. Roberto Saviano’s *Cero, Cero, Cero: como la cocaína gobierna el mundo* (2014) describes these conditions in a transcribed recording of a lesson on how to be a man from “un viejo capo italiano, delante de un consejo de chicanos, italianos, italoamericanos, albaneses y excombatientes kaibiles...,” (18). After a long introduction about the importance of power and money, the speaker gets very specific: “La cocaína es esto: all you can see you can have it. Sin cocaína no eres nadie. Con la cocaína puedes ser como quieras. Si esnifas cocaína te jodes con tus propias manos.... Podéis escalar montañas con reglas de carne, sangre y dinero” (24-5). The monologue, whose source Saviano was not permitted to learn much less divulge, represents globally hegemonic discourse about the illegal sector’s version of masculinity in neoliberalism and coincides with Valencia’s descriptions of the *endriago* type masculinity.

Since President Nixon declared the “War on Drugs” in June of 1971, drug violence in most of the Western hemisphere has steadily increased. In the transcription quoted above, Saviano’s mentioning that among those listening were “ex-combatientes kaibiles,” references an elite Guatemalan Special Forces Unit, which the United States and its military has consistently supported with funding and counterinsurgency training



since its forming in 1975.<sup>36</sup> In “Rules of Disengagement: Masculinity, Violence and the Cold War Remakings of Counterinsurgency in Brazil” (2014), Benjamin Cowan documents how Cold War high ranking military theorists from Brazil, the U.S., and France coincided not only in their anxiety over a loss of ‘masculinity’ among Western males, but also in their ideas for the construction of the ultimate counterinsurgent with specific conditions for this masculinity: “These theorists... made soldiers into futuristic hypermasculine killing machines, positing that these ‘counterinsurgents’ were the salvation of military manhood and of the West itself.” Among the conditions for the counterinsurgent masculinity was a “lack of restraint,” a “willingness to engage in indiscriminate violence,” and “masculinity without physical or moral restraints” (Cowan 691-3).

In the four principal texts, the neoliberal masculinity is parodied through several characters, whose life history includes some sort of Brazilian, American, European, and/or Central American military education, which led to their particular gender performance and to their socially honored position in the neoliberal hierarchy of “men.”<sup>37</sup> Due to an illicit market that pays better than the military, and that is vital to the neoliberal, global economic structure, they commit these acts of violence within their own country, against their own compatriots, who they were trained to protect. Their

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<sup>36</sup>“Funding through the Department of Defense has been used to train and support Guatemalan soldiers, including Kaibiles. ... Guatemalan soldiers trained by the US at the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, (formerly the School of the Americas), the Coast Guard Training Center and the Inter-American Air Force Academy among others.... August 2006: Ex-Kaibiles arrested working for narco-traffickers in Chiapas, Mexico.” [http://ghrc-usa.org/Publications/factsheet\\_kaibiles.pdf](http://ghrc-usa.org/Publications/factsheet_kaibiles.pdf)

<sup>37</sup>Also the respective texts indicate that both Thales Lima Prado (the villain in *A grande arte*) and D.S. (the villain in *O seminarista*) wanted to be literature professors, but instead became wealthy, powerful, greedy businessmen.

willingness to be militarized, and to kill when ordered to, gives them access to power and wealth that they would not otherwise have had.

The conditions that characterize this ultra-violent masculinity are becoming increasingly normalized in Latin America, especially in the two largest countries, Brazil and Mexico. Because of the social acceptance that it can yield upon the subject from marginalized communities where the ruling drug cartel or crime boss offers the only opportunity for breaking the poverty cycle, this masculinity finds an especially vulnerable population among the poverty stricken in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), which, according to the (neoliberal) World Bank's (questionably low) figure of 6% of the LAC's 626 million people (according to the U.N.) is just under 37.6 million people.<sup>38</sup>

This poverty stricken subject is engulfed in hetero-patriarchal, consumerist discourse and sees illicit industries as the only means to participate in hetero-patriarchal consumerist society. His obligatorily ultra-violent masculinity manifests in many gruesome acts of explicit violence such as the femicide in Juarez, a drug war in the favelas of Rio (with numbers that resemble genocide), beheadings posted on Youtube, and all the other unspeakable tragedies seen all too often in the news today, much of which, is violence from organized crime, such as that of Mexican drug cartels.

*A grande arte*, *Agosto*, and *O seminarista* depict murdering as an order of business, in a strategic, methodical manner. This more 'corporate' approach to murder is different even from, what Schulenburg notes is, an underlying anxiety about a post-dictatorship power vacuum in Fonseca's 1979 short story "O cobrador" "The collector" (28), which depicts a male protagonist/narrator in Rio de Janeiro towards the end of the

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<sup>38</sup> [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/State\\_of\\_the\\_poor\\_paper\\_April17.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/State_of_the_poor_paper_April17.pdf) ; [http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/Key\\_Findings\\_WPP\\_2015.pdf](http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/Key_Findings_WPP_2015.pdf)

dictatorship, who, unlike the professionals he sees that can afford goods and services, is fed up with the inaccessibility of the neoliberal economy, so he whimsically robs and kills people.<sup>39</sup>

Fonseca's texts illuminate Valencia's pleading for new conditions for honoring masculinities as a micropolitical starting point for breaking cycles of global violence. Valencia's proposal connects my argument to Forter's thesis that, "masculinity may have to be murdered -in order that we might reinvent it" (4). Detectives Mattos and Guedes (the cop in *Bufo & Spallanzani*) are relentless, incorruptible, humble, and they both represent re-invented masculinities. But unlike the heroes of a neoliberal Hollywood film, Guedes and Mattos stand alone among their co-workers and in their society, by how they constitute their gender practices. They lack the anxious obsession to prove their heterosexuality, while Mandrake and Gustavo (the protagonist/narrator in *Bufo & Spallanzani* whom Guedes investigates) reinforce Judith Butler's point about a heterosexual identity based on extinguishing any previous homosexual attachment.<sup>40</sup> In their case, their sexual prowess is so exaggerated that it just begs for one's questioning whether they represent the disavowed homosexuality in neoliberal masculinity.

Also, Mattos, Mandrake, Gustavo and Zé (the protagonist/narrator of *O seminarista*) represent another important point of departure from the typical hardboiled detective novels, because instead of their "renouncing theoretical ambitions" (Forter 5), these narrators openly discuss and embrace a variety of theoretical speculation. The

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<sup>39</sup> His first victim is a dentist. Teeth, in Fonseca, can be markers of social class, intelligence (or lack thereof), and they are a direct indicator as to the overall well-being of a character, which reflects the findings of, "How Much of the Income Inequality Effect Can Be Explained by Public Policy? Evidence from Oral Health in Brazil," by Celeste, Roger Keller, and Paulo Nadanovsky.

<sup>40</sup> In "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification" in *The Psychic Life of Power...* [Stanford 1997] (140).

references to philosophical and classical texts reach the point of exhaustion in some instances, as is the case with Zé, the protagonist/narrator from *O seminarista*, who quotes classical poets and philosophers throughout the novel. Fonseca's narrative is overtly "intellectual," yet it still reflects his non-theoretical, authentic knowledge of the world of law enforcement and that of large corporations. Both of these institutions' relationships with corruption are a recurring thematic in the four novels chosen for analysis.

Contrary to what Forter identifies in hardboiled fiction as the omission of, "an affective, active and self-conscious subject, who behaves in any way like a subject," (24), Fonseca's extremely self-conscious detective/anti-heroes Mandrake, Mattos, Gustavo, and Zé offer an inside look at the human condition of several different subjectivities. Forter talks about Hammett's achieving this not-so-subtle omission of the self-conscious subject through the use of "an utterly impersonal third-person language that seeks to fold over upon and engulf even the human consciousness at its origin," whereas Silva talks about Fonseca's endearing first person narrator who tells the story as if he were confiding in a close friend (71). Marín says Fonseca writes as if he were listening to a sworn deposition (41). I read Fonseca's narrators the way Silva does, and because of this style, that exposes their flaws, they are effective in their capacity to disrupt the social conditioning of masculinity and gender discourse.

The Brazilian Minister of Justice Falcão's censorship of *Feliz ano novo* in 1976 only made Fonseca's work more popular, which indicates either a calculated agreement on the part of author and dictatorship, to maintain the class struggle in the form of literary fiction, as opposed to being in the discourse of government, which is what some critics

insinuate,<sup>41</sup> or it indicates the relevance of the social critiques that Fonseca's narrative makes through its representations of marginalized sexualities, pathological eroticisms, and violations of 'respect for good moral customs,' which is Silva's position.

Those condemning the author's refusal to give interviews, as a pact of silence between Fonseca and his cohorts from the early 1960's, can only do so by their ignoring the content of the four novels in this study, none of which were written when Dreifuss wrote his dissertation in 1980. Over the course of his life, Fonseca has worked in an uncommon variety of settings, including a brief stint of police work on the streets of Rio, that adds an inside look at the entire class spectrum, which is intrinsic to an understanding of race, class and gender issues. Flattering or not, his life experience validates not only his authority to criticize social ignorance, violence and injustice, but also to suggest alternative conditions for masculinity.

As the narrator Gustavo Flávio says, "o ponto de vista, a opinião, as crenças, as presunções, os valores, as inclinações, as obsessões, as concepções et cetera dos personagens, mesmo os principais, mesmo na primeira pessoa, ... não são necessariamente os mesmos do autor" (47).<sup>42</sup> While this dissertation honors Gustavo's disclaimer on behalf of his creator, it also takes into consideration the political criticism of these novels and their representations of power and discourse in society.

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<sup>41</sup>Pereira says Fonseca, along with Brazilian courts, turned *Feliz ano novo* into a symbol of democratic freedom. She says he forgets his participation in IPÊS, and she criticizes his receiving fame for writing about what he saw as a cop after having only spent 9 months on the streets (26), she questions his experiences at NYU and BU (27).

<sup>42</sup> "... el punto de vista, la opinión, las creencias, las presunciones, los valores, las inclinaciones, las obsesiones, las concepciones, etcétera, de los personajes, incluso los principales, hasta cuando se narra en primera persona,... no son necesariamente los mismos del autor" (Losada 32).

## Chapter 1

### Assassins of the 'Brazilian Racial Democracy' in *Agosto* and *A grande arte*

This chapter analyzes murderers in *A grande arte* (1983) and *Agosto* (1990) and considers how these assassins characterize the subtle ways in which knowledge, “derives its guarantee” from hegemonic discourse, which is what Lacan refers to as “Speech” (306), according to my understanding of *Écrits*. They denounce the undue weight that hegemonic discourse gives to scientifically debunked race narratives and to unverifiable, politically compromised rhetoric. They demonstrate how the narratives and the rhetoric reinforce the inequality that results from hierarchies within the social orders of race, class and gender. The nauseating spectacle of violence that these assassins create in the stories, implicate society’s role, which, in turn, indicates the reader’s complicity, in perpetuating a culture of violence that results from these hierarchies in post-dictatorship Brazil.

*A grande arte* and *Agosto* expose the misunderstandings, still lingering in the hegemonic discourse of the 1980’s and, arguably, in present times, of evolutionary epistemology that eugenicists during the Progressive Era, from either side of the political spectrum, misapplied to economics and social issues like poverty and violence.<sup>43</sup> Another

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<sup>43</sup> Gould emphasizes the importance of skepticism with respect to evolutionary epistemology: “Science, since people must do it, is a socially embedded activity ... Much of its change through time does not record a closer approach to absolute truth, but the alteration of cultural contexts that influence it so strongly” (53-54). Also, Gould discusses how funding advances certain areas of research to the detriment of others, which alters how knowledge is produced.

popular claim whose absurdity these novels expose and that emerged in the 1930's, is the popular claim that, due to its higher level of miscegenation, a "racial democracy" exists in Brazil, which is a notion that ignores how Afro-Brazilians are far more likely to be poor or murdered than any other demographic and that sixty-two percent of the victims of police shootings in São Paulo are black (Huggins 115-116)."<sup>44</sup> The texts also expose neoliberalism's solipsistic narratives about the 'self-made' man<sup>45</sup> and the 'self-regulating' free-market.<sup>46</sup> Similar to how the eugenicist explanations and proposed solutions for poverty and violence were based more on privileged class ideology than verifiable information and were favorable to their promoters even after The Progressive

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<sup>44</sup> Twine claims that the racial inequality in Brazil, where people of color are far more likely than whites to live in poverty or be killed, and far less likely than whites to be middle-class or accepted into a state subsidized university, is because anti racist activism in Brazil is behind even that of the U.S., due to the lack of a black middle-class and the pervasiveness of the myth that Brazil is a 'racial democracy,' which started with Gilberto Freyre's *Casa Grande e Senzala* (1933) in which Freyre, "provided a sanitized version of Brazil's long history of colonization and slavery" (3-6). "Data from a 2000 probability sample of racial attitudes in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, contradict this long-held assertion, showing that most Brazilians in this state recognize racism as playing a role in Brazilian society, support the idea of affirmative action, and express interest in belonging to antiracism organizations" (Bailey 728)

<sup>45</sup> The 'self made man' narrative, imposed upon Brazil by IPÊS, is noticeable in the titles of these IPÊS documentaries: '*O Brasil precisa de você,*' '*Depende de mim,*' and '*Criando homens livres*' (Assis 627-690). ('*Brazil Needs You,*' '*It Depends On Me,*' '*Raising Free Men.*' Fico, again, has similar evidence that implicates the USIS in disseminating this myth: "Em 1965 ... foram feitos no Brasil os seguintes curtas: '*A força e o homem*' (sobre auto-ajuda como meio de desenvolvimento), '*Revolução democrática no Brasil*' (sobre o golpe), '*Pirambu-o milagre da auto-ajuda*' (sobre a favela nordestina)... (81). "In 1965 ... the following short films were made in Brazil: *Man and Strength* (about self help as a method of development), *Democratic Revolution in Brazil* (about the coup), and *Pirambu and the Self-help Miracle* (about the [mostly afro Brazilian] *favelas* in the northeast region..." (81).

<sup>46</sup> This rhetorical thread of neoliberal 'common sense,' can be noted in the titles of the following documentary films that IPÊS made during its effort to sway public opinion towards the coup of 1964: '*Uma economia estrangulada,*' '*A boa empresa,*' '*Portos paralisados,*' and '*Conceito da empresa*' (Assis 663-699). "*A Strangled Economy, The Good Company, Paralyzed Ports, The Concept of a Business*"

Having dug through declassified USIS documents, historian Carlos Fico offers more evidence of this neoliberal propaganda, but carried out by the U.S. Department of State, in his book *O grande irmão* (2013), at a cost of \$5 million annually for U.S. taxpayers from 1965 to 1970. To the same ends, in 1966, The United States Information Service (USIS) produced these documentaries in Brazil: "'*Assombração no varejo,*' sobre a livre-inicitiva e a criação de empregos, ... , e '*Caminhos,*' uma história de auto-ajuda em nível nacional e local" (Fico 81) "... *Retail Horror,* about laissez faire and job creation ... and *Paths,* a self-help story on the local and national levels" (Fico 81).

Era, in neoliberalism, political economists have presented the 'self-made' man and 'the self-regulating' free-market as unquestionable facts, their basis is also far more ideological than factual,<sup>47</sup> hence the need for propaganda campaigns that promoted them.

*A grande arte* and *Agosto* critique the discursive force of these myths through the narrator's disrupting the reader's perception of the murderers. Their transformations are due to the novels' representing these killers in the process of constructing their masculinities, which, inevitably, is influenced by their society's unduly congruent race, class, and gender hierarchies. The representations of gender performance indicate a discursive space beyond the hegemonic binaries of hero/villain, innocent/guilty, stupid/intelligent, 'white'/non-white, heterosexual/homosexual, and good/bad. Also, both texts make use of narrative techniques, such as changes in focalization, to imply that they are an object of their socio-historical context, rather than the subject of the narration. The representations of the killers' constructing their masculinities, according to (or in spite of) the race, class, and gender hierarchies of their respective socio-historical contexts, convince the reader to sympathize more with the 'bad guy.'

The unexpected or 'undeserving' sympathy weakens the meaning of signifiers with which the reader may have associated the killer. It obscures binaries that are understood according to the predominantly neoliberal ideology that reigns in the novels' respective socio-historical contexts. *Agosto*, published in 1990, officially takes place in 1954 Rio de Janeiro, but, as mentioned in the introduction, the text also implies that its various social critiques correspond to the time period surrounding the coup of 1964, when

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<sup>47</sup>Terry Eagleton in "Ideology and Narrative" calls the mental process of treating rhetorical ideology as if it were verifiable fact, "being deceived by the 'exterior grammar'" (64).



the opposition's neoliberal rhetoric bombarded Brazil, in order to remove President João Goulart from power. *Agosto* also speaks to post-transition Brazil, when the novel was published and when neoliberalism had become the globally dominant discursive force. *A grande arte* (1983) takes place during 1980, when The U.S., The U.K., and China, were advocating for neoliberal economic policies that would affect economies around the globe (Harvey 1-4), including Brazil, where high inflation and debt accompanied industrial growth.

The novels depict the paradigmatic thought patterns of these historical moments (in other words, the dominant discourse of their socio-historical contexts), through the aforementioned changes in focalization and through their killers' inner monologues and/or dialogues, which gives the reader access to those thought patterns, and offers some explanation for why they kill. The affective transformations of murderers in both novels, point to the same correlations between the race, class, and/or gender hierarchies, that Progressive Era eugenics 'explained' with evolutionary biology. This pseudo-science has, of course, since been dismissed.<sup>48</sup> Although these "explanations" continue to linger in discourse, they indicate an ignorance that is leftover from an embarrassing time in

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<sup>48</sup>I do not intend to preclude discussion about race and evolution. I am referring to aspects of biological determinism that have been debunked and are discussed in Stephen Jay Gould's *Mismeasure of Man*, which I cite here: "[Biological determinism] holds that shared behavioral norms, and the social and economic differences between human groups -primarily races, classes, and sexes- arise from inherited, inborn distinctions and that society, in this sense, is an accurate reflection of biology" (52). "... biological determinism fails because the features they invoke to make distinctions among groups are usually the products of cultural evolution..." (355). "... all non-African racial diversity -whites, yellows, reds, everyone from the Hopi to the Norwegians, to the Fijians- may not be much older than one hundred thousand years... since genetic diversity roughly correlates with time available for evolutionary change, genetic variety among Africans alone exceeds the sum total of genetic diversity for everyone else in the rest of the world combined!" (399).

history, when much of Europe, North and South America (especially Brazil), bought into Progressive Era eugenics.<sup>49</sup>

The critique of racist discourse from early eugenics, sets the stage for them to also serve their novels' questioning more recently espoused, neoliberal rhetoric, disguised as common sense and imposed most heavily upon Brazil, by IPÊS, and by the U.S.

Department of State, in the 1960s, via politically compromised film shorts. Lastly, one other closely related neoliberal construction, that these two novels serve to deconstruct by way of their killers, is the Counter Insurgent (CI) masculinity, which U.S., French, and Brazilian military strategists indoctrinated among elite coalition troops during the Cold War. *Agosto* has a very diverse group of murderers, and the following analysis indicates how the text, in its representations of racism, violence, and gender performance, specifically uses Chicão and Lomagno, in order to subvert the neoliberal/CI masculinity and the notion of a racial democracy.

### The Sinthomosexualization of Race and Corporate Masculinity in *Agosto*

In *Agosto*, the protagonist Alberto Mattos is a police detective in Rio de Janeiro who investigates the murder of Paulo Aguiar, found dead in his own bed and in a mess of bodily fluids. Aguiar was a top executive of Cemtex, which is a major import/export company that is allowed an advantageous import/export licensing by the effeminately

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<sup>49</sup> As Nancy Leys Stepan documents in *The Hour of Eugenics* (1991), Brazil, like the U.S., was a main player in the eugenics field (35). Despite biologists affirming since as early as 1972 that the overall genetic differences among human races are astonishingly small (Gould 353), a conclusion that officially debunks the biologically determined race hierarchy, Blumenbach's diagram and eugenics' mis-interpretations continue to linger in discourse and reflect the social exclusion of the formerly enslaved genetic phenotypes.

depicted Senator Vitor Freitas. The murder investigation coincides (somewhat) chronologically with the botched attempt on the life of Carlos Lacerda, a real life journalist and radio personality (who became a politician), that heads the right-wing opposition against President Getulio Vargas' government. Aguiar's murder is connected to the attempt against Lacerda, because the latter is keen on uncovering government corruption, which makes him a target for those who stand to gain from Aguiar's death, such as Aguiar's widow, Luciana, his cousin, named Claudio, Senator Freitas, and Pedro Lomagno. Lomagno is the the novel's principal villain and son of a wealthy politician. He is also a longtime friend/employer of the assassin Chicão, who is an Afro Brazilian, ex-WWII combat veteran.

Before too long, it becomes clear that *Agosto* is critiquing racial discourse through dialogue about the assassin Chicão, who was an original member of FEB (Forças Expedicionárias Brasileiras).<sup>50</sup> Among the most important pieces of evidence in the Aguiar murder investigation are a couple of short, black hairs that detective Mattos recovers from the soap inside the victim's shower (17). The fragment below is a conversation about these hairs between Mattos and his forensics specialist. The text uses the dialogue to critique the means by which mid-twentieth century Brazilian society introduces and verifies knowledge, and it parodies how and why certain knowledge is not questioned, although it should be, especially by a detective and a forensics expert. The dialogue also critiques how this knowledge is bound to the socially constructed orders of gender and race:

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<sup>50</sup>Vargas's deploying the FEB to Italy during WWII marks the beginning of Brazil's close military relationship with the United States that last throughout the Cold War (Fico 22).

“Os pelos do sabonete não são da vítima.’ ‘São da mulher?’ ‘De um homem. Um negro.’ ‘Um negro? Isso é possível de descobrir? Tenho uma edição nova do Soderman, de 1952, e ele não fala nisso.’ ‘Soderman está superado. Os exames que fiz são baseados num estudo publicado no último número do *New England Journal of Medicine*. Fiz todos os testes. Um negro usou aquele sabonete...’”  
(99).<sup>51</sup>

The dialogue draws attention to a few more issues: first, the text juxtaposes Mattos’s (limited) skepticism against the questionable certainty and speed with which the forensics expert “did all the tests” and concludes that “a black man used that soap,” especially since nuclear DNA identification, which would require a hair root to be present and is currently the only way to know with a high degree of certainty (and therein lies the issue) the race and sex of the person to whom the hair belongs, had not yet become available to forensic scientists. Second, the dialogue indicates the validity and power that a publication from the U.S. holds over Brazilian hegemonic discourse that they represent, which helps one to understand how the neoliberal propaganda, that was presented as verifiable fact in the same socio-historical context, by the USIS and IPÊS, subjected Brazilian hegemonic discourse to neoliberalism. The forensics specialist refers to the journal as a source of absolute knowledge whose status as the witness of Truth, if he is lying, enables him to do so, which is what the text strongly suggests, because genetic finger printing did not come about until 1984.

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<sup>51</sup> “Los pelos del jabón no son de la víctima.’ ‘¿Son de la mujer?’ ‘De un hombre. Un negro.’ ¿Un negro? ¿Es posible saber una cosa así? Tengo la nueva edición de Soderman, de 1952, y no habla de eso.’ ‘Soderman está superado. Los exámenes que hice se basan en un estudio publicado en el último número del *New England Journal of Medicine*. He realizado todas las pruebas. Un negro usó aquel jabón...’” (Manuel Seabra 109).

If the New England Journal of Medicine really did publish a study, then the only "evidence" that it could possibly have mentioned that might allow for a conjecture in regards to the suspect's gender, would have been the presence of hair dye, which would then, given hegemonic representations of gender in Brazil of 1954, indicate that the hair is from a woman. As an investigator, Mattos needs to ask about how the test works. The dialogue denounces the self-verifying "verifiability" of science, but the critique seems aimed more at Brazil's subjection to the global economic power's functioning as signifier, represented by the fact that merely mentioning the journal's name is enough to determine the course of the police investigation that Mattos takes. The forensics expert, with or without intention, but certainly without his giving a scientist's name or explaining what kind of tests, how they work, what evidence the scientists have to prove they work, or if there have been any false positive identifications, etc., perpetuates racial persecution via their latest search for a black male murder suspect.

Therefore, the logical next step available to this questionable typology-based investigation, then, can only be Mattos's asking the evening security guard from Paulo's building, if, on the night in question, the Aguiar's received a visit from a black male subject:

'Receberam sim. Um crioulo' .... 'Como é ele?' 'Um negro grande e mandão. Mal-encarado' 'Mandão?' 'Ele foi entrando e me olhou com cara feia.' 'Como é ele?' .... 'Usava paletó e gravata.' 'A cara dele.' 'Uma cara larga, fechada.' 'Por que não me falou nesse crioulo antes?.... Diga a dona Luciana que eu volto aqui outro dia, para conversar com ela sobre o negro' (100-2).<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> "Recibieron una. Un negro.' '¿Sabe su nombre?' 'No, señor.' '¿Puede describirlo?' 'Un negro grande y arrogante. Ceñudo.' 'Ceñudo?' 'Entró sin decir nada y me miró con mala cara.' '¿Algo más?' 'Llevaba

The dialogue confirms that Mattos's investigation will hang, almost exclusively, on those hairs, whose race and gender were never determined. The repetition around the search for a black male suspect emphasizes the essential role of racial profiling in law enforcement in general, and suggests that the racially discriminating socio-historical context of Rio de Janeiro in 1954 has changed little by 1990, when *Agosto* was published and when police and private security killed a very high, indeterminable number of black men.

"Indeterminable," because, due to the extrajudicial privatization of policing in Brazil, one's differentiating between a private security killing or a citizen killing is impossible, because neither is inclined to report the murder (Huggins 119-120). The ambiguity becomes worse, given that a significant amount of police flow back and forth between "regular" police duty and "rent-a-cop" or "death squad" work.

The following dialogue between Mattos and his co-worker Pádua, offers an inside look at the thought patterns that are (arguably still) paradigmatic of the Brazilian police racial profiler. Pádua, who is baffled, yet also impressed, by Mattos's capacity for objectivity, is at odds with Mattos's humanism, especially because he refuses to detain suspects without probable cause:

‘Vamos imaginar uma situação, Mattos. Você está andando por uma rua aqui da nossa jurisdição às duas da madrugada e vê um sujeito numa esquina em atitude suspeita.’ ‘O que é atitude suspeita?’ ‘Porra, Mattos, um sujeito parado de madrugada numa esquina escura é sempre uma atitude suspeita.’ ‘Principalmente se for um crioulo.’ ‘Isso mesmo, porra. Você está andando as duas da

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americana y corbata.’ ‘Su cara.’ ‘Una cara larga, cerrada.’ ‘Por qué no me habló de ese negro antes?.... Dígale que volveré otro día para hablar con ella sobre el negro’” (Manuel Seabra 111).

madrugada... e vê um crioulo parado numa esquina. O que um crioulo pode estar fazendo numa esquina essa hora? Ou mesmo um branco de merda? Eu lhe digo o que ele está fazendo: esperando alguém para assaltar ou procurando uma casa para roubar. Eu vou e prendo aquele filho da puta. Medida cautelara pero e simples... (57-8).<sup>53</sup>

Pádua represents the kind of oppressive institutional racism that the black male subject faces in this society, especially in the mid 1950's, when Brazil's eugenics movement had not yet fizzled out, and where the collective imagination remains influenced by racial stereotypes that eugenics and previous pseudosciences fueled.

In Chicão's case, war and the FEB have taken him out of poverty, and the text portrays him as mostly indifferent to the issue of race, which coincides with Swine's explanations for the persistence of Brazil's 'racial democracy' ideology. In regards to Chicão's being a murderer, the investigation of the murder that Lomagnó, Luciana, and company commission him to commit, parody the racial profiling that Mattos applies to that investigation. It is Mattos's search for a black male that leads him off track towards Fortunato, the head of President Vargas's security team, who is responsible for his part in the conspiracy against Lacerda, but has nothing to do with the murder of Aguiar.

Therefore, Chicão manages to get away with murder (several times) and never faces any charges, which makes a mockery of the investigation.

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<sup>53</sup> “Vamos a imaginar una situación, Mattos. Tú caminas por una calle de nuestra zona a las dos de la madrugada y ves a un tipo en una esquina en una actitud sospechosa.’ ‘¿Que es una actitud sospechosa?’ ‘Cojones, Mattos, un tipo parado de madrugada en una esquina oscura es siempre una actitud sospechosa.’ ‘Principalmente si es negro.’ ‘Eso mismo. Tú vas a las dos de la madrugada por una calle y ves a un negro en una esquina. ¿Qué puede estar haciendo un negro en una esquina a esa hora? ¿O incluso un blanco de mierda? Te lo voy a decir: Espera a alguien para atracarlo o está buscando una casa para asaltarla. Voy y detengo al hijo de puta. Una simple medida cautelara” (Manuel Seabra 66).

Also, through Chicão, *Agosto* implicates the complicity of his military experience in his constructing a violent masculinity, which the text queers through his murdering Aguiar while having sex with him and through his homoerotic relationship with Lomagno,<sup>54</sup> and the parody becomes more apparent. Finally, his motive for killing in Brazil, after the war, is his need to gain access to the neoliberal economy, because his attempt in to use the other skill that he honed in the military, boxing, fails.

The narrator finally presents Chicão by name in part II of *Agosto*, and portrays him as naturally possessing all the physical and mental attributes of the elite counterinsurgent fighter. The text suggests that during the war, Chicão developed these attributes and became the type of masculine killing machine that military strategists from the allied forces idealized: “A possibilidade de morrer não o preocupava e depois de ver dois companheiros morrerem ao seu lado... Chicão chegara à conclusão de que tinha o corpo fechado. Seu porte atlético o levava a ser chamado para participar de exercícios de boxe e a participar de lutas de exibição” (168).<sup>55</sup> The context of war establishes a place of origin for new, more violent conditions with which Chicão constructs his masculinity, so,

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<sup>54</sup> Again, I rely on Edelman to define the verb ‘to queer,’ whose meaning I understand as follows: to “mark the place of gap in which the symbolic confronts what its discourse is incapable of knowing” (26); “expose sexuality’s inevitable coloration by the drive: its insistence on repetition, its stubborn denial of teleology, its resistance to determinations of meaning..., and, above all, its rejection of spiritualization through marriage to reproductive futurism (27).

<sup>55</sup> “La posibilidad de palmarla no le preocupaba y después de ver a dos compañeros muriendo a su lado... Chicão había llegado a la conclusión de que debía de ser inmune. Gracias a su porte atlético lo habían llamado para participar en peleas de boxeo con sus colegas americanos y participar en sus combates de exhibición” (Manuel Seabra 184). (This reference to Candomble is one of many that associate the African religion with the novel’s class critique. Characters from the lower class like Salette believe in the powers of its black magic; those characters who represent the upper class, like Luciana and Paulo, seem to toy with it.)



in other words, his military experience as a young adult, influences the gender performance that he portrays.

Mentally and emotionally he is perfectly suited for the war environment because he is fearless, and he represents a belief in the marginalized supernatural similar to that which is referenced in the Preface of this study. Chicão's belief that he had a "corpo fechado" is a reference to Candomblé and suggests a direct correlation between his blackness and his fearlessness, and, for this reason, he represents "the coloniality" of neoliberal power, as an Afro-Brazilian in a position of service to the modern era's war industry.<sup>56</sup> The reference associating Chicão's blackness with fearlessness also invokes the savage versus civilized dichotomy. His 'savage' blackness, according to the science at that time, explains his athleticism and makes him an even better fighting specimen. The bellicose, fascist environment of Italy during WWII brought more honors upon which he could construct his masculinity, elevating its position in the gender hierarchy, where, in Chicão's society and in his mind, the rich white Cemtex executive, Pedro Lomagno, sits at the top.

This next description of Chicão's war experience represents the heteronormativity that is a condition of his newly endowed masculinity: "Fodera e lutara boxe e desarmara minas, sem pegar gonorreia.... a guerra fora uma coisa boa" (168).<sup>57</sup> The reference to his ability to "desarmar minas," is a play on words that links his war experience to his gender

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<sup>56</sup> I am referring to Anibal Quijano's famous text, "The Coloniality of Power," (2000), which denounces capitalism's imposition of a race hierarchy advantageous to white Europeans. With respect to the Atlantic slave trade, Harari points out: "Unrestrained market forces ... were responsible for this calamity .... This is the fly in the ointment of free market capitalism. It cannot insure that profits are gained in a fair way" (330,331).

<sup>57</sup> "Había follado, practicado boxeo, y desarmado minas sin coger gonorreia... sí, la guerra había sido una cosa buena" (Manuel Seabra 184).

performance: “mina,” in addition to ‘land-mine,’ is also slang for “menina” ‘girl,’ which, in turn, gives “desarmar” ‘to defuse’ a meaning that speaks to the heteronormative, hegemonic expectation of the soldier’s masculinity, and to the honor bestowed upon he who accumulates multiple heterosexual partners and encounters. Finally, it also points to formerly popular, racially concocted assumptions about black males and their propensity for higher libidos.

Chicão displays the more violent conditions of the Counter Insurgent (CI) masculinity when he kills and disposes of Raimundo, the security guard whose disappearance secures some peace of mind for Pedro and Luciana, Chicão’s privileged ‘white,’ current employers in the violence industry. Throughout his inhuman treatment of the body of Raimundo, Chicão employs a, “lack of restraint, willingness to engage in indiscriminate violence and masculinity without physical or moral restraints,” that defines the elite counter insurgent soldier (Cowan 691-693). The method he that uses to kill, indicates his deft ability and usefulness in the violent illicit sector of the budding neoliberal economy that awaited him after the war: “Se alguém passasse naquele por perto, não teria ouvido sequer um gemido.... O único ruído que se ouviu parecia o de um palito de picolé sendo quebrado. Eram os ossos do pescoço sendo quebrado” (177).<sup>58</sup> The sounds of breaking bones caused by Chicão’s brute force echo a cold disregard for human life.

This indifference towards his fellow man continues as he disposes of the body, in order to earn his pay in gore capitalism. The only emotions Chicão feels is narcissistic

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<sup>58</sup> “Si alguien pasase cerca en aquel momento, no habría oído ni siquiera un gemido... El único ruido que se oyó parecía el de un palillo de helado que se quebraba. Eran los huesos del cuello de Raimundo quebrados por las manos de Chicão” (Manuel Seabra 194).

aggression and frustration.<sup>59</sup> He is frustrated because he has been inconvenienced by his victim, whose head takes longer than expected, to hack off: “O rancor que sentia pelo morto fez aumentar a violência dos golpes.... viu, pela última vez.... o rosto sujo de Raimundo, separado do tronco. ‘Sujeitinho ordinário’, tentou dizer Chicão” (179).<sup>60</sup> The comment, ‘sujeitinho ordinário,’ indicates Chicão’s narcissistic aggression and uncovers his registering himself as a superior entity over Raimundo, which, according to the story’s representation, is the result of his upward mobility in the hierarchies of masculinity and class.

He and Raimundo, a ‘pernambucano’ (from the state of Pernambuco which has a high Afro-Brazilian population), may be of the same race, but in Chicão’s mind, they are not of the same class, and neither is Raimundo as much of a ‘man’ as Chicão believes himself to be. Due to his being ex-FEB, Chicão considers himself a man of worth, and his victim, disposable. Only when disposing of Raimundo’s fingers does he experience a slight, twisted moral dilemma, which stems from his memory of a folk tale: “Na volta pensou em espalhar os dedos pelas ruas, com intervalos de cinco quilômetros entre um dedo e outro, mas lembrou-se da história de Joãozinho e Maria jogando miolo de pão no caminho e sem saber bem por que preferiu ficar com os dedos do Raimundo no bolso” (179).<sup>61</sup> But, his indifference towards human life, which Pedro will remunerate,

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<sup>59</sup> “Aggressivity is the correlative tendency of a mode of identification that we call narcissistic, and which determines the formal structure of a man’s ego and of the register of entities characteristic of his world” (Lacan, *Écrits* Sheridan 16)

<sup>60</sup> “El rencor que se sentía por el muerto hizo aumentar la violencia de los golpes.... vio, por ultima vez, iluminado por la luz de su linterna, el rostro sucio de Raimundo separado del tronco. ‘Un gilipollas,’ intentó decir Chicão...” (Manuel Seabra 195).

<sup>61</sup> “Durante el regreso pensó en ir tirando los dedos por la carretera, con intervalos de cinco kilómetros, pero recordó la historia de Pulgarcito echando migas de pan por el camino y sin saber bien por qué prefirió quedarse con los dedos de Raimundo en el bolsillo” (Manuel Seabra 196).

eventually wins out: “Divertiu-se jogando pelas janelas do carro, no meio da correira de manifestantes e policiais, os dedos cortados de Raimundo; os pedaços de dedos eram colocados sobre o indicador do mão direita de Chicão e impulsionados pelo polegar, como se fossem bolas de gude” (182).<sup>62</sup> His ruthlessness, then, is unquestionable, but the narration gives reason for his becoming this way: Chicão’s behavior is the byproduct of neoliberalism’s ideology of domination and its most important industry, the war industry.

Once drafted into the FEB, Chicão found his way to a better life: “Chicão gostara da guerra. Nunca comera tão bem em sua vida, os soldados brasileiros dispunham dos abundantes recursos e serviços do 4º Corpo de Exército americano. As rações, os cigarros, e tudo o mais que recebia fascinavam o seu relacionamento com as regazze italianas” (167).<sup>63</sup> For Chicão, the violence of WWII was a means for his having new experiences and opportunities that he would not have otherwise had. In becoming a soldier, he moved up from below the poverty line to lower middle class, which seems only fair. Also, the military enabled him to practice socially honored heteronormative masculinity with the Italian women. War not only provided him with a good meal, it also granted him a sense of value within the social orders of class and gender, allowing him to believe that, unlike ordinary folks, such as Raimundo, race is not an issue for him.

His sense of worth from his experience with the FEB, surfaces during his postwar job search: “Antes de ser convocado Chicão trabalhava como servente de obra. Mas

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<sup>62</sup> “Se divirtió echando los dedos de Raimundo por la ventana del coche entre las carreras de manifestantes y policias; Chicão se colocaba los trozos sobre el índice de la mano derecha y los impulsaba con el pulgar, como si fueran canicas” (Manuel Seabra 199).

<sup>63</sup> A Chicão le gustaba la guerra. Nunca había comido tan bien en su vida. Los soldados brasileños disponían de abundantes recursos y servicios del 4.º Cuerpo del Ejército americano. Las raciones, los cigarrillos y todo lo demás que recibía facilitaba sus relaciones con las ragazze italianas” (Manuel Seabra 184).

agora considerava aquele serviço indigno de um homem com a sua experiência” (168).<sup>64</sup>

The text indicates that before coming back from the war, Chicão was just another black man in Brazil. In its narration around Aguiar’s murder, the text refers to him (indirectly) several times, as either “algum negro” ‘some negro,’ “um crioulo” ‘a black guy,’ or it simply does not mention a name, as is the case with the murder scene from the opening page:

No oitavo andar. A morte se consumou numa descarga de gozo e de alívio, expelindo resídios excrementícios e glandulares - esperma, saliva, urina, fezes. Afastou-se, com asco, do corpo sem vida sobre a cama ao sentir seu próprio corpo poluído pelas imundícies expulsas da carne agônica do outro... Uma dentada no seu peito sangrava um pouco (7).<sup>65</sup>

This nauseating description of Chicão’s murdering Aguiar, denounces the glorification of the violence that characterizes the more typical spectacles of violence, that repeat themselves in the Hollywood dominant, popular cultural productions of the late 1980’s and 1990’s, which would be contemporaries of *Agosto*. Also, the novel’s gender critique begins with this murder, because the scene is full of ambiguity around gender: the victim’s expelling of sperm indicates unequivocally that the victim is a male, but what about the person committing the murder?

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<sup>64</sup> “Antes del servicio militar, Chicão había trabajado como ayudante de obra. Pero ahora consideraba ese servicio indigno de un hombre con su experiencia” (Manuel Seabra 184).

<sup>65</sup> “En la octava planta. La muerte se consumó en una descarga de gozo y alivio, expeliendo residuos excrementicios y glandulares -esperma, saliva, orina, heces-. Se apartó asqueado del cuerpo sin vida sobre la cama al sentir su propio cuerpo contaminado por las inmundicias expulsadas de la carne agónica del otro” (Manuel Seabra 9).

There is no indication as to whether the murderer is male or female. Since the victim is male, the reader likely assumes that, because of the required strength to kill someone and given the absence of a weapon, the perpetrator must be male too. With this ambiguity, the text denounces the gendered element of violence, and overall, *Agosto* disrupts the masculinity of violence in hegemonic discourse, far more than it repeats it: detective Mattos refuses to carry a gun, yet, Luciana has her husband Paulo Aguiar killed and orders the death of whoever else could ruin her plans to accumulate more personal wealth. Also the flamboyantly effeminate Senator Freitas's willingness as a co-conspirator in the Aguiar murder and his ordering the death of his condominium association's manager represents an unconventional type of a murderer. The gender ambiguity of the unidentified perpetrator, in the scene cited above, sets up the story's ambiguity about the killer's gender practices.

Not only is Chicão an athletic, fearless, killing machine who is 'successful' with the ladies, but once he is home from war, he proves to be a useful and loyal ally for his upper class friend and employer Pedro Lomagno. Pedro's lover, Luciana, mentions Chicão's loyalty in her conversation with Pedro when they need a certain witness to disappear: "Mas temos que sumir com esse porteiro. O Chicão pode encarregar disso. Ele te adora, faz tudo o que você quer..." (165).<sup>66</sup> After the war, Chicão began to teach boxing at the exclusive Clube Boqueirão do Passeio, where he met the young wealthy Pedro Lomagno who helped Chicão start his own gym, which failed, making Pedro his last and only trainee.

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<sup>66</sup> "Pero hay que despachar a ese portero. Chicão puede encargarse de eso. Te adora y hará todo lo que quieras..." (Manuel Seabra 181).

In the relationship between Pedro and Chicão, the text draws attention to their mutual homosexual attraction that they obligatorily suppress, in order to practice their society's version of hegemonic masculinity. The text indicates an intention to parody this compulsory condemnation of homosexuality, in its overt exposition of their admiration of each other's physical attributes when they box one another, which indicates an underlying homosexual desire between them:

Um se sentiu logo atraído pelo outro. Lomagno, que era um jovem taciturno e introvertido, admirava o entusiasmo e a alegria de viver de Chicão. Este respeitava a educação, a riqueza e a brancura do outro ... Lutaram vigorosamente, até Lomagno cansar ... 'Estava sentindo falta disso.' Os dois estavam nus, no vestiário. A nudez dos corpos musculosos suados lhes dava uma sensação de confiança, parceria, conivência. Foram tomar banho do chuveiro. A água tornava a pele de Chicão ainda mais negra. Em contraste, a pele de Lomagno...como se seus músculos poderosos fossem feitos de mármore (168-70).<sup>67</sup>

The depiction calls to mind Forter's comment about two characters he analyzes: "the homoerotic sadomasochism of their relation could hardly be much clearer" (27). Through their gazing at one another, the narrator depicts the homosexual eroticism between these two. The scene also plays into the novel's parody of the sinthomosexual villain. All of the 'bad guys' are sexually deviant: Luciana and Lomagno cheat on their spouses together;

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<sup>67</sup> "Se sintieron en seguida atraídos. Lomagno, que era un joven taciturno e introvertido, admiraba el entusiasmo y la alegría de vivir de Chicão. Este respetaba la educación, la riqueza y la blancura del otro.... Lucharon vigorosamente, hasta que Lomagno se canso. Hacia mucho que no sentía aquella sensación de bienestar. 'Yo lo echaba en falta.' Ambos estaban desnudos, en el vestuario. La desnudez de los cuerpos musculosos sudados les daba una sensación de confianza, compañía, connivencia. Fueron a la ducha. El agua hacia que la piel de Lomagno, aun despues del ejercicio violento, seguía pálida, como si sus músculos poderosos fuesen hechos de mármol" (Manuel Seabra 185-86).

Chicão and Lomagno's suppressed homosexuality is on display and neither one has a problem with murder as a means to an end; Freitas is a gay corrupt senator; Claudio was involved with his cousin Paulo (against whom he co-conspires to have murdered for personal advancement in Cemtex) and Lomagno, when they were in high school, in their gang raping of a boy; Paulo was murdered during sex with a black man, Chicão, who uses his homosexuality as a murder weapon; and Magalhães, a spoiled brat who links the Cemtex conspirators to Senator Freitas for their more advantageous import licence, gives Salete, who was a prostitute, money and an apartment in return for sex.

Once the text establishes Chicão's homosexuality, his character queers the masculinity that he represents as an ex-FEB war veteran, because it resists the symbolic traits that are crucial to the elite CI masculinity, which, according to Cowan, is based on principles such as, the "complete man" and "manliness" (702-7). The texts' associating Chicão, the cold blooded killing machine, with homosexuality, disrupts the "idealized warrior capable of resuscitating manhood in western warfare," since the military theorists involved in the Brazilian, French, and U.S. Cold War re-masculinization project, "bemoaned ... an attack on 'manly virtues,' which threatened to dilute Western masculinity with 'homosexuality'" (Cowan 707).

As a paid assassin in Rio, Chicão denounces the increased violence that the CI masculinity creates in 'civilian life,' which, for many folks in cities such as Rio de Janeiro, turns urban life into a very real experience of war. Finally, the text's queering of his CI masculinity dares to resist what Valencia calls "discursos inmovilizantes, desarticulantes que siguen caminando por vías ya transitadas y llegan a las mismas conclusiones" (188-9); Valencia condemns the immobilizing discourse of gender above



all, and this depiction of homosexuality in Chicão, the black ultimate warrior, is indeed different from the representations of counter insurgent heroes that Hollywood produced, especially in the 1980's, with tremendous discursive impact in the Americas.<sup>68</sup>

The background of the wealthy Pedro Lomagno, represents the top of the race/class structure. Lomagno comes from a family with ties to Brazilian Integralism and Vargas' first ascent to power, yet neither politics nor the immaterialist ideology of Integralism is of Pedro's concern. Deputy Rosalvo, who aspires to the version of masculinity that Lomagno represents for him, reports to Mattos, whose humility Rosalvo finds repulsive, his summary of the suspect Pedro Lomagno: "O negocio do rapaz ... é ganhar dinheiro" (79).<sup>69</sup> When Mattos interrogates Lomagno about his ties to the dubious Senator Freitas, Lomagno portrays the neoliberal corporate executive, and his statement speaks to the the core issue for Brazil's still current problem with corruption: the famous "jeitinho brasileiro" 'little Brazilian way' or 'greasing of pockets,' which is a term that inadvertently maintains seemingly harmless Brazilian nationalism because it is used in a number of contexts. However in regards to the businessman that Lamagno represents, "jeitinho brasileiro" describes the socially unsanctioned (yet socially unjust, especially for poor minorities in a 'racial democracy') practice, of one's bribing the right people, usually politicians or the authorities, to advance one's personal agenda: "Muitas vezes é necessária a colaboração de um amigo influente" (187).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> For an example, see the protagonist of the Rambo film series (1982, 1985, 1988, 2008).

<sup>69</sup> "De todas formas, el negocio del chico es ganar dinero" (Seabra 88).

<sup>70</sup> "Muchas veces es necesaria la colaboración de un amigo influyente" (Seabra 205).

In order to describe Lomagno physically, the text uses Mattos's focalization. Mattos, whose teeth need work and whose health is failing, reveals his subconscious envy and frustration with those more willing to break the rules and/or more privileged than he, who has struggled his whole life: "É mais alto do que eu. Tem todos os dentes. Boa saúde, pensou Mattos" (186).<sup>71</sup> Rosalvo indicates how Lomagno enjoys sport and leisure: "joga polo no Itanhangá. Gente fina" (79).<sup>72</sup> In Lomagno's fulfilling the conditions of neoliberal masculinity, he conspires to kill his cousin, in order to gain a bigger share of Cemtex, but he also must emphasize his heterosexuality, especially in his extramarital affair with Luciana, who also is motivated by greed: "nas primeiras vezes em que se encontravam ... Lomagno exibia a ereta substância física do seu ardor amoroso, atirava-se impetuosamente sobre ela, rasgando sua roupa, mordendo-a, estuprando-a, maravilhando-a." However, the narrator is keen to point out that, "Parte desse furor era pura encenação" (226).<sup>73</sup> This parody that the text makes of his exaggerated heterosexual performance, reaches an extreme that is, indeed, laughable:

Afastou o corpo, para Luciana não percebesse que seu sexo não dera sinal de vida .... Agora, fingir com Luciana estava ficando cada vez mais penoso. 'Vou rapidinho ao banheiro' .... No banheiro Lomagno tirou a roupa e contemplou-se no espelho. A visão do próprio corpo nu conseguiu levar algum sangue ao seu pênis

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<sup>71</sup> "Es más alto que yo. Tiene todos los dientes, buena salud, pensó Mattos" (Seabra 203).

<sup>72</sup> "Lomagno juega polo en Itanhangá. Gente fina" (Seabra 89).

<sup>73</sup> "Antes, en las primeras veces que se habían encontrado, en seguida que Luciana entraba en el piso Lomagno exhibía la erecta sustancia física de su ardor amoroso, se agitaba impetuosamente sobre ella, rasgando su ropa, mordiéndola, violándola, maravillándola. Parte de ese furor era pura escenificación" (Seabra 247).

murcho.... correu para o quarto, atirou sobre Luciana que estava deitada de costas na cama dizendo palavras obscenas (226-7).<sup>74</sup>

The scene calls attention to the performative aspect of the heterosexual masculinity that Lomagno exerts himself in order to practice and affirm in him, complete “manliness.”

The scene also points to Luciana’s role as the submissive feminine partner who plays along so that the performance is realized. Pedro’s flaccidity indicates that he is no longer physically attracted to Luciana’s female body. And the erection that he achieves from looking into the mirror indicates he is really more attracted to his own male body.

Luciana, too, breaks from her supporting role in this heteronormative performance by her teasing Pedro about his repressed attraction for Chicão: “Luciana mudou de voz. Agora, sarcástica, e amarga: ‘Alguma vez esse negro serviu de mulher pra você? Ou você de mulher pra ele? ... ‘Você é um gilete igual a ele’” (236).<sup>75</sup> Luciana’s calling him bisexual, effectively kills Pedro’s representation of the neoliberal masculine performance, because bisexuality is not a condition for practicing that masculinity.

In conclusion, *Agosto* parodies the idea of a ‘racial democracy,’ by showing that limited upward social mobility for the marginalized races that Chicão represents, is only a result of his willingness to be militarized and kill. He is not a ‘self-made’ man, he is a

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<sup>74</sup> “Apartó su cuerpo para que Luciana no notara que su sexo no había dado señales de vida después del beso apasionado.... Ahora, fingir con Luciana era cada vez más difícil. ‘Voy al baño un momento,’ dijo Lomagno.... En el baño, Lomagno se quitó la ropa y se contempló en el espejo. La vision de su propio cuerpo desnudo consiguio llevar un poco de sangre a su pene dormido. Mientras miraba los poderosos musculos de su pecho, de los brazos, del muslo, Lomagno sacudio el pene hasta que verga y glande empezaron a hincharse.... Cuento mas se entumecia en la imagen del espejo, mas duro y grande se ponía el pene en su mano.... corrio hacia el dormitorio, salto sobre Luciana, que estaba tendida de espaldas en la cama diciendo obscenidades” (Seabra 247-48).

<sup>75</sup> “Luciana cambio su tono. Ahora, sarcastico y amargo: ‘¿Alguna vez te ha servido de mujer ese negro? ¿O tú de mujer para él? ‘No digas tonterias.’ ‘Paulo lo hacia. ¿Por qué no tú?’ ‘Tu marido era diferente de mí.’ ‘Tú eres bisexual como él’” (Seabra 258).

violence made man. Any hope for Chicão's maintaining his middle-class status after the war, is contingent upon his willingness to kill in the illicit sector of the neoliberal economy. His attempt at an individual small business was a failure, which only lasted as long as it did due to his being connected to the rich 'white' Pedro Lomagno.

Lastly, the text's representations of the neoliberal and CI masculinities point to the violent social byproducts of these gender performances and therefore their underlying ideologies. Its juxtapositioning of Chicão and Lomagno's race and class backgrounds, creates more sympathy for Chicão than for Lomagno, in that the latter's motivation is purely greed, whereas the former kills more out of the necessity that characterizes the poverty in Brazil. However, this comparison of their individual histories also signals the many ways their gender performances overlap. They both aspire to a masculine social status that is based on the accumulation of wealth and sexual encounters. If, in order to meet these two conditions, they have to commit murder, then the third condition of the neoliberal masculinity, which is an indifference towards human life, permits them to do so. Through the text's representing the process by which they construct their masculinities, it indicates how these two are objects of the conditions they impose upon their own gender performances.

## *A grande arte: Assassins Defy Racial Discourse*

Similar to how *Agosto*'s omniscient narrator offers a unfiltered effect that turns its seemingly evil assassin Chicão, into a more ambiguous, even sympathetic character, in *A grande arte*, the ambiguity around the assassins becomes especially thick, when Mandrake's 'first person' narration turns to (and/or turns into) the thoughts or feelings that, at first, appear to be his, but, due to their uniqueness, cannot logically be, so that the reader gets the impression the narrator has changed. Temporarily, the focalization emanates not from Mandrake, but from whom he had previously been describing. When Mandrake lets go of the focalization, the narration becomes noticeably untainted by his perspective.

*A grande arte* takes place in Rio de Janeiro around 1980 and critiques racial discourse that fortifies false connections between phenotype and cognition with, among other narrative techniques, a story about organized crime, murdered prostitutes, and a missing videocassette. After an ambiguous third person narration in the prologue, in which an anonymous character snaps a prostitute's neck and then carves a letter 'P' onto her face, Mandrake begins his narration and mentions the diaries of Thales Lima Prado, conversations with Miriam, Mandrake's client who owns a burdel; José Zakkai, a 'self-made' mixed-race dwarf gangster; and Camilo Fuentes, a Bolivian hitman of indigenous descent, who escaped poverty by his working for Lima Prado. Lima Prado, who believes Adolf Hitler to have been the century's most important man (199), is the founder, president, and CEO of Aquiles, a corporation in which Zakkai has an active interest.

Aquiles's tentacles reach nearly every market of every industry, from food and beverage, to insurance, to investment banking, but a main source of the corporation's income is the cocaine industry. Zakkai knows this, and aims to take over everything, legal and illegal.

The novel's mystery begins when Roberto Mitry, supposedly a cousin of Lima Prado, arrives at the offices of Mandrake and Wexler seeking their legal services to recover a video tape that has been wrongly appropriated. His visit comes shortly after Mandrake and Wexler refuse to represent a prostitute named 'Gisela' who seeks protection because she feels threatened by Mitry's having called her, asking for a 'package,' that he left behind (the video cassette). Gisela is later found dead, as are (eventually) her colleagues Danusa and Cila, the latter being the novel's most mysterious and important cadaver, because she was in a love triangle that involved Lima Prado and his lover, Rosa Leitão, who is the wife of an important legislator.

Mandrake, in an attempt to call Mitry's bluff, pretends to have recovered the video cassette, which backfires when his dwelling is burglarized, his girlfriend Ada is sodomized, and he is stabbed and left for dead by two of Lima Prado's henchmen: Rafael and Fuentes, the latter of which, is, by far, the novel's most physically intimidating, vicious thug (a natural-born-killer), who is involved in Lima Prado's cocaine smuggling operations. With the mystery of the murdered prostitutes in the background, Mandrake seeks vengeance, and, in doing so, he botches a federal investigation of Fuentes. Fuentes tries to leave his life of crime, falls in love with Miriam, and is forced out of his job under Lima Prado.

Other important characters are Raul, Mandrake's friend and police homicide detective in Rio de Janeiro; Bebel, who is Rosa's eighteen year old daughter and one of

Mandrake's many lovers; and among these are also the aforementioned Ada, the intellectual-chess-playing-Berta Bronstein, the aristocrat-married-to-a-homosexual Lilibeth, and the federal narcotics agent Mercedes. The novel ends without a real ending, except that Fuentes, for whom the text eventually generates the most sympathy, must die.

The following fragment from *A grande arte*, emphasizes the social phenomenon of femicide, and obliges the reader to think about the act and its accompanying mindset. The monologue, cited below, is spoken by a minor character, the pathologist Dr. Sette Netto, who is addressing Mandrake, the protagonist/narrator and criminal defense lawyer/detective. Also present and listening is Raul, who is investigating the same series of murdered prostitutes as Mandrake, although not without suspecting everyone as a potential suspect, including Mandrake. The monologue is from the literary present, 1980, but these three have a history going to when Mandrake and Raul were students in Dr. Sette Netto's anatomy lab, observing a cadaver dissection. Sette Netto got so furious at Raul's audacity in his answering every question, that he began tearing and ripping out body parts with every correct answer that Raul would give (33-34). With that incident still fresh in their minds, the two friends listen as the pathologist offers these words about murderers:

Há um certo tipo de homem que é capaz de cortar o pescoço de mulheres sem ser psicótico, entre aspas, e outro tipo que, sendo, aspas, psicótico, aspas, não é capaz de cortar o pescoço de uma galinha. Não nada de categorias rígidas.... não é muito difícil saber quem, tendo a oportunidade – a faca na mão e o pescoço à disposição – corta e quem não corta. E, ao cortar, a paixão que põe no gesto também nos diz muita coisa sobre ele, ou, ela, sua visão do mundo e do Outro, sua ideologia

cósmica, sua interpretação da realidade. O tema tem fascinado os artistas desde que o homem desenvolveu uma linguagem mais complexa para expressar as intrincâncias sa sua essencia. Todos os grandes personagens da literatura, veja bem, são assassinos.... a Bíblia é um livro de histórias de homicidas...’ (197).<sup>76</sup>

The first conclusion to take from this monologue is, that there is no ‘good’ non-killer versus ‘bad’ killer, and, unlike the world of classic detective fiction, there is no order to be restored in this socio-historical context. The speech denounces society’s voyeuristic and celebratory tendencies with respect to violence in cultural productions, but it also leaves the reader wondering how seriously this pathologist intends for his conclusion to be taken.

I interpret it to mean that science cannot cure violence, because even if science could find a way to isolate and identify one’s ‘first degree-murderer’ gene, doing so would not prevent, or solve, any murder. One’s being a carrier of the gene does not mean he or she has murdered, or will murder, anyone. The carrier would simply embody a common element of the human condition. Therefore the solution must be cultural, not scientific, which brings the discussion back to gender performance. The pathologist’s inclusiveness, in regards to gender and murderers, is important, because he points out that murder, and more specifically feminicide, is neither masculine nor feminine, despite the act’s gendered reputation. His saying “ele, ou, ela” ‘he, or, she’ is incongruent with the

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<sup>76</sup>“There are men who are potentially capable of slitting a woman’s throat without being quote-unquote psychotic, and there are psychotics who aren’t capable of slitting the throat of a chicken. Rigid labels just don’t work. What I mean is that it’s not all that difficult to tell who, given the opportunity- knife in hand and neck at the ready- slices and who doesn’t slice. And, on slicing, the passion put into the motion also tells us a lot about him, or her: his vision of the world and of the ‘other,’ his cosmic ideology, his interpretation of reality. It’s a theme that has fascinated artists since man developed language complex enough to express the intricacies of his essence. All the great characters in literature, when you stop to consider it, are killers. Starting with Cain- the Bible is full of murderers” (Watson 225).



“manliness” typically associated with the sort of indifference to one’s fellow human being that murder and femicide require. Dr. Sette Neto’s autopsy reports on the cadavers lying before Mandrake and Raul, may cause the reader to think that the perpetrator responsible for the dead bodies, belongs in the category of ‘bad,’ particularly given the degree of mutilation, apparent on the female bodies, compared to the efficient perforation used on the male:

Nos pescoços das mulheres foram produzidas lesões múltiplas, de esgorjamento e degolamento, entre a laringe e o osso hióide, e na nuca.... Há uma interessante contraste na maneira de agir do assassino.... A vítima masculina recebeu um único golpe letal. Mas o assassino, depois de infligir lesões mortais nas mulheres, continuou ferindo-as furiosamente (196).<sup>77</sup>

The evidence of her assassin’s contemptuous misogyny seems intentionally upsetting and bewildering, and really, there is nothing redeeming about Rafael, who carries out these slayings. Aside from misogynist, he is portrayed as racist, and he incessantly calls Fuentes, ‘China,’ throughout the novel, in reference to Fuente’s ‘Chinese looking,’ indigenous South American phenotype (106, 124, 252-53). By contrast, despite his also brutally killing a woman, the text intends for Fuentes to win the reader over, and the novel uses him to carry out its race, class and gender critiques.

Halfway into the novel, after Camilo Fuentes has evaded the feds and killed a female agent with his bare hands (125), Mandrake’s narration turns to Fuentes who is in a

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<sup>77</sup>“The women’s necks evidence multiple lesions, between the larynx and the hyoid bone, and also on the nape. One appears to be missing a piece of the neck, not uncommon in this type of lesion. Both carotid arteries, as well as the phrenic and pneumogastric nerves are severed, and in the case of one, the medulla also. There is an interesting contrast here in the killer’s apparent attitudes- clearly this is the work of only one attacker toward his victims. The male victim was dealt only one lethal stroke. But after inflicting lethal wounds on the women, the killer continued madly slashing away” (Watson 224-25).

bar, and soon to be involved in an altercation. Nothing thus far in Mandrake's narration indicates he was present in the bar, at this undisclosed time, which the reader eventually understands to be years in the past, yet, curiously, Mandrake starts narrating about what is going on inside Fuentes's head: "Sabia que matar era uma coisa torpe. Mas não haviam matado ao seu pai? A vida não passava de uma luta de vida ou morte entre as pessoas. Entre os animais. Entre os povos. Entre as forças da natureza" (132).<sup>78</sup> Since Mandrake would not know a detail as specific as, Fuentes's feeling that killing is something he does against his own will and only because (as seen with Chicão) it is his only option in the neoliberal economy, the text indicates that these are Fuentes's thoughts, which, in addition to their demonstrating that the "subject" is subjected to the hegemonic discourse of that which he signifies, reveal that he disapproves of his job as an assassin, and form part of the text's process that eventually beckons sympathy for him.

This insight into his upbringing, also invokes sympathy because it portrays Fuentes as an object of his own flawed discourse. He repeats the same thought pattern that would have been used to justify the displacement of his ancestors and the killing of his father. By alluding to 'the survival of the fittest,' Fuentes's monologue parodies the 'survival value' of a 'meme,'<sup>79</sup> that, from its onset, was a misapplication of biology to the social sciences which also disseminated a dangerous misunderstanding of race phenotypes. First of all, Herbert Spencer coined the phrase in *Principles of Biology* (1864), in which he applies, what biology now knows to have been a limited

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<sup>78</sup>"He knew that killing was a sordid thing to do. But hadn't they killed his father? That's what life was, a life and death struggle between people. Between animals. Countries. Forces of nature" (Watson 145).

<sup>79</sup>"Richard Dawkins has coined the word *meme* ... building blocks of the cultural software that forms our apparatus of understanding.... We use memes to understand, yet memes also 'use' us..." (Balkin 43).

understanding of Darwin's evolutionary theory of natural selection, to the social science of economics. I say 'limited,' mostly because Spencer's equating 'natural selection' with 'survival of the fittest,' obviates the more important evolutionary element of gene reproduction, but to fault Spencer for this mistake is unfair. The science of genetics would not arise for another century, which means even Darwin's understanding of his own theory was 'limited,' by today's standards. Secondly, Spencer's equating 'natural selection' with, "the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life" (444), indicates his era's overestimation of 'difference' among the various 'race' phenotypes in humans, especially with regard to cognitive capacity, which genetics has since found to be, at most, negligible. That the meme would be in Fuentes's internal monologue, given his indigenous heritage, parodies the contemporary discursive dominance of an oppressive evolutionary epistemology, which, as shown, was wrong on a number of levels, especially in its initial stages.

Although, evolutionary epistemology has been used to promote the political agenda of both conservatives and reformists, the parody by way of Fuentes's thoughts, is vital to the novel's critique of neoliberal discourse. His inner monologue ridicules not only the hegemonic ignorance about the misapplication that the meme 'survival of the fittest' has been a from the start, but also how oppressors have appropriated the misapplication to justify slavery, displacement, and private property rights, all three of which, Fuentes, and the indigenous peoples that he represents, have been victims. The text's parody points towards historical injustices' underpinning land ownership, because as Darwin's co-author Alfred Wallace,<sup>80</sup> points out, even Spencer, who was a proponent

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<sup>80</sup> Wallace was also a, "a socialist who wrote on political economy and who actively opposed competition, free trade, usury, and exports; who championed minimum wages, land nationalization, free bread for the

of laissez-faire economics, had once stood strongly against the ownership of private property: “He [Spencer] taught me, that ‘to deprive others of their rights to the use of the earth is to commit a crime inferior only in wickedness to the crime of taking away their lives or their personal liberties...’” (Wallace 333). When neoliberalism uses ‘survival of the fittest’ to allege the superior benefits of laissez-faire economics (Laurent 19), it enables society to ignore the residue of colonialism, slavery, and, “the coloniality of power” from which the privileged class benefits. Historically, ‘survival of the fittest’ has acquitted the rich who Fuentes claims that he hates, and who, in their majority (and not coincidentally), also sit atop Blumenbach’s race-ranking-diagram as, ‘caucasians.’

Also, the text’s parody-through-Fuentes’s-thoughts, indicates how capitalism is essentially an imagined, intersubjective social order that only works because humans believe in it, as Harari indicates, with the following tongue-in-cheek comment: “Free markets are the best economic system, not because Adam Smith said so, but because these are the immutable laws of nature” (113). The epistemological impact of Smith’s ideas from almost two and a half centuries ago is strongest among those, like Fuentes, who are ignorant of any alternative discourse. Finally, Fuentes’s internal monologue reinforces his functioning to subvert the dichotomy of ‘civilization versus the barbarie,’ which appears in Spencer’s *First Principles* (1900), and is another example of a meme that has served to ‘justify’ slavery, genocide, and displacement.<sup>81</sup>

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indigent; and who argued that ‘capital’ was ‘the enemy and tyrant of labour’” (Leonard 230 and Coleman 36-40)

<sup>81</sup> I do not intend to stigmatize Spencer. He claimed to be an abolitionist and his forward thinking has led to important debate in the social sciences, but in *First Principles* (1900), he applies Lamarckian biology to economics and references a dichotomy of the civilized society versus the savage tribe (Spencer ctd. in Laurent 20), which speaks to the racist ideologies at work in Spencer’s thinking, and, given his influence, in the thinking of his era.

In keeping with its subversions of rigid categories, *A grande arte* also takes aim at socialist policy, as seen in its descriptions of price regulating and contrabanding basic goods, such as coffee and flour (92,114). However, unlike the random mutations of gene coding in the natural world, neoliberalism, as Harvey mentions and Dreifuss and Fico point out in their denouncing of IPÊS and the USIS, has strategically imposed the meme about a 'self regulating free market,' which has become 'common sense' knowledge in dominant discourse, due especially to neoliberalism's having fabricated a link between the, 'immutable laws of nature,' and free trade, as if the latter will always reach homeostasis by itself, without any government intervention, just like mother nature. The Great Recession of 2008 indicated otherwise.

More irony lies in Fuentes's 'fitness' or 'survival value.' Until the very end, he is by far the novel's strongest character, especially in comparison with the 'white' characters. The overweight, sloppy Rafael does not survive as long as Fuentes; neither does Lima Prado, and Mandrake is clearly over matched when he seeks his revenge from Fuentes. It is also ironic that he has all the makings of an anti-imperialist insurgent. He is from Bolivia, where many modern day slaves in Brazil come from,<sup>82</sup> and Bolivia is also where the CIA found and killed Che Guevara.<sup>83</sup> His name, Camilo Fuentes, pays homage to Cuban revolutionary, Camilo Cienfuegos, and he represents a resistance to the

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<sup>82</sup> "Rádio Pirata Integra Rede De Trabalho Escravo." *Band News Band.com.br*. Rede Bandeirantes, 2 Feb. 2016. Web. 22 Apr. 2016.

<sup>83</sup> There is, perhaps, a subtle reference to this assassination carried out through the novel's Saussurean critique of the arbitrariness of signs: when Mandrake is on the train to Bolivia, he says, "... paguei... e saí sem olhar Fuentes e *Cia*" (emphasis, mine 108), calling her 'Cia' instead of 'Zéila' just like he seems to refer to Bebel as Eva in the paragraph below, confusing his biblical feminine names, saying, "Nesse instante, senti uma inesperada saudade do corpo do Eva, a filha mimada do senador corrupto..." (108), as Bebel is the spoiled daughter of the politician on Lima Prado's payroll for his help getting an import/export licence (204).

dominance of Brazilian bourgeoisie. Fuentes knows how to adapt in society, and he plans to quit his job as an assassin, so he will no longer have to take orders from any Brazilian (106). In one of his last conversations with Zakkai, who insists it is too late for him to change professions, Fuentes disagrees and professes a belief in the ability to change the course of one's life (278). In line with Spencer's individualism, Fuentes believes in improving himself.

The next fragment analyzed is important for novel's critique of racism in Brazil. The incident further enables Fuentes's transformation into a more sympathetic character because it sheds light on the circumstances which led to his becoming a hitman and indicates that he is not just an inherently evil person, who one day decided that he wanted to start killing people. It references an altercation in a bar, is also enunciated from Fuentes's focalization:

Dois homens e duas mulheres, que bebiam uísque numa das mesas, escarneceram das suas ropas velhas e muito apertadas no corpo ... e um tentou jogá-lo ao chão, botando o pé na frente para que Fuentes tropeçasse ao passar. Porque ele era índio Boliviano; porque ele era pobre e estava mal vestido.... Uma das moças gargalhou um pouco divertida, um pouco assustada, sentindo que a situação não era tão confortável ... Os homens olharam Fuentes de volta, arrogantes, zombeteiros. Num gesto rápido Fuentes estendeu a mão, agarrou um dos homens pelos cabelos, puxou sua cabeça para a frente e desferiu-lhe um forte murro em cima do nariz. Ouviu-se o barulho de ossos partindo antes do homem cair... (132).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>“Two couples who were drinking whisky at one of the tables had laughed at him, at his clothes, which were old and shabby and much too tight.... One had stuck his foot out in the aisle to trip him as he walked

As in a Hollywood movie, this act of aggression suddenly casts Fuentes in a more heroic light: the lone, poor, indigenous man stands up for himself, against the rich racist ‘white’ guys, in front of the attractive ‘white’ girls. Given the social injustices endured by the masses in Latin America, many of whom, like Fuentes, are of indigenous descent, it seems unfair that these spoiled brats mock him for being indigenous and poor. The excitement starts to build when the girl fears that they have just irked the wrong guy. The description of the noise made by the pretty rich boy’s nose breaking is, indeed, exhilarating, after his trying to humiliate Fuentes in front of the girls. For a moment, the reader entirely forgets that, in the previous chapter, and unlike any cliché Hollywood story would allow, Fuentes has snapped the neck of a female narcotics agent (Mercedes) and beaten her face to a pulp (125). By contrast, Fuentes’s use of violence in the bar, seems only fair.

Most important for the novel’s critique of neoliberalism, the incident is what leads to Fuentes’s getting hired by Mateus, Lima Prado’s head of security, who is in the bar, watching this physical specimen at work. However, in order for the poor indigenous man to buy new clothes, he will first have to do some killing, because that is the only job available, for him. In keeping with his representing a high cognitive capacity, Fuentes proves to be extraordinarily skilled in the hit-man industry; he finds creative ways to kill bourgeois men in suits (133), and at times shows signs of altruism (or superiority, depending on one’s interpretation), when he gives away their money after killing them

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by. Because he was a Bolivian, an Indian; because he was poor and badly dressed.... One of the girls let out a whoop of laughter, half enjoyment, half fear, sensing that the situation was not as comfortable as her friends imagined. The two men stared back, sneering, arrogant. In a rapid movement, Fuentes extended his hand grabbed one of them by the hair, pulled his head forward and gave him a tremendous blow on the nose. The sound of breaking bones was audible before the man fell to the floor” (Watson 146).

(134). Incredibly, he begins to transform out of his being an odious misogynist thug, into his becoming an indigenous hero who transcends the social orders of race, class, and gender. Ironically, the main factor enabling his Hollywood-like recovery, stems from his most hateful moment, when he beats and kills Mercedes, the federal narcotics agent who perforates his left eye with her fingernail (125).

Fuentes's cornea shopping is the novel's most direct critique of free market capitalism. Although Fuentes simultaneously embodies and defies the race and class struggles, free market conditions have led to his participation in capitalism's parallel industry of the drug trade, and his success in the illicit sector has given him the purchasing power to buy a new cornea on the black market. The ad in the *Jornal do Brasil*, establishes the heartless, all-business tone of the setting he will encounter: "córnea — moça, 24, vende. Tel. 185-3944" (136).<sup>85</sup> It implicates the newspaper's ignorance of, or complicity in, the illegal organ trade, and the expected impunity therein. The donor's apartment, "já em mau estado, o reboco das paredes caindo, o capim crescendo em volta" (137),<sup>86</sup> depicts the current situation for dwellers of what used to be government housing. The eye donor's mother, "uma mulata magra e pálida,"<sup>87</sup> links the issue of race to these ignored dwellers, and provokes Fuentes's self consciousness with respect to his own race and class: "Um índio, para àquela cadela, não tinha condições de comprar um olho, pensou Fuentes" (137).<sup>88</sup> His referring to her as a 'cadela' ('slut') perhaps indicates that

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<sup>85</sup>"Cornea for sale -female, age 24. Call 185-3944" (Watson 151).

<sup>86</sup>"... already in disrepair. The plaster was peeling, the grass needed cutting" (Watson 152).

<sup>87</sup>"A thin, light-skinned mulatto woman..." (Watson 152).

<sup>88</sup>"The bitch figures an Indian couldn't possibly have the money to buy himself an eye, thought Fuentes" (Watson 152).



she could be a prostitute, but more so that Fuentes is subconsciously fighting to keep a superior position in his imagined race/class/gender hierarchy, which is what Mandrake ‘tries’ to indicate in one of his parenthetical comments: “(Eu já disse que ele era um homem ressentido e rancoroso, com a tendência de atribuir aos outros uma hostilidade em relação a ele que nem sempre existia)” (137).<sup>89</sup> Mandrake’s comment is a paradox and a subversive play on racist discourse. The ‘white’ middle-class male narrator, with whom the average reader likely identifies, narcissistically spots a tendency towards hatred (that is non-existent, according to this narrator) in the non-white Other, who the narrator has just called resentful and angry. It is as if Mandrake knows how paradoxically racist/narcissistic he sounds, which makes a white middle-class reader, who does not claim to be racist, realize how racist/narcissistic he sounds. By its use of punctuation that inserts Mandrake’s parenthetical comment into Fuentes’s narration, the text indicates its intent for it to function as a subversion of racist discourse, via parody.

Along similar lines, the mother’s sales pitch seems intended to conjure up discourse from the days of slavery: “‘Dez milhões,’ disse a mulher impaciente. ‘E não é caro. Minha filha é muito moça, nunca teve doença.... Olhos maravilhosos.’” (137).<sup>90</sup> Their interaction is void of the formalities and false pretenses, that one typically sees in legitimate business, which is why Fuentes’s next question, addressed to the girl and not the mother, seems as permissible as it does out of place: “‘Por que você quer vender um olho?’ ‘Tenho minhas razões,’ disse a moça.’ ‘Ela tem as suas razões,’ disse a mãe,

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<sup>89</sup>“(I already mentioned that he was a rancorous, easily offended man, with a tendency to find hostility where it didn’t necessarily exist” (Watson 152).

<sup>90</sup>“‘Ten million,’ said the woman impatiently. “And that’s cheap. My daughter’s never been sick a day in her life, she’s got good teeth, perfect hearing, terrific eyes” (Watson 152).

agressiva” (137).<sup>91</sup> From this moment, Fuentes begins to represent different conditions for constructing his masculinity. He is incapable of practicing the level of indifference towards humanity that is required for neoliberal hegemonic masculinity. He would rather be blind in one eye, than be an accomplice to the mother’s pressuring the young Marluci to sell one of her big, beautiful, healthy eyes.

His thoughts during the scene, link race and gender to capitalism: “Não posso comprar o olho dessa menina, pensou Fuentes, ela tinha os mesmos cabelos negros dele, seria índia?, mais os brasileiros haviam matado todos os índios.... No mundo, pensou Fuentes, tudo se comprava e vendia, a mulher [the mother] sabia disso” (137).<sup>92</sup> In his mentioning the massacre of indigenous peoples, he denounces the fallacy of Brazil’s racial democracy that had previously been referenced in the bar altercation. His thoughts again indicate the brutality of global capitalism, which continues to involve the sale of organs on the black market and continues to displace the few indigenous peoples who remain unintegrated. This thematic of capitalism’s brutality recurs, when, well into Fuentes’s relationship with Miriam (the brothel owner), he has a conversation with her, about whether he should purchase Marluci’s eye:

‘Você tem o dinheiro?’ ‘Tenho.’ ‘Então compra.’ ‘Eu fico pensando na moça.’  
‘Que moça? ....’ ‘A moça que está vendendo a córnea. Não sei se é justo ela ficar cega de um olho para um sujeito com dinheiro ficar com dois.’ ‘Não é ela que quer vender?’ ‘Forçada. Pela miséria.’ ‘Por que não vai dar bucinha, como todo

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<sup>91</sup>“‘Why are you selling your cornea?’ ‘I have my reasons,’ said the girl. ‘She has her reasons,’ said the mother, belligerent” (Watson 152-53).

<sup>92</sup>“I can’t buy this kid’s eye, thought Fuentes. She’s got the same straight dark hair I do. Could she be Indian? But hadn’t Brazil killed off all its Indians? .... There’s nothing in this world that isn’t bought or sold, thought Fuentes, and she knows it” (Watson 153).

mundo?’ ‘Nem todo mundo.’ ‘E para que ela quer tanto dinheiro? Ela não é nenhuma coitadinha, não...’ (222).<sup>93</sup>

Fuentes hints that Miriam’s discourse takes for granted that Marluci is poor, female, and not-white. If any one of those three characteristics were different, she would not be faced with the choice of either prostituting herself or selling her eye.

With the money that he has earned as a hitman, Fuentes can actively participate in all of capitalism’s industries, legal or illegal, but here, instead, he yields to his feelings of empathy, and recognizes that Marluci’s precarious situation, is the main factor in her willingness to sell her eye. The dialogue solidifies Fuentes’s role as the novel’s hero of the class struggle, who eventually says, “gosto de viver no meio de gente pobre,”<sup>94</sup> when Miriam suggests a house for them to rent in a marginalized neighborhood (225).

Miriam’s position on many topics indicates that she serves to contrast with Fuentes, in order to further expose capitalism’s violent relationship with the hierarchies of race, class and gender in Brazilian society. Unlike Miriam, Fuentes did not think of the very likely possibility that Marluci’s mother placed the ad in the paper, because Marluci refuses to prostitute herself. Miriam indicates that this thought (or one similar) has occurred to her, and she seems to find Marluci’s insubordination worthy of losing an eye. Miriam represents a more ‘laissez-faire’ economic attitude, because to her, money is the great equalizer, even when it purchases a healthy young girl’s perfectly healthy eye;

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<sup>93</sup>“Do you have the money?’ ‘Sure.’ ‘Then buy it.’ ‘I keep thinking about the girl.’ ‘What girl? What girl?’ ‘The girl selling her cornea. I’m just not sure it’s fair for her to give up one of her eyes so some guy with money can have two.’ ‘But she wants to sell it, right?’ ‘She’s being forced. By poverty.’ ‘So why doesn’t she sell her little pussy like everybody else?’ ‘Not everybody’ ‘What does she need so much money for, anyway? And don’t tell me what a poor little thing she is....’ (Watson 257).

<sup>94</sup>“I like living around poor people” (Watson 261).

Marluci is simply greedy and/or insubordinate, and poverty is not a factor to be considered; Marluci should just “dar bocetinha” ‘give up the pussy’ like every other woman in her situation would do, Miriam included. Miriam shows this same merciless, neoliberal business attitude when Fuentes’s friend (Arlindo) says that he regrets his having mixed manure into the compressed cannabis that he sells: “Deixa eles fumarem a merda deles... o barato é o mesmo” (224).<sup>95</sup>

These comments indicate a resentment in her that, according to her life history, stems from her having been ushered her into prostitution by her race, class and gender: Eramos seis, cinco mulheres e um homem. Eu a única branca, de cabelos lisos, claros. Mas ser branca e bonita só me ajudou a ser puta. Quer dizer, nem sei se uma puta branca é melhor que uma puta mulata, comercialmente falando. Já me disseram que eu fui puta porque quis. Eu tinha doze anos” (223).<sup>96</sup> According to Miriam, a life of prostitution was inevitable because she was poor, uneducated, female, and, due to the fact that her phenotype was considered pleasing by society’s racist standards, men would pay to have sex with her and provide her (and therefore her family) some much needed income. Thirdly, this same dialogue utilizes Miriam to portray a divided subjectivity, which critiques the interaction between gendered discourse and Christianity. She prays in church and claims a belief in a divine plan for everyone, down to the number of heartbeats, yet this belief suggests that for her, the divine plan included a career in the sex industry, starting at the age of twelve: “Não gostei, mas continuei. Faz de conta que voltei

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<sup>95</sup>“Let them smoke their shit,’ said Miriam. ‘The high’s the same’”

<sup>96</sup>“I was white and had straight light hair -the only one. But being light-skinned and pretty only helped me become a prostitute. I mean, I don’t really know for sure if a white girl’s better than a mulatto, commercially speaking. Plus, they told me I got into the life because I wanted to. I was twelve years old” (Watson 258).

ter doze anos: eu ia conseguir fazer outra vida para mim? Ou existe um destino do qual não se pode fugir? Uma nasce para ser madame, outra para puta, outra para freira, outra para artista de televisão, outra para enfermeira. É isso? É assim a telenovela?” (223).<sup>97</sup>

Her list is an example of the unconscious maintenance of her society’s dominant gender discourse, especially if one considers what other professions, or how many more opportunities, would be on a similar list for someone born ‘male.’ This irony, coupled with her ability to run a successful business (after all, she could afford Mandrake’s legal services), indicates that her situation is less a question of destiny or DNA, and more a consequence of heteropatriarchal (or Catholic), neoliberal culture. Miriam’s discourse points to how Christianity’s divine plan, maintains the same power that predetermined her career trajectory. Her admitting that she could have kept a job cleaning houses, emphasizes her blindness to the church’s maintenance of the gendered social order that gave her those limited options.

In order to expose the connection between Miriam’s gendered, racialized thinking, and her conception of ‘God,’ the text juxtaposes Fuentes’s atheism to Miriam’s beliefs: “Esse negócio de destino é besteira.... Deus não existe” (223).<sup>98</sup> This disbelief corresponds with his subverting their society’s dominant discourse, which is the case too, in his showing respect for Miriam: “Fuentes até então desprezara todas as mulheres

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<sup>97</sup>“I didn’t like it, but I didn’t leave it, either. Now let’s say I could go back to being twelve. You think I’d manage to do something else with my life? Or does everyone have a destiny and there’s no running away from it? Like one person’s born to be a madam, another a whore, another nun, or a television star, or a nurse, Do you think it works that way? Like on the soaps?” (Watson 258-59).

<sup>98</sup>“All that destiny stuff is a bunch of crap.... God does not exist” (Watson 259).

brasileiras.... Agora respeitava uma, que era prostituta” (222).<sup>99</sup> The conditions that correspond to the neoliberal hegemonic masculinity do not appeal to him. When Zakkai offers Fuentes the chance to be his ally, he declines specifically because he is not interested in any power (275).

Fuentes becomes so redeemed by the end of the novel that, before his exiting the story, the text represents his signified redemption, before the reader, in a reference to “the phallus.” In order to create a subterfuge to hide his dealings with Zakkai, Fuentes must visit the prostitute Aurora’s apartment in the same building. When she insists on their having sex, he insists on their using a condom, and her response alludes to the phallus: “Não tem camisinha para isso não. Só se for apanhar no Jardim Zoológico a do elefante” (281).<sup>100</sup> Here, as with Zelia on the train, his phenotype represented as sexually savage gets exaggerated to the point of parody, which, again, effectively ridicules the dichotomy. Also, because Fuentes refuses to have sex with Aurora, who is baffled by his behaviour, his redemption opposes the third condition of neoliberal masculinity; his concern for others in the aforementioned thoughts about Marluci and his indifference to the accumulation of wealth (he had always planned to quit Lima Prado’s security team) being the other two.

However, “the phallus,” as Lacan explains it, “can only play its role when veiled ... as itself a sign of the latency with which any signifiable is struck, when it is raised (aufgehoben) to the function of the signifier.... That is why the demon of ... shame arises

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<sup>99</sup>“Until meeting Miriam, Fuentes had despised all the Brazilian women he’d been involved with. But he respected Miriam, a prostitute no less” (Watson 258).

<sup>100</sup>“I don’t have a rubber this size, no way. You’d have to go to the zoo and borrow it from the elephant” (Watson 329).

at the very moment, in the ancient mysteries, the phallus is unveiled,” and nothing about *A grande arte* gives the reader a reason to expect a happy ending. Fuentes’s meeting his fate, at the hands of Zakkai’s machine gun wielding thugs, is an allegory that stands as the novel’s version of the phallus that, having just been unveiled, becomes the bar, which, at the hands of this daemon [Zakkai], strikes the signified, marking it as the bastard offspring of this signifying concatenation” (*Écrits* 288). Fuentes’s death indicates that his role as a signifier that stood for redemption is now that of a corpse, which also speaks to Lacan’s subversion of the subject: “No doubt the corpse is a signifier... 316), and brings this analysis to the he who embraces his role as a survivor of and a thriver within the underworld: José Zakkai, also known as “O Nariz de Ferro” ‘Iron Nose.’

The little sympathy that Zakkai does evoke comes from his representing the shame of the privileged classes’ perceived inferiority of the racialized “Other.” He is a horrendously ugly, ‘mixed race’ dwarf, who was raised by the streets. His defiance also lies in his name: ‘Zakkai,’ in Hebrew, means ‘innocent’ or ‘pure’ (Ginway 720). Due to his diverse ancestry, he defies the old idea of racial purity.

Mandrake’s naturalist description of him, reminds one of Cesare Lombroso’s discussion of phrenology in *Criminal Man* (1887): “Nariz de Ferro, ..., levantou-se e, virando sua enorme cabeça de cabelos encarapinhados, exibiu o perfil para mim. Seu nariz imenso, de linha perfeitas, era um pouco mais negro do que o rosto.... riu, mostrando gengivas violáceas e dentes pontudos como os de um cão” (150-51).<sup>101</sup> The

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<sup>101</sup>“Iron nose, who was a dwarf but carried himself like a giant, stood up and turned his enormous head of frizzy hair sideways to exhibit his profile. His nose was immense, with perfect lines, just slightly more negroid than the rest of his face.... Iron Nose laughed, revealing purple gums and pointed teeth like a dog’s” (Watson 166).

shocking impression that Zakkai's presence makes on Mandrake, due mostly to racial difference, implies that this little black man is to be feared, and indeed, Zakkai does have a revolution in mind: one that would seek revenge against those matching Mandrake's 'white' middle-class profile (275). Zakkai parodies debunked sciences that spewed myths about causalities between race, intelligence, work ethic, and criminality.<sup>102</sup> In particular, he caricatures some of the documented assumptions that Progressive Era eugenicists made to explain conditions such as dwarfism.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Zakkai's individual achievements in the free market underworld ridicule eugenicist myths that connected race to laziness or ability. Despite Zakkai's dwarfism, his being a mix of races, and his impoverished background, he survives and prospers in neoliberalism, but, the text must remain convincing with a character so lavishly fictitious. Therefore, he prospers only through his successful participation in the 'jungle' of illicit industries.

In a conversation next to a dead Rafael, whose neck Zakkai has recently perforated with a pair of scissors, the dwarf excitedly refers to an apocalyptic future, which causes his interlocutor to draw the following conclusion about him: "Você odeia a humanidade." Zakkai's response reveals the neoliberal indifference that he represents: "A humanidade é um monte de merda." (278). Two of Zakkai's monologues establish his defiance of race taxonomy and eugenicist race narratives. During the first of these Zakkai starts immediately attacking Mandrake's 'whiteness,' initially by pointing out Mandrake's ignorance of anything Jewish: "O nome Zakkai não significa nada para o

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<sup>102</sup> For more information see Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man* (152-73).

<sup>103</sup> "... the toxic action of alcohol on the protoplasm... the children resulting from their conjugation become idiots, epileptics, dwarfs or feeble minded (Forel in Childs 205).



senhor?’ ‘Nada.’” (149),<sup>104</sup> which is important because Mandrake is constantly badgering his law partner, Wexler, about being a Jew (36). Zakkai’s next comment poignantly signals the ignorant, yet, seemingly, all too common tendency of those who buy into race stereotypes, to try and guess one’s ancestry: “Percebo que o senhor está querendo me catalogar, mas não adianta nem eu mesmo sei se sou branco ou preto, mouro ou judeu, o que aliás não tem a menor importância de uma forma ou de outra” (149).<sup>105</sup> Finally, Zakkai’s life story of success through struggle and business acumen, contrasts with that his ‘white’ interlocutor, Mandrake, who misses work throughout the entire story, expecting Wexler to pick up the slack, because he is Jewish (63).

In Zakkai’s conversation with Lima Prado, the latter assumes that the ‘non white’ nouveau riche before him, must have arrived do to his having a specialty. Zakkai’s response to Lima Prado’s inquiry about his specialty, subverts Herbert Spencer’s misunderstanding of race in evolutionary epistemology: “Sobreviver” ‘surviving’ (214). Similar to how Zakkai subtly accuses Lima Prado of his part in Cila’s murder,<sup>106</sup> by telling him a story about “a vagina dentada” ‘the vagina with teeth,’ Zakkai’s saying that his specialty is surviving, crushes the foundation of Lima Prado’s Naziism. Zakkai’s being ‘mixed-race’ and an incredible ‘survivor,’ embodies the resilience that diversity offers in a gene pool, which is precisely what the Nazi eugenics that Lima Prado stands by, got wrong. Their exchange highlights the text’s critique of hegemonic ignorance.

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<sup>104</sup> “‘The name Zakkai doesn’t mean anything to you?’ ‘No.’ (Watson 165).

<sup>105</sup> “I can tell you’re trying to categorize me, but don’t bother, I’m not even sure myself if I’m black or white, Moor or Jew, and besides it doesn’t make the slightest bit of difference” (Watson 165).

<sup>106</sup> “Scylla’s frightening toothy maws” (Ginway 717).

Given that, above all other things, Zakkai's specialty is surviving, his ironic name could also be interpreted as a representation of the epithet 'social Darwinism.' The term 'social Darwinism' is not only a misnomer when applied to its reputed paradigms, it is also "also a red herring," since many progressive reformers, who were opposed to laissez-faire capitalism, were also eugenicists and racists and, "routinely made recourse to biological explanations of social and economic phenomena" (Leonard 216).<sup>107</sup> In Brazil, mostly white, eugenicist doctors attributed poverty and ignorance to race, and hoped that eugenics, which at that time condemned 'interbreeding,' might be a solution (Stepan 36-41). Ironically, Lima Prado's next assumption, that Zakkai must represent a group wanting to buy out one of Lima Prado's businesses, spurs an answer which affirms that Zakkai is a true individualist: "Nao tenho grupo. Estou sozinho nisso (214)."<sup>108</sup> A *grande arte*'s storyline indicates that he is better fit for the neoliberal economy than Lima Prado himself, and by the end, Zakkai has embodied and ridiculed Spencer's 'survival of the fittest.'

Given his rise from homelessness to riches, Zakkai also represents and parodies the 'self-made man narrative,' that is so valuable to neoliberalism. His life story indicates that he represents the Brazilian urban street kid, who learns at a young age how to survive alone in the concrete jungle, any way possible, even if it means living in the sewers, "com os ratos. Já cuspiram, mijaram e cagaram em mim. Ou morria ou virava essa

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<sup>107</sup>"Spencer's view was that, in the struggle for existence, self-improvement came from conscious, planned exertion, not from chance variation and natural selection. The biological case Spencer made for laissez-faire rested upon a kind of Lamarckian self-help and not upon Darwinian inheritance. In these important respects, 'social Darwinist' (Leonard 215). is a misnomer even when applied to Spencer.

<sup>108</sup>"I have no group. I'm alone in this" (247).

maravilha que sou” (149).<sup>109</sup> His having arrived at neoliberal success by way of violence, denounces the social consequences of the ‘self-made man’ narrative. Only the illicit sector allowed him to participate in his society’s conditions of production. Zakkai’s wealth is of the illegitimate or unrespectable business world, as detective Raul explains: “Ele está metido em negócios de motéis, jogo, droga, publicação de livros e revistas eróticas e produção de filmes pornográficos” (158). What he calls a “maravilha,” is a position in the social hierarchy that, for the marginalized populations, is enviable, but for the class privileged, is more like a fly in the milk, as is the story he tells about his being a target of serial killer, whose work resembles that of the notorious state and privately sponsored ‘death squads,’ that began as far back as 1958 when Rio Chief of Police General Kruel, “was being pressured by Rio’s commercial association to do something about the thefts and robberies affecting their businesses,” (Huggins 120):

Certa época, quando eu não tinha onde morar e dormia na soleira das portas, surgiu na cidade um matador que jogava gasolina nos mendigos que dormiam e ateava fogo. Matou um monte. Eu senti que ele ia me pegar, sabe, tive aquele pressentimento. E ele quase me pegou mesmo. Acordei com o corpo todo molhado de gasolina, ele tentando acender fósforo e jogar em cima de mim, com a cara de quem está acendendo o gas de um fogão.... passei a dormir dentro de um bueiro. As baratas passeavam em cima do meu corpo, mas eu sabia que não iam me fazer nenhum mal, no máximo chupar um pedacinho de lábio aqui, uma pelinha do dedo ali, mas com elas estava seguro, a morte estava lá fora, tinha duas

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<sup>109</sup>“... with the rats. I’ve been spit on, pissed on, and shit on. It was either die or turn into this wonderful person I am” (Watson 166).

pernas, dois braços, uma cabeça, como eu, feita à imagem e semelhança de Deus Nosso Senhor Jesus Cristo (253).<sup>110</sup>

Zakkai's storytelling here, not only outdoes his rivals (Lima Prado and Mandrake) who, as Ginway points out, think they are men of letters (716-8), it creates emotion and pity for him. The horror of his experience gives reason to his violent nature. The same people who tell him to believe in Jesus are those who would prefer he were eliminated.

Zakkai also overflows the text with his philosophical diatribes. He cites Euclides da Cunha and Carlos Lacerda, the former communist who became a right wing journalist and leader of the opposition, also portrayed in *Agosto*. Zakkai calls Lacerda, “o maior orador da historia do Brasil” (250),<sup>111</sup> which adds to his parody of neoliberalism and its narrative about the ‘self-made man.’ This parody begins when the text first introduces Zakkai, and detective Raul visits his office. The dwarf's hegemony in that space, points to his hegemony over the State (62).

Seated behind his huge desk in an expensive building, Zakkai receives raul, a cop in need of a favor, which puts the dwarf well above Raul in their society's hierarchy of masculinities and explains why Zakkai does not feel obligated to cooperate with Raul's request: “Pedi que ele levantasse a ficha de Mitry para mim. Respondeu que ia pensar,

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<sup>110</sup>There was a killer on the loose in Rio once -I had nowhere to live at the time and was sleeping in doorways- who went around pouring gasoline on tramps and beggars while they were asleep and then setting them on fire. He killed a bunch of people. I had this feeling, see, that he was going to get me, this premonition. And he almost did. I woke up soaking wet covered with gasoline, with the guy standing over me, calm as he could be, looking as if he was about to light the oven. I ran like a maniac. After that, I slept in the sewer. The roaches crawled over me, but I knew they wouldn't do me any harm, at most just suck a little piece of lip here, a bit of finger there. At least I was safe with them, death was outside on the street: It had two legs, two arms, and a head, like me, created in the image of God our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Watson 296).

<sup>111</sup> “The greatest speaker in the history of Brazil” (Watson 165).

como se soubesse alguma coisa. O Nariz de Ferro” (62).<sup>112</sup> The fragment shows how Zakkai’s knowledge is power, and his business savvy has taught him to not give up that power simply because an authority from the state asks him to do so.

However, as Ginway points out in her comparison of Zakkai to Trimalchio, the text allows for Zakkai to win all the battles, but its critique of class society will not permit him to win the war (718). He can buy almost anything, but he cannot purchase acceptance among the Brazilian elite. In order to compensate for his being excluded Zakkai acts like a giant, despite his size (150). He desires social recognition, which coincides with the castration complex to which his confrontation with the ‘vagina dentada’ alludes. While relating the events that close encounter he also alludes to his possessing or being “the phallus,” when he tells Lima Prado about his “pau, enorme como o de todo anão” (212).<sup>113</sup>

Zakkai reveals the root of his need for signification when discussing his past: “Quando era menino via as mulheres passarem desdenhosas nos seus carros, as mãos curruscando de jóias, e almejava ardentemente tê-las segurando o meu pau” (149).<sup>114</sup> These sights, sounds, and feelings describe a powerful jealousy that motivated Zakkai, and instead of following the ideology that would keep him slaving for the class privileged, he learns to hustle in the industries that they typically condemn, which explains the pleasure he finds in calling Jesus, the god of the class privileged, a failure:

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<sup>112</sup>“I asked him if he could fill me in on Mity. He said he’d think about it, as if he knew something. That’s Iron Nose” (Watson 60).

<sup>113</sup>“ ... cock -which, all modesty aside, is enormous, which, ditto, is normal for a dwarf...” (245).

<sup>114</sup>“When I was a kid I’d watch the snooty women go by in their cars, their fingers dripping jewels, and I died to have a pair of those hands holding onto my cock” (Watson 166).

“Nunca tive um ídolo. Pensei numa época em Jesus Cristo mas ele foi um fracassado.... trafiquei amendoim, graxa de sapatos, chicletes, cano de chumbo, erva, pó, limão roubado da feira, não nessa ordem. Fui dentista da meia-noite” (150).<sup>115</sup> Zakkai’s explanation of what he means by a midnight dentist speaks volumes for his parody of the self-made man, especially in a neoliberal economy that offers so little opportunity for the marginalized to gain a significant position within the legal industries.

He reveals that meaning while explaining to one of his men (Amândio) about King Tut’s grave:

‘Antigamente eles enterravam as pessoas importantes com os seus tesouros, jóias, ouro, Ladrões mais cedo o mais tarde robavam tudo.’ ‘O único ouro que vai ser enterrado comigo é esse dente aqui,’ disse Amandio.’ ‘Também vai ser roubado. Existem quadrilhas operando em todos os cemitérios do Rio. Teve uma época em que ganhei a vida como dentista da meia-noite, arrancando dente de cadáver no São João Batista.’” (240).<sup>116</sup>

Zakkai’s life experience has convinced himself of his unparalleled, indestructible will (226). He is ready to pass on his success and dethrone those in power, by way of his proposed didactical publication:

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<sup>115</sup>“I never had an idol. I considered Jesus Christ for a while, but, to quote Archbishop Cardeal, he was a failure. Do you understand what I’m saying? I sold peanuts, shined shoes, peddled Chiclets, lead pipes, grass, snow, and limes that I stole from the vegetable stalls -not in that order- I’ve been a midnight dentist” (Watson 166).

<sup>116</sup>“In ancient times the VIP’s used to be buried with their treasure, jewels, gold. Sooner or later the thieves got everything.’ ‘The only gold that’ll be buried with me is this tooth,’ said Amândio. ‘They’ll get that too. There are squads working all the cemeteries in Rio. I myself made my living for a time as a midnight dentist, pulling teeth out of cadavers in São João Batista.’” (Watson 279).

Estou acabando de escrever o ‘Manual dos Frustrados, Fodidos e Oprimidos.’ Nele descrevo, minuciosa e sistematicamente, os métodos mais sujos e destruidores para se ir à forra de qualquer inimigo, seja quem for, forças armadas, companhias de serviços publicos, companhias de cartões de crédito, bancos, a polícia, o proprietário senhorio, a loja comercial, qualquer pessoa ou instituição que tem força e sacanea os outros (150).<sup>117</sup>

This manual, that facilitates attacks on the economic and authoritative institutions which produce knowledge and assert power, is, essentially, an insurgent’s guidebook. In order to no longer be a victim of the oppressor, one must turn to the “métodos mais sujos e destruidores,” and become a criminal like he has. The Manual dos Frustrados, Fodidos e Oprimidos speaks to the implausibility of realizing the ‘self-made man’ narrative, without turning to crime. The moral turpitude that has brought Zakkai so much success, is best depicted, when he and Fuentes search for the video cassette, the novel’s symbol of power, and Zakkai shows that he does not have any problem killing anyone in his way: “Nariz de Ferro apanhou a tesoura que estava no chão. Estendeu-a para Fuentes. ‘Acaba com ele.’ ‘Não mato um homem amarrado’ Rafael fechou os olhos. ‘Eu mato,’ disse Nariz de Ferro.”<sup>118</sup>

Zakkai’s use for violence within his profession is limitless, as shown in the explicitness of his assassination of Camilo Fuentes (293). Fuentes’s bullet ridden body

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<sup>117</sup>“I’ve just finished writing a book, in fact, called the *Manual for the frustrated, Fucked Over & Oppressed*, in which I describe systematically and in great detail the dirtiest and most destructive tactics to get even with whatever enemy, whether it’s the armed forces, the utilities, credit card companies, a bank, the cops, your landlord, a local merchant -any person or institution that uses its power to fuck people over” (Watson 167).

<sup>118</sup>“Iron Nose picked the scissors up off the floor. He held them out to Fuentes. ‘Finish him off.’ ‘I don’t killed people who are tied up.’ Rafael closed his eyes. ‘Well I do,’ said Iron Nose” (Watson 297).

and face send the message that Zakkai will maintain the power that he has taken from Lima Prado. In the end, he is the neoliberal hegemonic male, the ‘fittest’ survivor, and the baddest of the bad. His rise to dominance sterilizes false narratives about race and poverty that permeate hegemonic discourse. The text neuters neoliberal masculinity, because Zakkai’s representing neoliberalism’s ‘self-made man’ narrative, demonstrates its absurdity, especially when comparing his life story to that of the last killer analyzed here, Thales Lima Prado.

Born into an aristocratic family, Lima Prado received a military education, and due to his grandfather’s wasting the family fortune, he was denied most of the privileges that his lineage would otherwise indicate. Contrary to Chicão’s post-military business failure, Lima Prado’s experience as a member of the Brazilian elite forces, eventually led to an unsurpassable career in the neoliberal business world, and the following dialogue between Mandrake and Zakkai, summarizes the operations of Lima Prado’s business, named Aquiles:

‘Tóxico e pornografia. Mulheres, cadelas submissas, sendo esporradas por cacetes gigantescos, as bocetas, plantas carnívoras arreganhadas, e cus negros sinistros atraentes como poços de petróleo latejantes, como disse Euclides da Cunha. Isto dá muito dinheiro neste país esfuziante. Pó e putaria, esse é o negócio dos Bois, uma cooperativa que eles chamam Escritório central...’ ‘O Escritório Central é uma organização criminosa que utiliza empresas legítimas como cobertura, por um lado, e como diversificação de investimentos, por outro?’ ‘Sim’(151).<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>“They’re into drugs and pornography. Women, submissive sluts, covered with semen from gigantic pricks, their cunts like carnivorous plants split wide open, and sinister, sexy black assholes like spurting oils wells, as Euclides da Cunha once said. That stuff pays pretty good in this bubbling country. Coke and cunts, that’s the business these boys are in. It’s a cooperative they call the Main office.... ‘The Main Office



Zakkai's reference to Euclides da Cunha projects a barbarism onto Lima Prado that even Zakkai finds exceptional, which fits the conclusion to be drawn from Lima Prado's diary entries and from his thoughts during remunerated sex with Mônica, that Lima Prado is the perpetrator in the novel's gruesome opening.

Zakkai's description of Aquiles also speaks to the barbarism that makes Lima Prado's businesses lucrative, and it denounces the symbiotic relationship between legal and illegal industries in the neoliberal global economy. The irony of his activity in the sex and cocaine industries, is that, unlike the 'mixed-race,' 'self-made' Zakkai, the presumably 'white' and comparatively privileged Lima Prado, is the one who his society considers to be a reputable businessman, who has the power to change laws and control politics in Brazil (204, 182).

His first name, Thales, invokes the scientific method's creator, Thales Miletus, which serves the text's parody of eugenicist discourse from Progressive Era. The first indications of this parody are subtle: his favorite authors are Yeats and Eliot, who have been criticized for their appropriations of eugenicist language that effectuates an oppressive social agenda (Gould 14).<sup>120</sup> The parody intensifies, however, through Lima Prado's discoveries in the notebooks that contain his family history. From a eugenicist perspective, his situation is dire: alcoholism, gambling, promiscuity, and drug addiction,

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is a criminal organization which uses legal businesses as a cover and also for diversification of investments.' 'True'" (Watson 167-68).

<sup>120</sup>Also, Childs' *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration*, obligates "literary critics to investigate the ways in which a discourse ostensibly so racist, classist, and sexist as eugenics apparently circulated in turn-of-the-century Europe and America to simultaneously oppressive and emancipatory effect - both in the realm of modern social policy and in the realm of modern literary imagination (20). Woolf's name comes up as Bebel enters the story, recognizing the name Wexler as cinematographer of *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966).

are all part of the amoral and ‘degenerate’ pollutants running through his ‘germ plasm,’ which, considering his admiration for Adolf Hitler, makes him almost laughable.

However the detail that assures the reader that Lima Prado represents a parody of eugenics, is his discovery that his biological mother, was really his mentally ill aunt (243), who was kept locked up in the basement for fifty-nine years howling, eating her own feces and banging her head against the wall while thinking she was copulating with Jesus (176-7). By his own Nazi/eugenicist standards, Lima Prado’s fitness could not be worse, yet, paradoxically, he has children, which indicates the text’s intention parody and undermine the erroneous, pre-genetics eugenics standard of ‘fitness,’ that still permeates the discourse of *A grande arte*’s socio-historical context.

His unsettling discovery also indicates that symbols have become problematic for him and have fueled his insanity: “aunt” and “uncle,” in his case, can also mean “mother” and “father.” His ability to recognize both the importance and arbitrariness of signs, especially since he has the power to change laws that govern Brazil, denounces the arbitrariness of the signs by which humans categorize one another in their constructions of race, class, and gender. This thematic around symbols is especially noticeable in his diary entries: ““O IMPORTANTE NÃO É A VERDADE MAS O SÍMBOLO. ARRAS.’ .... A loucura da mãe teria sido interpretada por Lima Prado como um sinal de garantia de um contrato pignoratício - o penhor da liberdade: a liberdade trocada pela sanidade” (264-5).<sup>121</sup> Lima Prado’s understanding his mother’s insanity and complete marginalization from society, as the price she paid for ‘freedom,’ not only critiques

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<sup>121</sup>“WHAT’S IMPORTANT IS NOT THE FACT BUT THE SYMBOL. HANDSEL.’ .... Lima Prado had misconstrued his mother’s illness to be the earnest money in a contract -the price of freedom: freedom in exchange for sanity” (Watson 309).

neoliberalism's appropriation of the term "freedom" in its advancement of its oppressive agenda, this detail of Lima Prado's life history also gives the reader a reason that explains his actions as a psychopathic killer of prostitutes. He is incapable of accepting his subjection to the signifier. What at first seemed like a twisted way for Lima Prado to confirm his masculinity and demonstrate indifference for human life, can now be understood as the behavior of someone who is confused and mentally ill. Despite, Lima Prado's despicable actions, he becomes more sympathetic in this representation of his dealing with and identifying with his aunt/mother's insanity.

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed how *Agosto* and *A grande arte* use narrative techniques to build ambiguous villains, obliterate the notion of Brazil's being a racial democracy, denounce the maintenance of race, class, and gender hierarchies from early capitalism, and highlight the misapplications of evolutionary epistemology that continue to influence discourse. This analysis has identified representations of eugenicist language in both novels and shown how the novels parody that particular form of discursive residue and critique neoliberal narratives. This chapter has analyzed characters that represent race as inextricably tied to their class and gender, and indicated the ways that they serve the explanation that in Brazil, the only democracy is that of the class privileged who can afford to bribe politicians.

This analysis has shown that *Agosto* disproves Brazil's 'racial democracy' most vividly through the construction of Chicão's CI masculinity, and that the novel weakens neoliberal narratives in its representations of explicit violence and through the queering of Chicão and Lomagno's gender performance. The chapter indicated how Fuentes and Zakkai serve *A grande arte*'s parodying of hierarchies that correlate race phenotypes with

cognitive capacity, the notion of a 'racial democracy,' the civilized/savage dichotomy, the 'self-regulating' free market, and the 'self-made' man narratives. As for the 'white' murderers analyzed, this chapter showed that Lomagno and Lima Prado's privileged life histories, contrast with those of the non-white murderers, yet, it also identified the overlapping conditions by which they construct their neoliberal masculinities. Similarly, Miriam's discourse served *A grande arte's* critique of neoliberal myths, by its contrasting with the thought patterns and discourse of Fuentes.

There are many more characters whose gender performances work against Neoliberal ideology in both novels that merit further analysis. Chapter two continues to analyze *A grande arte*. It delves further into Lima Prado and takes a psychoanalytic perspective that focuses on representations of masculinities through Mandrake, Raul, Fuentes, Zakkai, other minor characters, and through the female characters' constructing gender and/or practicing their own version of masculinity.

## Chapter 2

### Masculinity Act: Castration and Violence in *A grande arte*

In this chapter I argue that *A grande arte*'s portrayals of characters in the unrealizable act of their masculinities indicate the text's intention to subvert the hegemonic gender discourse of the novel's socio-historical context, especially the neoliberal version of masculinity that is conditioned by indifference for human life and honored according to the accumulation of wealth and sexual conquests. Cornwall's daring and informative representations of hegemonic discourse on gender (from the introduction), speak to Lacan's "Other," that, "distinguishes itself as locus of Speech, imposes itself no less as witness to the Truth" *Écrits* 305, Sheridan).

The protagonist Mandrake, in his role as lawyer/detective, observes, and through his observations the text builds characters that demonstrate, to varying degrees, a desire to perform masculinity according to the mainstream representations of gender that Cornwall mentions. However, the texts portray them as unable to keep up the act, which indicates a rejection of hegemonic gender discourse. The first chapter touched on some of the thoughts, personal life and history, from the villain Thales Lima Prado. What still merits discussion is how the text uses him to queer the masculinity that he aims to completely embody: that of the elite soldier and the corporate boss, which, together, fulfill the archaic, early capitalist conditions of what I have labeled as the neoliberal masculinity.

Lima Prado can have anything that money can buy, but when his horse wins the Grande Prêmio Brasil, he lacks the relief he expected from such an honor, and he feels he is missing something: “Postado na Tribuna de Honra, perto do Presidente da República, de Ministros de Estado e outros personagens poderosos... Lima Prado sentia um enorme tédio. Sentia também algo que não conseguia definir...” (246).<sup>122</sup> His inability to accept this non-mastery, incompleteness, or his “refusing castration,”<sup>123</sup> eventually gives way to a realized death drive, which the text foreshadows through details about him, such as the phrases that appear most in his diaries: “man created death” and, “birth, copulation, and death” (175). His frustration from his incomplete, violent, misogynistic, yet, still socially honored version of masculinity, eventually turns into psychopathic perversion: “it is castration that governs desire.... Castration turns phantasy into that supple, yet inextensible chain by which the arrest of the object-investment ... takes on the transcendental function of ensuring the jouissance of the Other, ... which culminates in the supreme narcissism of the Lost Cause” (*Écrits* 323-4). Lima Prado’s obsession with a non-existent stamp of approval for his masculinity gets him and many others killed.

In order for Mandrake to accurately represent Lima Prado’s focalization and his refusal of castration, the text employs a metalanguage thematic, whereby a written history of the Lima Prado family, called *Retrato de Família* (‘Family Portrait’) finds its way into

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<sup>122</sup>“Sitting on the platform, in close proximity to the President, ministers of state , and other powerful figures, moments before his horse was to run the ‘greatest test of Latin American turf,’ Lima Prado felt enormously bored. He also felt something he couldn’t quite define, related to the fact that he was the incestuous child of the woman who howled in the cellar on São Clemente when he was a boy” (watson 286-87). [The horse’s name *Conselheiro* could be a reference to Lima Prado’s great grandfather, “o conselheiro Barros Lima” (51), or to da Cunha's Conselheiro, the leader of the Canudos revolt.

<sup>123</sup> I am referring to castration in the Lacanian sense of its, “being a symbolic act which bears on an imaginary object... it is only by accepting (or ‘assuming’) castration that the subject can reach a degree of psychic normality.... The different modalities of refusing castration find expression in the various forms of perversion” (Evans 22-23). From here on, I cite Sheridan’s translation (1977) of Lacan’s *Écrits* (1966).

Mandrake's hands and supplements his readings of Lima Prado's diary entries (174). These entries are color coded, so that blue ink indicates family topics, green refers to his military experience, and red, to his 'secret activities' (180). The categories imply Lima Prado's obsession with structure and symbols.

They also imply that the blue (family) diary entries indicated his unfulfilled demand for love, which, "can only suffer from a desire whose signifier is alien to it" (*Écrits* 289), and in his case, stems from his being raised in an aristocratic 'family' as the bastard child, who is ashamed about his "mother" and "father." Raised believing his 'mother' was an adulterer and that he is really the result of an affair between Luíza (who he thinks is his mother) and Bernard (her brother in law), Lima Prado has never been able to believe things are as they are represented. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in accordance with his name 'Thales,' the father of the scientific method, Lima Prado believes in science, and, especially with his imposition of biology onto Luiza's social behavior, he represents how science is treated as an absolute Truth in hegemonic discourse<sup>124</sup>.

Pelo menos não largara a família, como Bernard fizera ao saber que o dinheiro acabara. Mas é raro uma mulher fazer isso. Luíza, como todas as mulheres, fora condicionada a ficar com as suas crias. Continuar com o filho em vez de seguir o amante não significava, para Thales, nenhum sinal de abnegação e sacrifício, apenas um cacoete biológico.... E que diferença faz ser filho de a ou b? Ele

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<sup>124</sup>"Feminist scholars have introduced the word "gender" in English-language discussions precisely to indicate that our understanding of sexual differences, or the social and political roles taken to be appropriate to those differences, are not, as they have often been taken to be, obvious or based in simple ways on well-known differences of sexual physiology and anatomy" (Stepan 12).

considerava-se apenas o resultado da combinação de defeitos e virtudes ... através de cópulas provocadas pelo instinto de preservação da espécie (176).<sup>125</sup>

Lima Prado indicates he grew up believing, not only that he was a bastard and, therefore, a mere product of libido, but also that he considered Luíza's decision to care for him to be simply maternal instinct and therefore insincere. As his obsession with Hitler shows the influence of eugenicist discourse over Lima Prado, his thoughts also serve as an example of the residual effect of folk biology upon gender discourse, “that many of the things we think of as natural, ‘essential,’ or timeless facts of sexual difference are not the results of anatomy and physiology understood unproblematically and objectively...” (Stepan 12).

Their family's loss of fortune led to the green entries about his military education (and therefore no private school for the wealthy), which, Mandrake indicates, meant that he would not study literature, as he would have liked, and would instead be situated amongst a lower middle class peer group. Mandrake reveals bits and pieces of information about Lima Prado's military experience. During his time in the Brazilian Army he achieved at least the rank of major (230), and while a member of the Núcleo de Serviços Especiais ‘Special Forces Unit’ (NUSE), Lima Prado mastered the secrets of the martial art Percor (“perforar e cortar”) adopted for NUSE by its first commander, major Alberto Vilela Monteiro (94). Lima Prado then passed these on to Sergeant Hermes de Almeida (232), a man capable of withstanding any form of torture who now works for Lima Prado as his top assassin (184-5). Not only is his military experience still a crucial

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<sup>125</sup>“At least she had not abandoned her family, as Bernard had, upon learning that the money had run out. Of course, it's rare for a woman to do such a thing; like any woman, Luiza had been conditioned to stay with her young. The fact that she stayed with him instead of following her lover meant little to Thales; it represented neither self-denial nor sacrifice, but rather a biological reflex.... And what difference did it make if he were son of *a* or *b*? He considered himself the result of the combination of defects and virtues ... via couplings that were after all, only the result of the instinct to preserve the species” (Watson 198).



part of his personal and professional security, it is essential to his masculinity. Lima Prado keeps a hand-made knife designed by Roderick Caribou Chappel, a gift from Hermes, hidden under his shirt (204). It is the same knife he brings with him to his “appointment” with Mônica, a prostitute, who, at fifteen years of age, reminds him of his daughter.

Lima Prado’s disillusionment early in life and family turmoil, then, yield the red diary entries that speak to his refusing to accept his non-mastery of a masculinity that is unattainable and imagined, because what he demands (love, the signifier of the desire of his mother, or the signifier of the desire of hegemonic discourse) is imaginary. Lima Prado’s frustrated gender performance manifests in his sexual relations through perverted acts of gender violence, such as that of the novel’s opening scene that is cited here:

Não era uma ferramenta como as outras, ... mas usava-o para escrever a letra P no rosto de algumas mulheres.... Era uma perda de tempo especular por que determinadas coisas dão prazer. O P não tinha ressonâncias literárias... O fato de as mulheres serem prostitutas não tinha qualquer influência em sua resolução, ... por isso escolhia indivíduos que a sociedade considerava descartáveis.... O prazer que podia propiciar era mínimo.... Ele agarrou-a pelo pescoço e jogou-a de costas ao chão.... (13).<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>“It was a tool like no other ... but he used it to write the letter *P*, nothing more, to write the letter *P* on various women’s faces.... It was a waste of time to speculate why particular things give us pleasure. The *P* had no literary resonance.... That the women were prostitutes had no bearing whatsoever on his resolve ... for this reason he chose individuals society considered dispensable....The pleasure she could give was minimal, easy to find, imagine... He grabbed her by the neck and threw her to the ground...” (Watson 3).

This distorted act of violent perversion, “appears in relations of resistance without transference [of meaning]...., like a punctuation without a text” (*Écrits* 324). The nameless actor kills an unnamed woman (Cila is named in the following scene in Mandrake and Wexler’s office conversation with Gisela, but, like all of the slain prostitutes, she has two names, which plays into the thematic around symbols), and this unnamed actor carves a ‘P’ on the unnamed woman for an undetermined reason. The fragment’s lack of meaning establishes the thematic of the subject’s subjection to the signifier that bars him/her/it from meaning beyond that which hegemonic discourse permits, and it represents Lima Prado’s (the subject’s) “aim at being whole,” as well as “the castration complex,” understood as the subject’s lack of having or being “the phallus,” which, “is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos [reason] is joined with the advent of desire” *Écrits* 287).<sup>127</sup>

The second mystery around which the text builds the plot in *A grande arte*, is an unattainable, missing video cassette,<sup>128</sup> that, the story indicates, belongs to Lima Prado, and it also refers to an unreachable power. Not coincidentally, cassette is the Brazilian Portuguese slang term for ‘dick.’<sup>129</sup> The ‘P’ in the opening scene, then, represents the

<sup>127</sup>Forter’s comments about the opening of *The Glass Key* describe exactly what I am trying to say about the opening in *A grande arte*: “Language like this wreaks... epistemological havoc.... But what’s crucial... is the *withholding* character of a discourse that seems... so generously attentive to the minutiae of detail that it’s almost forced to operate in slow motion.... masking, beneath the strained attitude of its concentration, the informational dearth of its content. Where are we? When? Who’s there? Who’s speaking? (18).

<sup>128</sup>The arbitrariness of signs is a recurring theme: in the scene where Rafael and Camilo Fuentes burglarize Mandrake’s apartment, Rafael demands Mandrake tell him where the “filme” is, confusing him, while Fuentes, corrects him and says “o videocassette” (79).

<sup>129</sup>Forter’s interpretation of the falcon in Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon* says exactly what I am trying to say about the video cassette in *A grande arte*: “The novel dramatizes nothing so much as the impossibility of possessing the phallus and the democratic distribution of castration -of physical and psychic vulnerability. As long as the falcon “belongs” to no one, it succeeds in imparting the illusion that it can belong to someone and, accordingly, in articulating moral difference along the axis of sex: the good guys are the men and the manly (but not too manly) women; the bad guys are the women who act too much like

phallic mark of the Other's desire, or, the stamp of approval from hegemonic discourse. Therefore both phallic symbols represent a power and/or masculinity that is unobtainable, even for the owner and boss of the Aquiles conglomerate. As the narrator indicates, while the perpetrator carries out the act, he thinks to himself that his speculating over why it gives him pleasure, if in fact it will, is a waste of his time. The literary reference mentioned in the actor's thoughts, that the letter 'P' in the ancient Semitic alphabet signifies "mouth" (14), speaks to the actor's ignorance as to what is driving him to do this.<sup>130</sup> Finally, although Mandrake's non-chronological discussion of Lima Prado's diaries indicate that the perpetrator during the opening scene is Lima Prado, the text's ambiguity about this character's identity, and its third person narration of this scene, parodies society's veiled narcissism in the omniscience it attributes to hegemonic discourse as the witness of absolute Truth

Lima Prado will remain impune: "Não haveria impressões digitais, testemunhas, quaisquer indícios que o identificassem. Apenas sua caligrafia" (14), and therein lies the paradox. If there were a most hegemonic male in Lima Prado's society, he is it. As an overachieving adult male in his early fifties in perfect physical condition, who now sits atop class society with his wife, two kids, thoroughbreds, and a mansion with a heated pool, Lima Prado gives every indication that he embodies the 1980's neoliberal version of hegemonic masculinity.

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they "have it," along with the men who obviously don't. It's thus the transcendental inaccessibility of the falcon that facilitates socio-symbolic (albeit criminal) circulation in the novel, enabling its world to "work." Money and women can change hands, the plot can continue smoothly to unfold as a quest for an elusive object, and the falcon itself can be imagined as that which confers a fullness of being on its owner and meaning on the quest to obtain it" (236-37).

<sup>130</sup> This thought, Lima Prado's military background, and his anti-semitism arguably reference the stereotypical (but not necessarily accurate) characteristics of the Ação Integralista Brasileira (AIB) movement's "man," and, therefore, its influence in Brazilian hegemonic masculinity.

He has a lot for others to envy, and he is to be understood as the best at what he does. He is a top player in the business world, who implements effective leadership skills learned during his years of military service. Despite the tough economic times that began to hit Brazil in 1980, there is no reason to suspect that the success of his legitimate businesses are subsidized by profits from his activities within the international cocaine trade, which he manages with equal precision and success by his taking into account changes in foreign governments, arrests made abroad, and recent complications with the feds (216). He has created a financial empire with O sistema Financeiro Aquiles; its thirteen limited liability companies, and several other companies in which Aquiles has a minor interest (181).

However, despite all that he has (wealth, power, muscles, all the sex that money can buy), it is “worth no more than what he does not have, as far as his demand for love is concerned because that demand requires that he be the phallus” (*Écrits* 289). His criminal life is kept secret, as his underworld enemy José Zakkai points out: “Esse Lima Prado é bandido, mas se eu disser isso ninguém acredita. Seria o mesmo que afirmar que o Papa estuprou uma menina de oito anos” (241).<sup>131</sup> Zakkai’s comparison also describes the immunity neoliberalism enjoys in Western society, that is, one’s denouncing its crimes against humanity, especially during the 1980’s, resists hegemonic discourse and makes one a conspiracy theorist.

In his practice of masculinity, the text represents Lima Prado’s narcissism or, his longing, “to be loved for himself” (*Écrits* 288). He maintains a chiseled physique,

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<sup>131</sup>“The guy’s a gangster, but if I said so no one would believe it. It would be like saying the Pope raped an eight-year-old-girl” (Watson 280).

through discipline, restraint, exercise, and diet, “café sem azucar, bife grelhado ou pedaço de carne assada, com legumes cozidos e uma péra o maça.”<sup>132</sup> He admires himself in the mirror, “variando os ângulos do braço e ante braço;”<sup>133</sup> (209) and despite all that Lima Prado has or can flex in the mirror; he cannot swim (208-9). The scene with his private, secret swim coach, Romualdo, is a mockery of Lima Prado’s flawed mastery (208). In one of his parenthetical side notes, Mandrake says that the fact that Lima Prado cannot swim, has to represent something, but he just cannot be sure what (183), letting the reader determine the interpretation for this lack of meaning, indirectly referring to the recurring theme around signification and gender performance.

The more details Mandrake reveals about Lima Prado’s relationships with women, the more he represents a sense of lacking. His wife, named Dadá, looks like she is eighteen years old after plastic surgery, and she would make him complete by her/his inciting the envy of all the other men, “se não fosse a celulite naquela parte perigosa da coxa” (209).<sup>134</sup> Dadá does not quite live up to Lima Prado’s expectations for her matching the desire of hegemonic discourse: she has a poker addiction, knows nothing of bridge (much to his dismay), and only communicates with him because she has overdrawn her checking account (209-10).

The text represents Lima Prado’s frustration best in his encounters with Mônica, the prostitute who is too young to understand or care about even pretending to signify his being desired, no matter how rich and powerful he is. When Mônica visits his mansion in

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<sup>132</sup>“...grilled steak or piece of roast meat and steamed vegetables, with a pear or apple for desert” (Watson 206).

<sup>133</sup>“...varying the angle between upper arm and forearm” (Watson 241).

<sup>134</sup>“ if it weren’t for the cellulite in that dangerous thigh area...” (Watson 240).

Gávea (Lima Prado had been keeping her captive in a spare apartment), he finally tells her his name: “‘Como?’ perguntou Mônica, demonstrando desapontamento. O nome nada significava para ela. Ele repetiu o nome. ‘Você faz o quê?’ ‘Sou financista.’ Tanto misterio para nada, pensou ela” (291).<sup>135</sup> Despite all he has done to fulfill the requirements of his society’s version of hegemonic masculinity, he does not fulfill them for Mônica, the one prostitute who sweeps him off his feet, even to the point that he cannot bring himself to kill her. Ironically, it is immediately following her failure to recognize his name that he sends her home and kills himself (291). The name he had been giving her, “Ajax,” references one of neoliberalism’s more intrusive foreign impositions: the 1953 coup in Iran.

However, it is not her tender age or beauty that saves Mônica from the psychopath’s wrath. Ironically, she, whom he judges ignorant, enamours him with her words: “Mônica disse, então, uma frase que fez seu corpo tremer como num choque.... Desejou e teve medo que Mônica repetisse a frase... ‘Ai, vou encher o teu pau de merda,’ repetiu Mônica. O corpo dele tremeu de paixão e gozou com um prazer que nunca sentira antes” (207).<sup>136</sup> This sex scene shows Lima Prado’s vulnerability in the very moment he expects to control and dominate his victim in his effort to resist castration. Despite all of his symbolic hegemony, it is Mônica who has the power here; she is the one whose signs disrupt Lima Prado’s perception of reality. She is the comedor (‘the insertor’) that

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<sup>135</sup>“‘What?’ Said Mônica, visibly disappointed. The name meant nothing to her. He repeated it. ‘What do you do? ‘I’m a financier.’ ‘All that mystery for nothing, she thought” (Watson 340-41).

<sup>136</sup>“Suddenly Mônica said something that made his body shudder as if he’d felt an electrical shock.... Shivering with anxiety, he asked her to repeat it. ‘Ay, I’m going to cover your prick with shit,’ she said again. His body trembled with passion and he came with a pleasure he had never before experienced” (Watson 238).

Cornwall mentions, in the above exchange. His shock and, “*tulmutuosa exaltação,*” complete the novel’s mockery of his castration and failed mastery, but it is not finished neutering neoliberal masculinity.

Monteiro is an international arms dealer who supplies Lima Prado’s security/enforcement team. The trade that he represents carries on the Fonsequian critique of war, which is, arguably, neoliberalism’s most vital industry. Monteiro exposes the act of neoliberal heteronormative manliness even further, especially given that Mitry, Lima Prado’s cousin, deems Monteiro as the world’s best arms dealer and the winner of all wars (188). Monteiro’s effort to be, what Cornwall would call, an “*homem comedor ativo*” (‘dominant male stud’) is even more overtly mocked than Lima Prado’s scene with Mônica:

Monteiro sentiu seu pênis ficar rijo. Não havia tempo a perder; algumas vezes, anteriormente, ele não aproveitara o momento certo e o seu membro voltara a uma inibidora flacidez. Apressadamente, suando muito, Monteiro possuiu a passiva Titi. Quando gozou, saiu rapidamente de cima da garota, sentindo o alívio de quem acabara de cumprir uma obrigação. Deitado de costas, já dominado pelo tédio, Monteiro disse: ‘Amanhã vou acordar cedíssimo.’ Olhou os seus sapatos no chão. ‘Ouviram trompetes?’ (190-1).<sup>137</sup>

The passage is a clear joke on the stereotypically ‘masculine’ effort to fulfill certain conditions required of the heterosexual masculinity he desires to embody, and, therefore,

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<sup>137</sup>“Monteiro felt his penis stiffen. No time to lose; a couple of times in the past he had not taken advantage of the moment and his cock had gone back to its debilitating slackness. Hurriedly, sweating profusely, Monteiro pushed inside the passive Titi. After he came, he quickly climbed off, feeling relieved, like someone who has just fulfilled an obligation. Lying on his back, already bored, he said, ‘I have to get up real early tomorrow.’ He looked at his shoes on the floor. “Did you hear trumpets?” (Watson 218).

be a 'man,' but, unlike Lima Prado, the text does not represent his refusing castration. It just mocks neoliberal masculinity through him. The urgency of his pending flaccidity, compels Monteiro to act fast, because his chance to meet an important masculine condition could get away from him. For a moment he feels he has accomplished his mission: "sentindo o alívio de quem acabara de cumprir uma obrigação," yet once this initial sense of relief wears off, he looks for her to affirm his having met the minimum standard for the *homem comedor ativo* that mainstream discourse assumes that he, a great international arms dealer, would be. Hence the question: "Ouviu trompetes?" Her response, "Mais ou menos. Mas você foi uma maravilha, eu é que sou uma porcaria. Você não vai me dar uma lembrança?" (191),<sup>138</sup> of course, does not provide the confirmation he seeks. Instead, it points to the only reason she is there with him in the first place: his money and, therefore, never expected to 'hear any trumpets,' with Monteiro. Her stroking his ego and saying that he was marvelous, would be more likely to add to his self doubt, and, given the way he went about things, "apressadamente, suando muito," she would rather call herself "uma porcaria," than give him the satisfaction of his thinking that he satisfied her sexually. Monteiro strikes out on all of the conditions of Cornwall's mainstream masculinity, and he fails to perform the financial requirement of the neoliberal masculinity: "'Você tem caneta?' perguntou Monteiro. 'Não. Sabe de uma coisa? Deixa para lá, esquece.'" <sup>139</sup> He asks for a pen, either because he wants to write her a check, or because he thinks she wants to exchange phone

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<sup>138</sup>"More or less. I mean you were terrific, obviously it's *my* problem. Aren't you going to give me something to remember you by?" (Watson 218)

<sup>139</sup>"Monteiro put his shoes on and, still nude, asked, "Have a pen?" ... "No. But you know what? Never mind, forget it" (Watson 218).



numbers, but either way, he fails to tip the sex worker. Instead of his meeting the standards for ‘man’ or *homem ativo comedor*, Monteiro, the ‘winner of all wars,’ represents a ‘complete dud.’

By contrast, Mandrake’s friend and homicide detective Raul represents a more innovative masculinity, because his performance does not aspire to represent the hegemonic version. Amidst the seemingly masculine, yet, certainly homosocial context of Mandrake and Raul’s enjoying beers at their favorite bar, Amarelinho, their conversation points to the gap between reality and the conditions of conventional masculinity. Without any indication in the dialogue as to who is talking, eventually the free, indirect discourse indicates that Raul is telling Mandrake about his struggling relationship with his wife Ligia. The lack of cues as to context and speaker are some examples of Fonseca’s experimental style, perhaps with the intent of implying that anyone anywhere could be making Raul’s comments. Here they are interpreted through the eyes and ears of the narrator Mandrake:

‘Ela me disse que não podia viver sozinha. O que é que você vai me dar? Não coisa material, entende, quero amor, afeto, companhia - ela me disse. Eu estava disposto a dar ela todo o afeto do mundo.... Queria um homem disponível. Disponível era receber suas ordens, assinar cheques, desligar as luzes, pagar imposto predial, verificar a fechadura antes de dormir ...’ (31).<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>“She told me she couldn’t live alone. What do you have to offer me? Not material things, understand. What I want is love, she said, friendship, company. Well I was willing to offer her all the friendship in the world.... She was just out to find a willing man - willing to take orders, sign checks, turn the lights off, pay real estate taxes, check to see the doors are locked before bed... (23).

Overall, this fragment indicates Raul's accepting his castration and openly admitting to his inability to perform hegemonic masculinity, and it portrays Ligia's agency (about which he is complaining) in his failure. First, Raul is not interested in appearing to represent the phallus or anyone's, "capable protector." Ligia initially gave Raul the impression that she looked for him to fill the role of emotional (not material) provider, and Raul agreed. The conventional gender roles of agency switched, as Raul admits, because she ordered him around as if he were her domestic servant.

There is, of course, nothing abnormal about Raul's portrayed subjectivity, and it is probably a closer representation of reality. Police officers in Brazil do not command much of a salary, and neither do a large portion of males,<sup>141</sup> so Raul or the average Brazilian's being the only source of income for his household, even without children, would not be worth the symbolic status for him or her.

Another non hegemonic norm that Raul also freely admits is his lack of virility: "Para falar a verdade acho que estou ficando broxa" (31).<sup>142</sup> He defines his position as a man who is not deluded by thinking he can practice the mainstream version of 'man,' and therefore, he accepts his castration.

Raul further develops this more innovative version of masculinity in the flashback to college, when he and Mandrake observe the autopsy. Raul knows far more than expected, just from his looking at the cadaver, but not only does the young Raul have the

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<sup>141</sup> Military police salaries were in the range of \$150-200\$/month in 1999 (Huggins 125); based on the Brazilian 'real' (3.5 - 4 'reais' has bought 1 U.S. dollar during the first half of 2016) the average hourly wage in 1981 was the equivalent of 2.96 reais in 1981 compared with 2.81 reais in 1998, which is well under one dollar per hour (Dickerson and Green

1926).

<sup>142</sup>"To tell you the truth, I'm not even sure I could get it up anymore," said Raul (Watson 24).

human anatomy memorized, he diagnoses the victim's mysterious injuries and hypothesizes about possible other ones, based on factors, such as the victim's age (33-34). This scene is as impressive as when he shows off his knowledge of the history of criminal punishment from the time of Sophocles up to the twentieth century (97-98). Both scenes indicate the text's intention to represent his erudite, socially conscious conditions for masculinity.

In regards to such erudition, Mandrake's comment, "Raul, por ser tira, uma profissão de pouco prestígio, gostava de exibir cultura" (98),<sup>143</sup> seems laden with envy that stems from Raul's knowing a history that Mandrake, who specializes in defending criminals, should also know. In fact, Raul's being as or more knowledgeable and honest than Mandrake, is part of a recurring theme that persists in Fonseca's narrative that disrupts international criticism of undeniable Brazilian police corruption and brutality:<sup>144</sup> important police characters (Raul, Mattos, and Guedes) are all more knowledgeable and more honest than the lawyers and wealthy men with whom they interact. Yet, the text portrays the lawyers and the upper class's imagining themselves in a superior place on the hierarchy of masculinities than the police. Mandrake signals towards this hierarchy, which he apparently buys into, when he labels his best friend's job a "profissão de pouco prestígio." The cops' imagined lower position on the hierarchy of masculinities, still functions on behalf of the texts' promoting these cops' honest, erudite masculinities,

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<sup>143</sup>Since he was a cop- a low prestige profession- Raul liked to show off his intellect (Watson 104).

<sup>144</sup> "In 1992, in the greater metropolitan area of São Paulo, police killed 1,470 civilians.... In Rio,, 430 citizens killed by police in 1998 -almost 38 murders a month. Since Rio's population is less than half the size of São Paulo's, Rio's rate of police deadly force was at least twice São Paulo's (Huggins 116). Glennly speaks with former Brazilian police chief and documents corruption in *McMafia* (276-279).

because Raul, Guedes, and Mattos draw strength from their not being slaves to hegemonic discourse, capitalism, and corruption.

Raul applies his erudition and social consciousness to gender relations, or, in the Lacanian sense of sexual identity, he accepts castration. He and Lygia (her name is spelled with a 'y' at the end, coinciding with the recurring theme of the arbitrariness of signs), end up resolving their differences and stay together (295). Ironically, what makes such an implausible character (an honest, erudite, socially conscious cop in Rio) convincing, is Raul's accepting castration that the text portrays through his openly admitting his inability to practice hegemonic masculinity. However, Raul is also convincing because he fails to escape dominant discourse with respect to homosexuality, which is a topic that Raul, Mandrake, and Wexler discuss after Raul visits Zakkai's nightclub, called Lesbos, where he spots Rosa (who is the wife of Senator Leitão, the mother of Babel, and the murderer of the prostitute Cila), dancing with another woman (60-61). However, as opposed to Wexler's blind, old fashioned, heteronormative disapproval, Raul is fascinated with what he sees at Lesbos: "É decorada em tons suaves e beges e amarelo e as pessoas dançam abraçadas umas com as outras, como antigamente, e se beijam na boca ao som de adágios barrocos. Confesso que achei bonito" (61).<sup>145</sup> His saying that he confesses, as if it were a sin, to have found what he saw to be nice, parodies how one's approving of homosexuality is not a condition of hegemonic masculinity.

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<sup>145</sup>"But getting back to Lesbos- I've got to take you up there. You'd expect it to be red brocade, compete with mirrors, revolving spotlights, and strobes, right? Not even close. The place is down right suave- all beige and yellow with people slow-dancing, like in the old days, soul-kissing to baroque adagios. I've got to admit, it was kind of nice" (Watson 59).

On the one hand, that the upper class lesbians of Rio have their very own, socially accepted nightclub, a place that queers the class privileged, neoliberal ideology that they represent, shows a change in social attitudes about gender relations in favor of the queer resistance. On the other hand, these lesbians' maintaining their roles as wives and mothers once they leave Lesbos, as would be the case for Rosa, either indicates that the gay/straight binary is obsolete or that this change in attitude towards gender relations is negligible. Regardless, the expression of liberation in Lesbos excites Raul to the point that he feels obligated to comment, and in doing so, represents an evolving, yet still ignorant hegemonic discourse: "Dizem que as lésbicas são ótimas mulheres;" and he makes fun of Mandrake's 'ginecomania,' perhaps sarcastically implying his awareness that Mandrake's philandering hides his 'not-gay' anxiety: "Você, que já comeu cinco mil mulheres, podia me esclarecer se isso é verdade" (62).<sup>146</sup> In not responding with an answer, but instead by asking whether there were any men there, Mandrake indirectly acknowledges the repressed homosexuality to which Raul's joke refers. Overall, Raul serves to promote newer, more realistic, peaceful, innovative, and socially conscious conditions for masculinity.

The young, class privileged Bebel disrupts the passive and subjective conditions of agency that are represented as valued in mainstream gender discourse for women in Brazil: "Despite Brazil's libidinous image, purity and innocence still appear to be valued in women of all social classes... (Cornwall 119). She represents a young, very sexually active female, and as if she were the comedora, she seduces Mandrake, who is more than

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<sup>146</sup>They say lesbians are terrific, you know. Come to think of it, you're the one who's had five thousand women, you should be able to set me straight on that (Watson 59).

twice her age. Her defiance of the symbolic order is reflected in the text's representations of her death drive, through her chain smoking, eating fast food, and through her discourse: "Não quero passar dos trinta anos. Os velhos são horríveis. Quero morrer moça" (66).<sup>147</sup> Yet she also represents a divided aristocratic subjectivity in conservative Catholic society.<sup>148</sup>

Bebel's discourse repeats conditions of hegemonic masculinity, which is noticeable in her narration about how she was hit by a car while biking: "Eu estava com as pernas de fora mas ele não olhava as minhas pernas ou o meu bumbum como os homens fazem..." (67).<sup>149</sup> On the one hand, she has no desire to ever get married, and on the other, the reason for her not doing so represents a belief that the objective of all men in a relationship is to control the woman (76), which, though it repeats the hegemonic condition, also denounces that controlling, active, male role, as well as the passive, subjected female role. The example she offers, about her friend from their Swiss boarding school, adds significantly to this denouncement: "Outro dia encontrei com essa garota, já casada. Perguntei a ela, que tal a vida de casada e ela respondeu, masturbação no banheiro suíço era melhor" (76).<sup>150</sup> Her next question indicates her opposition to gender conventions imposed on women by the symbolic order: "quem mandou ela se casar?"

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<sup>147</sup>"I don't want to live past thirty. Old people are awful, I want to die young" (Watson 65).

<sup>148</sup>For more information on the catholic/privileged class interests behind the implementation of the dictatorship, see the collection of essays compiled by Milton Pinheiro in *Ditadura: o que resta da transição* (2014). For example, in "A Natureza de classe do Estado brasileiro," by João Quartim de Moraes, there is a quotation from the Catholic bishops Castro Meyer and Proença Sigaud addressing the rural populations saying that catholics cannot receive reappropriated land without offending their christian morality (72).

<sup>149</sup>"I had shorts on, but he wasn't looking at my legs or my bum, you know, like men do..." (Watson 66).

<sup>150</sup>"The other day I ran into her, she's married already. I asked her how she liked married life and she said masturbating in a swiss bathroom was better" (Watson 78).

(76),<sup>151</sup> and although meant to be rhetorical, the answer lies in the friend's allegiance to hegemonic discourse/the symbolic order, which Bebel has her reasons for renouncing: "Todas as minhas amigas que se casaram separaram-se dentro de um período de seis a doze meses" (76).<sup>152</sup> However, with respect to her mother Rosa, her discourse is more confined to the symbolic order of Catholic, aristocratic background.

Bebel indicates a resentment towards her mother's lesbianism: "Encontrei as cartas que aquela mulher escrevia para ela. Rasgei tudo e joguei no lixo" (65).<sup>153</sup> Her ripping up the letters and repeatedly referring to Cila as "aquela mulher," reflects a socially unsanctioned homophobia. She reflects her being socially programmed in Reproductive Futurism, because she still wants her mother to represent the conditions of 'woman' that she had previously signified for her: "A mamãe não é a pessoa que finge ser" (65).<sup>154</sup> Still, despite the influence of her upbringing, Bebel, like her mother, rebels against conventions. She continues to have a sexual relationship with Mandrake, despite her knowledge of his being involved in serious relationships with Ada and Lilibeth (295).<sup>155</sup>

Rosa Leitão represents the notion that a person is who she pretends to be whether she is performing her role as Bebel's mother and wife of Senator Gonzago Leitão (61), or

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<sup>151</sup>"But then no one made her get married, right?" (Watson 78).

<sup>152</sup>"All my friends who've married have separated within a period of six months to twelve" (Watson 78).

<sup>153</sup>"I found the letters that woman wrote her. I tore them up and threw them in the garbage" (Watson 64).

<sup>154</sup>"She's not the person she pretends to be. Hiding from Daddy, from me" (Watson 64).

<sup>155</sup>Not only does she put up with Mandrake's philandering up to the last page of *A grande arte*, She is still with him in *Mandrake a biblia e a bengala* (2005).

emphasizing her performance of hegemonic femininity by tanning and going to beauty parlor appointments (73), or being a lesbian and dancing at Lesbos, or when committing the act of murder. Due to her ability to toe the line between her practicing Reproductive Futurism, lesbianism, and committing murder, Rosa could be the novel's most subversive character. As it turns out, the apple doesn't fall very far from the tree. As with her mother's queering the conventions expected from an aristocratic wife, Bebel defies Reproductive Futurism, and seeks pleasure beyond the dirty words that excite Mandrake (71). She points to important weaknesses in conventional gender practices like unhappy, obligatory marriage and passive subjectivity, but she also serves to show that, an independence from patriarchal gender relations, is still subject to other oppressive elements in their society's hegemonic discourse, such as its intolerance of alternative sexual orientations.

Of all the characters in *A grande arte*, it is Fuentes who best represents one's changing the conditions in his construction of masculinity, and the two women that the text uses to represent his differing versions of masculinity are Zélia and Miriam. As for Zélia, she confirms Chiappani's conclusion that all women in Fonseca's narrative are sex objects (58). Zélia serves the text's portrayal, early on in the story, of Fuentes as the sexually limitless indigenous savage, which accentuates the racial dichotomy, which, as seen in chapter one, he later subverts. She also serves the text's portrayal of Fuentes's earlier adherence to hegemonic discourse and masculinity. Both of these representations are evident in his contemplating about Zelia's possibly being an undercover agent:

Zeila é muito estúpida para ser perigosa, pensou Camilo enquanto mandava que ela ficasse de quatro no chão do cabine. Em seguida começou a possuí-la como se



faz com uma cadela, chamando-a de puta brasileira, espancando-a e fazendo-a gemer e pedir mais.... Verificou embevecido que o seu pênis endurecia atingindo enormes proporções. Ele era um homem, pensou com orgulho, deitando-se sobre a mulher, penetrando-a com violência; ia fazer aquela cadela gozar mil vezes.... ele era um índio puro, capaz de foder qualquer mulher horas seguidas (106).<sup>156</sup>

The conditions of Fuentes's initial masculinity stand out in this scene: violent, misogynistic, savage. The infliction of pain onto his partner coincides with Lima Prado's perversions that result from his refusing castration. The coincidence indicates the acquiescence and adaptation by marginalized masculinities lower in the social hierarchy, of the oppressive hegemonic conditions for masculinity. Zélia's role in Fuentes's performance is paramount. She not only accepts her being subjected to gender violence, she pretends that she enjoys it and accentuates it: "Fingiu que gozava mais uma vez, sentindo um prazer diferente, de satisfazer e servir ao homem" (106).<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, she worries she may have somehow failed in performing her role: "ao ver o rosto carrancudo de Fuentes, perguntou se ele não estava feliz, se havia feito uma coisa errada," and then finally, she indicates her being satisfied with herself for her role in constructing Fuentes's

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<sup>156</sup>Zélia's too dumb to be dangerous, thought Camilo, ordering her down on the floor on all fours. Then he entered her form behind like a dog, calling her Brazilian bitch, spanking her and making her wail and beg for more.... He squatted over her outstretched body and watched, admiring his cock rapidly stiffened and swelled to enormous proportions. A real man, he thought proudly, perched on top of her, penetrating her violently; he'd make that slut come a thousand times.... He was pure Indian, capable of fucking any woman for hours on end" (Watson 113).

<sup>157</sup>"Zélia pretended to come once more, this time experiencing a different kind of pleasure, that of satisfying and attending to the man" (Watson 113).

violent masculinity, proudly showing off the bruises from their encounter left on her arms while he treats her as if he were her pimp (107).<sup>158</sup>

Next, the text adds to his background, in order to explain the social historical context that surrounds Fuentes's propensity for violence:

Camilo Fuentes acreditava firmemente que, para sobreviver no mundo hostil em que vivia, era preciso estar preparado para matar. Seu pai foi morto na fronteira porque vacilara ao enfrentar o seu assassino. Camilo tinha sete anos quando isso aconteceu, mas o seu tio Miguel lhe contara tudo: o homem que matara o seu pai era brasileiro, como eram usurpadores de larga parte do território boliviano... há séculos roubava as riquezas naturais do seu país. Camilo, na infância e na adolescência, sofrera a arrogância dos seus vizinhos ricos do outro lado da fronteira, aos quais prestava pequenos serviços humilhantes em troca de pagamento miserável. Por esse e outros motivos oscuros, odiava brasileiros (105).<sup>159</sup>

This brief life history describes a hate filled Bolivian immigrant who can rationalize killing Brazilians without hesitation because first of all, his father lost his life hesitating to confront the Brazilian who killed him; secondly, Brazilians stole his country's natural resources; and lastly, because Brazilians (like Rafael) are racists who have humiliated

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<sup>158</sup> "... noticing the scowl on Fuentes' face, she asked wasn't he happy, had she done something wrong?" (Watson 114).

<sup>159</sup> Camilo Fuentes believed firmly that to survive the hostile world he lived in it was necessary to be ready to kill. His father had died on the frontier; faced with an enemy, he had hesitated. Camilo was only seven years old at the time, but his Uncle Miguel later told him all about it. The man who killed his father was Brazilian, as were the usurpers of a large part of Brazilian territory... who... had been plundering the natural wealth of Bolivia for centuries. Living in a border town, Camilo had grown up enduring the arrogance of the rich neighbors on the other side of the frontier for whom he performed humiliating tasks in exchange for paltry wages. For these and other, more obscure, reasons, he hated Brazilians" (Watson 112).

him his whole life. It is crucial to the sympathy he earns and gives reason more reason as to why he kills.

The text represents new conditions for his masculinity with more frequency after he meets Miriam, which it portrays in his perception of her and through the degree to which it differs from his perception of Zeila in the earlier scene: “Pela maneira de caminhar percebia-se que ela se acreditava bonita e atraente. Seu corpo maduro era agradável e o rosto... exibia uma sensualidade satisfeita e digna...” (138).<sup>160</sup> This access to Fuentes’s mind reveals how he appreciates Miriam’s self-confidence and finds it attractive. This is a far cry from the portrayal of his voracious relations with Zeila, when he was turned on by her submissiveness. As crucial of a role as Zeila’s carrying out his ruthless warrior masculine performance, Miriam’s role is indispensable in this kinder, gentler masculine gender performance. In the supermarket scene, the focalization switches from Fuentes’s to Miriam’s, indicated by the narration’s representation of her thoughts and feelings:

Ela não tinha mais ilusões românticas, já tivera sua quota de homens daquele tipo e seu coração não batia alvissareiro, como quando era menina, mas era sempre delectável e animador sentir o interesse de um homem... Inconscientemente passou a posicionar o seu corpo com mais cuidado; elevou os ombros, retraindo a barriga ressaltando o busto, o queixo foi salientado para fazer desaparecer a pequena papada, mal de família, que corrompia seu perfil. Os olhares do homem e

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<sup>160</sup>... her stride said that she knew she was pretty. The woman had a mature and pleasing body...there was a certain satisfied, dignified sensuality about her” (Watson 154).

da mulher se encontraram... Sentiram a euforia que ocorre no início de um relacionamento com presunções eróticas identificadas reciprocamente (139).<sup>161</sup>

This representation of gender performance, speaks to the human condition through her involuntarily changing her posture in reaction to Fuentes’s gaze, and through their euphoria in reaction to their eyes meeting. But, the fragment also indicates Miriam’s cognitive dissonance. Her life experience has taught her to disregard nonsense, such as love, or illusions of romance, “não tinha mais ilusões românticas,” but this pragmatism competes with the gender performance she puts on before the male gaze, and the text indicates that the latter is stronger. Therefore her femininity, or, her preconditioned maintenance of Fuentes’s masculinity, is to be understood as more deeply ingrained within her psyche than the cognitive dissonance: her body language responds “inconscientemente.” The passage also describes in a positive (albeit heteronormative) light the collaboration of their gender performances. His appreciative gaze triggers more of her attractive self-confidence, which her self-consciousness then attenuates, as she thinks to hide her “pequena papada” ‘slight double chin.’ Nonetheless, this, arguably, is a love scene, so the text represents their reciprocated attraction that negates her anxiety.

Fuentes’s thoughts still represent the ambiguity of his misled gender discourse. For example, in a heroic performance against sexism, Fuentes anticipates his hotel receptionist turning Miriam away in order to maintain the hotel’s policy against

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<sup>161</sup>She no longer had romantic illusions, having already gone through her quota of men of this sort; her heart no longer pounded madly, as it had when she was younger. But it was always wonderful and energizing to feel a man’s interest, especially a man with the brute grace of the robust and unabashed. Unconsciously, she began to hold her body more carefully; her shoulders straightened, her stomach flattened (making her bust more prominent), her chin jutted forward to minimize the slight jowliness, a family weakness, that spoiled her profile. Their eyes met.... They were experiencing the euphoria that marks the beginning of a relationship sparked by reciprocal erotic overtones” (Watson 155).

prostitution, so he uses his size and intimidation to convince the receptionist that she is to be given no problems of any kind upon arrival: “Esse regulamento é ilegal. Ela vai subir sem ser incomodada. Entendeu o que eu disse?” (140).<sup>162</sup> However, despite this thoughtful gesture, once Miriam arrives at his room, Fuentes’s thoughts revert back to a misogynist hegemonic discourse: “Usava um vestido vermelho ... e sapatos de salto alto. Seu rosto estava pintado. Agora parece uma puta, pensou Fuentes com desgosto” (140),<sup>163</sup> which makes him, perhaps, less likeable, but perhaps a bit more convincing.<sup>164</sup>

Most important for Fuentes’s eventually representing a transformed version of masculinity, is that he shows more objective thinking that corresponds with his being the loving, tolerant, class struggle hero of the novel: “Acreditava que a maioria das prostitutas eram pessoas responsáveis,”<sup>165</sup> which is a representation that considers that many capable people are forced into prostitution by conditions or that there are some who choose to participate in the industry safely. Also, he becomes the novel’s conduit for HIV/AIDS education, which is exceptionally advanced for 1983: “podia acontecer, porém, que ela estivesse na fase inicial da contaminação, antes de sentir os sintomas que a alertassem” (141).<sup>166</sup> His dated and archaic reference to the virus’s symptoms as

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<sup>162</sup>“Look buddy... this regulation of yours is illegal. She’s coming upstairs and no one’s going to bother her, you got that?” (Watson 156).

<sup>163</sup>She was wearing a red dress... and high-heeled sandals. And makeup. Now you look like a whore, thought Fuentes, disappointed” (Watson 156).

<sup>164</sup> I also interpret this thought to represent two hegemonic gender misunderstandings: first, that women wear dresses, high heels, and makeup, in order to look attractive just for their male partners, when really, the indumentary probably has more to do with being prepared to be seen and found attractive by many people, especially other women; and the second misunderstanding that, perhaps the text intends for his thoughts to represent, is that men find makeup attractive.

<sup>165</sup>“He believed the majority of prostitutes were responsible people...” (Watson 157).

<sup>166</sup>“...but there was still the chance they were in the initial phase, without symptoms” (Watson 157).

‘contamination,’ however, takes his discourse back towards the hegemonic and away from social consciousness. Without these reversions, his transformation would not be at all convincing and neither would his relationship with Miriam.

This pattern of Fuentes breaking out of society’s dominant discourse and then getting sucked back into it mirrors the ebb and flow in the plausibility of their relationship: every questionable indication that they will be able to live ‘happily ever after’ is followed by a sufficient dose of reality: “Viviam como pessoas em férias longe de casa e Miriam sabia que isso não poderia durar muito...” (143).<sup>167</sup> Miriam would not be at all surprised if she never hears from Camilo again. Nevertheless, he wants to hurry back home as soon as he can, in order to be close to Miriam. This Fuentes is quite different from the hypermasculine, drug smuggling, professional assassin, warrior/sex machine that Mandrake was chasing to the Bolivian border. In the end, when Fuentes rejects Zakkai’s invitation to be allies, showing no interest in the dwarf’s fight against the ruling class that has repressed them, Fuentes’s attitude shows the childishness in Zakkai’s ideology of dominance, which is the ideology of their oppressors, and Fuentes even equates Zakkai’s behavior with the clown disguise that he wore when the two met at the circus: “Ele havia desistido de entender as palavras de Zakkai, ‘Um homem que curtia brincar de palhaço’” (275). Around the same point in the story, Mandrake’s narration makes the following conclusion about Fuentes: “Depois de terminar o seu contrato com Zakkai, ele mudaria de vida -sem duvida influenciado por Miriam” (275). It is not clear

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<sup>167</sup>“They were living like people on vacation, far from home, and Miriam knew it couldn’t last forever” (Watson 158.)

whether these are Mandrake's or Zakkai's thoughts about Fuentes, but the recurring theme in Fonseca's narrative of a woman's making the man who he is, resurfaces there.

Women characters are certainly intrinsic to the construction of Mandrake. He desperately wants the reader to know that he likes women. He narrates about his quiet, sexually repressed, Catholic School upbringing, in order to contrast it with his philandering adulthood, in which, at times, he has maintained "alternadamente, a cópula fornicatória com oito mulheres" (63).<sup>168</sup> He portrays himself as the enchanting object of all the ladies' affection: "Ficava quieto e as mulheres me provocavam.... Que diabo, eu tinha uma aparência tão disponível assim?" (38), yet he pretends that, because of this, he was dealt an unfair hand: "Depois Ligia [Raul's wife] descobriu que me amava, ou continuava me amando. Oh vida" (34).<sup>169</sup> His narration about when he initially seduced Ada after aerobics class, serves to construct his erudition and mockery of a masculinity that aspires to be irresistible to women: Esperei a aula acabar e ela sair. Abordei-a na rua. 'Estava vendo você fazer ginástica. Parecia um cavalo num quadro de Ucello', eu disse. 'Eu sei quem é Ucello,' ela disse.... Ela não falava com estranhos, mas o meu rosto inspirava confiança a todas as mulheres do mundo (19).<sup>170</sup> The text also mocks Mandrake's aspiring to irresistibility when he shares that Raul's wife has been in love

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<sup>168</sup> "...when I was copulating, alternately, with eight different women" (62).

<sup>169</sup> "I keep my mouth shut and women provoke me.... Damn, did I come off that available?" (Watson 32). "Later still, Ligia discovers that she loved me, or that she was still in love with me. Ah, life." (Watson 27).

<sup>170</sup> "I waited for the class to be over and for her to come out. Approached her on the street. 'I was watching you exercise. You look like a horse in a canvas by Ucello,' I said. 'I know Ucello,' she said.... She wasn't in the habit of talking with strangers, but my face inspired confidence in all the women of the world." (Watson 10). His associating Ada with a horse is part of an equestrian thematic seen here and there throughout the novel (Berta Bronstein looks like a Yiddish quarter horse (49); *Conselheiro* wins the race with a sixteen year old rookie jockey).

with him since they were in college (34). His anxious heterosexuality could be interpreted as masochism,<sup>171</sup> as a parody of a fearfully repressed homosexuality (as Da Silva suggests (88)), or as a critique of a double standard about promiscuity and gender. Given the castration thematic, Mandrake's gender performance could also be interpreted as an eternally insufficient effort to fulfill the desires of the Other, especially with respect to the always impossible signification of 'fully male.' The myriad interpretations suggest Mandrake serves for the reader to consider all these possibilities.

I interpret him as a representation as queering masculinity and a resistance to the symbolic order in general. On the surface his gender practice coincides with conventional norms because he is heterosexual, but that is the extent of his conventionality. First, he refuses to marry. Mandrake compares Ada's wish to marry him, to the parasitic relationship between the male angler fish (Lusitanian toadfish) and the female (25). The image allegorizes Mandrake's fear of commitment with the fear of becoming a creature that loses everything about itself except its ability to reproduce. In making this comparison, Mandrake mocks the institution of marriage and abjures Reproductive Futurism, which queers him and all other masculinities that are conditioned by fears of commitment and anxiously 'not-gay.' He trivializes the mundane life that his society's Reproductive Futurism would have him live: "É uma boa ideia, deixar de beber, deixar de fumar, almoçar com a família aos domingos, ser enterrado com a bandeira do clube. Ver

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<sup>171</sup>I am referring to Forter's reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in his chapter "Hardboiled Masochism" where he relies on Bersani's theory equating sexuality with masochism and considers the detective's tendency to repeatedly expose himself to getting hurt as a "compulsive submission to unpleasurable tension," that is "sexual enjoyment itself" (16). Mandrake's heterosexual masochism comes to a head in the later novel *Mandrake a biblia e a bengala* (2005), when acting the part of a womanizing detective puts him in the hospital with near fatal wounds for a second time (*A grande arte* is the first). It is as if Fonseca read Forter's chapter before writing Mandrake into another novel.



televisão” (32).<sup>172</sup> If he were to marry Ada and allow for these conditions to determine his masculinity, he would cease to be Mandrake.

The text represents its queering of Mandrake’s masculinity through his quest for *jouissance* and the inherent transgression towards beyond the symbolic.<sup>173</sup> When Mandrake describes his first sexual experience with Ada, his reactions to what he senses, locate his desire beyond the conventional signs established for masculine fantasy, indicating he finds *jouissance* in a queer space beyond some external imposition of what he is supposed to consider sexually stimulating or ‘feminine’: “Eu aspirara o odor da pele dela, sentindo o calor do corpo sólido e musculoso entre meus braços. Contra minha vontade uma enorme emoção me dominara” (26). Ada’s solid muscular odorous body is what turned Mandrake on. Therefore, Mandrake’s narration indicates that androgyny is what arouses him, which is incongruent with, “the inherent desirability of the sensuous woman.” that is supposed to bring about his “irrepressible [macho] desire” (Cornwall 119). Finally, by his saying, “Do nariz de Ada dois pêlos saíam como insetos vivos” (26), the text mocks the mainstream Hollywood masculine sexual encounter fantasy, which promotes Butler’s “different sort of repeating,” through Mandrake’s representations of gender performance.

Ada, whose allegiance to the symbolic (before her meeting Mandrake, of course) is portrayed as having stifled her sexuality to the point of “genital oblivity” (*Écrits* 287),

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<sup>172</sup>“That’s a good idea- quit drinking, quit smoking, eat Sunday dinner with the family, be buried with the club flag wrapped around your coffin. Watch lots of television” (24).

<sup>173</sup>I mean *jouissance* in Lacanian sense of that which transgresses, “the prohibition imposed upon [the subject’s] enjoyment ... ‘beyond the pleasure principle’” (Evans 91-2) “Its prohibition is inherent in the symbolic structure of language” (Evans 92) It is “the imaginary object of phantasy... Castration means that *jouissance* must be refused...” (*Écrits* 319-20, 324).

Ada (who was a virgin) feels incomplete now because of Mandrake's nonchalant attitude about their union-without-compromise (25). Mandrake speaks of feeling Ada's narcissism as he watches her walk across the room (26). Their dialogue's referencing orgasm refers to the point where his quest towards jouissance begins, and Mandrake revisits the death drive thematic in the next scene by mentioning the author Alphonse/Sacher, while he and Wexler contemplate the sadomasochism of their suspect/client (Mitry), who, according to Gisela (the prostitute seeking protection from Mitry and those who want the missing video cassette), brought a whip, black mask, and chains to their encounter (29).<sup>174</sup> Lastly, Ada worries Mandrake may suffer from a pathological syndrome; that his attitude towards sex is a symptom of his death drive, and Mandrake does not deny this possibility.

Mandrake's trip to the mall in search of Cila/Laura Lins is the first scene that really throws off kilter the secure, womanizing facade that he has tried to maintain up to this point, which leads towards the identity crisis he represents at the end: "Enquanto conversava com a moça, tinha a sensação de que havia alguma coisa importante que não conseguia identificar, [...], algo despertado pela relação mitológica Cila-Messina" (46).<sup>175</sup> He represents feeling perturbed by this unidentifiable signifier, as if he or something about him (his masculinity), were incomplete. Suddenly, Elizabeth, the cat for whom he has always had unlimited affection, aggravates him, and he begins to wonder if the grass is perhaps greener on the side of obedience to the currently established symbolic

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<sup>174</sup> Wexler's mentioning of Giles de Reis in a black mask (29), provides the image of a queer extremist: a historically infamous baby killer and arch enemy of the Child, the image of Reproductive Futurism.

<sup>175</sup> "While I was talking with the sales girl I had the sensation that something important was escaping me, something I couldn't put my finger on. Cila. Messina. There was something there" (Watson 41).

order: “senti saudades de companhia feminina permanente” (46). He portrays a vicious cycle, when he deals with this lacking by seeking fulfillment through women, such as when he seduces Lilibeth and contemplates the word ‘saciedade’: “uma palavra muito usada pelos advogados velhos — está provado à saciedade, saciar-se, não querer mais. Mas eu queria. Por isso estava ali, na casa de Lilibeth (enquanto Wexler carregava o escritório nas costas) numa noite chuvosa e estimulante (77).<sup>176</sup> Mandrake’s womanizing, contrasts with Wexler’s working, as their primary methods to fill the void produced by signification. Mandrake also deals with his lacking by calling Raul over to his apartment for some homosocial drunkenness, but not without a bit of the text’s underlying queerness to parody the masculinities performed before one another: “Apanhei na geladeira uma garrafa de Acácio, gelado. Raul me olhou com uma cara que me pareceu de carinho” (47).<sup>177</sup> Although their homosociality will always remain on the hegemonic, ‘safe,’ hetero side of the homosexual/heterosexual binary, this scene still serves to question such obligatory maintenance, as shown when they urinate together: “Ele e eu urinamos simultaneamente, evitando um olhar para o pênis do outro” (61).<sup>178</sup> The final detail points to Mandrake’s recognition of the sexual policing present in their practice of masculinity and homosocial camaraderie.

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<sup>176</sup>“Satiety: a degree or extent that fully satisfies, gratification of physical and moral needs to sufficiency. An oft-used word in old-time lawyers’ speech- it is proven to satiety... to be satiated, to want nothing more. But I did. That’s why I was there at Lilibeth’s (while Wexler carried the weight of the office on his shoulders) on a rainy and provocative evening” (Watson 79-80)

<sup>177</sup>“I grabbed an ice-cold bottle of Acacio out of the refrigerator. Raul looked at me with what seemed like affection” (Watson 42).

<sup>178</sup>“One Brazilian pees, they all pee,” said Raul. We urinated simultaneously, avoiding looking at each other’s penis” (Watson 59).

In the sex scene with Lilibeth, the text portrays Mandrake's having no interest in playing the male dominant role, nor does he make her out to be some plastic work of perfection: "O pé de Lilibeth era grande; a sola, escura de sujeira, brilhava como se tivesse sido lustrada por uma flanela; o dedo polegar era desproporcionalmente maior do que os outros; unhas pintadas de esmalte branco... rocei com os lábios o joelho dela, sentido no rosto a epiração das narinas da moça (77-8).<sup>179</sup> Instead of the text's representing sex that no one ever really has, Mandrake gives details that resemble the human experience of intimacy.

Also, in order to critique neoliberalism (and therefore Reproductive Futurism), the text uses Mandrake's queer (in that he prefers pets over parenthood) love for animals, such as his cat Elizabeth Feijão.<sup>180</sup> When he and Ada come face to face with Rafael and Fuentes, who have just burglarized Mandrake's apartment and are their would-be executioners, the text portrays Mandrake's being more concerned about Elizabeth than for Ada (79). His penchant for pets is especially queer when he falls in love with Diamante Negro, the giant iguana that he buys from a stranger at the beach in Leblon:

Foi amor a primera vista ... O lagarto exibiu a língua para fora, rapidamente. 'E pensar que tem gente que mata animal desse para fazer uma correinha de relógio,' eu disse. 'Esse não.... Esse é, grande, dá um par de sapatos e mais uma carteira. Além da correinha.' Curvei-me e acariciei o animal; sua pele era solta, como uma

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<sup>179</sup>"Lilibeth had big feet; the soles, dark from dirt, shone as if polished with flannel; the big toes were disproportionately larger than the others; toenails painted white. I leaned over and barely skimmed my lips across her knee. I could feel her breath on my face" (Watson 80).

<sup>180</sup> Mandrake's feline affinity points to other childless, wifeless sinthomosexuals in other Western cultural productions. The evil Gargamel and his cat Azreal (from *The Smurfs*) come to mind.

roupa larga, e o corpo, dentro, parecia ser feito apenas de um único duríssimo osso (43-4).<sup>181</sup>

Mandrake's queer masculine penchant for pets, in this scene, is starkly juxtaposed with the man who stands for free trade. Mandrake's comment represents a political stance against the use of animal skins to manufacture clothing and accessories, while the man selling the lizard is so caught up in his capitalizing on the animal, he fails to even pick up on Mandrake's conservationist perspective.<sup>182</sup> Mandrake's girlfriend at the time of his purchasing the iguana, Berta Bronstein, will have nothing to do with the three feet long reptile that, according to its description, is a living, breathing phallus symbol, and Berta's comment here, only accentuates that imagery: "além do mais ele tem órgão copulador dupla e reversível ..."<sup>183</sup> For Berta, Mandrake's queer pet, like his queer philandering, threatens her practice of conventional gender relations in accordance with the norms of the symbolic order. The iguana must be exiled to a friend's country house (44), and their relationship does not last. Lastly, the text represents Mandrake's contemplating his opposition to Reproductive Futurism: "Ada queria casar e ter filhos, mas eu não queria deixar nada neste mundo. Quem devia ter filhos era Elizabeth, e eu a impedira. O mundo

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<sup>181</sup>"It was love at first sight. The lizard flicked its tongue momentarily.... 'And to think there are people who kill animals to make watchbands,' I said. 'Not this one... This one's big enough for at least a pair of shoes, plus maybe a wallet.' I bent down and stroked the animal; his skin was loose, like baggy clothing, and the body inside felt as if it consisted of one extremely hard bone" (Watson 38)

<sup>182</sup> This animal rights theme resurfaces in *Bufo & Spallanzani* when Gustavo, whose queer masculinity has much in common with Mandrake's, becomes disgusted with a female character for talking about her mink coat (152), because, like Mandrake, Gustavo represents an attitude that is opposed to the capitalization of precious wildlife.

<sup>183</sup>"Besides which, he's got a double-reversible sex organ and a transversal cloacal slit" (Watson 38).

precisava mais de gatos do que gente” (75).<sup>184</sup> His love for animals coincides with his opposition to neoliberalism, marriage, and therefore, Reproductive Futurism, which serves the text’s subversion of hegemonic masculinity, through his irresistibly heteronormative, queer masculinity.

His masculinity also stands in opposition to neoliberal urban development, as he represents greater social consciousness while the story progresses. Mandrake’s nostalgia for the old red light district indicates a time before the invasion of foreign capital and major development projects: “Lembrei-me da primeira vez em que fora àquela rua. Parecera-me uma alegre feira, cheia de homens, andando de um lado para o outro, fumando e conversando nas esquinas; parados na frente das casas olhando as mulheres” (15).<sup>185</sup> Given the crucial role of the prostitute in the maintenance of the patriarchal family structure, which even the symbolic order recognizes (the prefeitura may have a place to hide Miram’s brothel (15)), one has to wonder at the hypocrisy (or inefficiency) in the government’s moving prostitution completely underground, except for a spot in the classified ads, where Lima Prado shops for potential female subjects to victimize.

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<sup>184</sup>“Ada wanted to get married and raise a family, but I didn’t want to leave anything behind in this world. The one who should have had offspring was Betsy, but I had prevented that. What the world needed was more cats and fewer people” (Watson 77).

<sup>185</sup>“I remembered the first time I’d visited that street. It had looked to me like a cheery outdoor market- men weaving from one side to the other, smoking and talking on street corners or stopping in front of the houses to check out the women” (Watson 5). The protagonist’s boyhood recollection of being addressed by a prostitute apparently has some significance for Fonseca, calling to mind Alberto Mattos’s similarly marking memory in *Agosto*.

Mandrake provides a synopsis of events that reflects the violent results of bulldozing the red light district and the cruel politics of mourning:<sup>186</sup> “Duas prostitutas mortas. Uma ex-prostituta dona de boutique também morta. Uma mulher desaparecida. Não é coisa para interessar o mundo por muito tempo” (62).<sup>187</sup> His synopsis states the reality for those whose deaths do not merit society’s mourning. His story about the falcon allegorizes the Catholic Church’s role in the matter: “Lembra do gavião que morava na cornija da fachada da Biblioteca Nacional? ... Varava os ares a 280 quilômetros por hora. Pegava os pombos voando ... surgiram os columbófilos com suas almas piedosas pedindo providências. Tomaram providências, o gavião sumiu” (35).<sup>188</sup> The image of pious pigeon lovers displacing the falcon (gavião also refers to the sexually deviant) parallels that of the invasion of foreign capital and neoliberal development, facilitated by the catholic church's support of the initial coup in '64. ‘Progress’ replaces the brothels, and despite their having once been recognized as essential for Reproductive Futurism’s family unit, neoliberal capitalism forces them to a more dangerous space.

By contrast, Mandrake narcissistically describes the 'flaws' of others, especially in the novel’s earlier scenes, and in some cases, his discourse fails to escape the hegemonic representations of class and gender. In search of the disappeared/murdered Cila, who the text represents as having ascended from lower to middle class via Rosa, Mandrake’s

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<sup>186</sup>I am referring to Butler, Judith. *Precaious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004. Print. The theme resurfaces when Zakkai says “Foram enterrados como indigentes. Ninguém faz perguntas, um mendigo morto é melhor do que um vivo, e um mendigo enterrado melhor ainda” (289).

<sup>187</sup>“Two dead prostitutes. Also, an ex-prostitute, owner of a boutique. A fourth woman vanished. Nothing that’s going to catch the world’s interest for too long” (60).

<sup>188</sup>“Do you remember that eagle that used to live up there on the cornice of the National Library? .... He cut through the air at 280 kilometers an hour. Snatched doves in midair.... the way those pigeon fanatics rushed in, pious souls demanding action. The city took action, the eagle took off” (Watson 28).

comments, indicate an effort to bolster his own place in social hierarchies and serves as an example of how the performances of class and gender become intertwined. Upon his breaking in her apartment with the police his observations mock Cila's infantile collection of magazines (Amiga, Status, Tio Patinhas), the decor, "paredes cobertas de reproduções de pintura japonesa" (55); and finally, he makes a comment to try and distinguish himself from the class ascension of the former resident: "Pasatempo de arrivista em país subdesenvolvido,' eu disse. 'O quê?,' perguntou Licurgo, em voz baixa. 'decoreção,' susurrei de volta" (55).<sup>189</sup> The cop Licurgo has no reason to respond to Mandrake's out of place comment, given Cila's cadaver is rotting in the bedroom, and the fact that Licurgo makes no reply exposes Mandrake's pretentiousness.

As the novel progresses along the plot's timeline, Mandrake becomes disgusted with himself for a number of reasons, one of them being his selfishness, which surfaces in his interaction with his law partner, Wexler. Erudition is also part of Wexler's represented masculinity, the only difference being, Wexler adds the condition of wisdom. He is able to cite and interpret classic texts and scripture. In his admonishment for Mandrake quit playing the detective role, he offers an interesting reflection over the human capacity to temporarily choose fantasy (in this case bargaining with God) over reality, until being forced into acceptance. Wexler re-narrates King David's reaction to learning he has lost his son: "David, porém, vendo os servos murmurando soturnamente entre si, entendeu que o menino morreria. Então levantou-se do chão, lavou-se e sentou-se à mesa para comer" (36).<sup>190</sup> Wexler's story is an allegorical way for him to tell Mandrake

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<sup>189</sup>"Playtime for parvenus in an underdeveloped country," I said. "What?" asked Licurgo, in a low voice. "The decor," I whispered back.

<sup>190</sup>"David, meanwhile, noticing the servant's sullen murmuring, realized what it meant" (Watson 29).



to accept castration. Only once David accepted reality of the logos (God was not going to bring his son back) and quit reaching for an imaginary object ('God,' 'miracle,' 'son'), was he able to get up and eat. Wexler's taking off with Ada in the end (287), speaks to Ada affinity for his masculinity's conditions of erudition, wisdom, and work ethic.

However, Wexler also contrasts with Mandrake in that he represents the law of the symbolic order's understanding of gender and sexuality when referring to, "O bissexualismo das prostitutas," while talking about Rosa's love letter to Cila (59), as if prostitutes were bad and responsible for lesbianism, which his discourse represents as a form of 'sexual perversion.'

Mandrake's interacting with characters that represent Rio's upper class provides more material for the novel's gender critique and for further analysis of his performance of a masculinity that seeks signification in the class hierarchy, despite his not occupying a place at the top and despite his underlying disdain for those who do. For example, when the wealthy Lilibeth enters his office seeking the incarceration of her husband Valdomiro for having betrayed her with another man, Mandrake assumes that she is judging him and his office: "... me olhando e aos móveis como alguém num leilão avaliando objetos à venda" (36),<sup>191</sup> and he is right; as shown below, she is evaluating him. The reference letter she hands him from Madeiros (Rio's most successful attorney) compels Mandrake to qualify himself to her and show her that he knows the law (38). Of course she is not impressed (39), but he maintains his act of the dignified attorney through little comments between parentheses: "(Seja paciente, etc. ... Paciente, etc)."<sup>192</sup> More than the scene's

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<sup>191</sup> "... Clearly evaluating me and the furniture like someone looking over items for sale at an auction" (Watson 29).

<sup>192</sup> ("Be patient, etc.) ... (Patience, etc.)" (Watson 30).

qualifying Mandrake's legal knowledge, it establishes his stance with respect to the policing of sex. He finds the law's condemning adultery ridiculous, which again puts Mandrake in a defiant position against Reproductive Futurism's 'official stance': "A existência do crime de adultério na lei brasileira era uma excrescência anacrônica que há muito já devia ter sido extirpada. Alguém me dissera que seria suprimida do novo Código Penal, em elaboração" (36).<sup>193</sup> The fact that the law still exists points to the residual influence of the Catholic church over the State and gender norms, as does the fact that Lilibeth would be the first ever woman to bring such a case against her husband's cheating on his wife with another man.

The required elements for catching Val in the act of adultery are laughable. They describe domestic, sex policing: "Basta estarem num quarto de dormir, trancados, é suficiente" (36).<sup>194</sup> The 'crime' and Lilibeth's reason for requesting Mandrake's services allow the text to denounce the authoritative and social policing of sex, and Lilibeth's case describes a parallel between Lacan's "signifying chain of concatenation" (*Écrits* 288), and the farce that is the legal/penal system: "O processo penal é uma peça teatral, de vários encadeados ... Os romanos usavam o termo *iudicium*—*iudicium est actus trium personarum: iudicis, actoris et rei* ... o juiz, o autor e o réu. O protagonista, o antagonista e o tritagonista" (38).<sup>195</sup> His 'fancy words' (as Lilibeth calls them) indicate the

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<sup>193</sup>"That the crime of adultery existed at all in Brazilian law seemed superfluous, an anachronism; it should have been excised a long time ago. Someone had told me that it was to be abolished in the process of elaborating the new penal code" (Watson 30).

<sup>194</sup>"It's sufficient if they are discovered alone together in a bedroom, behind closed doors" (Watson 30).

<sup>195</sup>"The penal process is a piece of theater, consisting of various interlinking acts ... The Romans used the term *iudicium - iudicium est actus trium personarum: iudicis, actoris et rei*. ... The protagonist, the antagonist and the tritagonist" (Watson 32).

performative nature of language, the judicial process, and the fragment criticizes the legal system for its prioritizing the show instead of a quest for the ‘truth’ and/or ‘justice,’ because it does not need to look for the “Truth” that it creates.

Yet, the novel uses Mandrake too in its critique of heteronormative patriarchal structure. Earlier in the story, the text provided a previous glimpse of a slightly violent, homophobic side to Mandrake when Mitry tries to pressure him: “Estou na dúvida se mando você à merda ou mando enfiar o talão do cheque no cu.” (50).<sup>196</sup> He represents a homophobic, verbally aggressive aspect of conventional ‘manliness’ during his affair with Lilibeth, which at first targets Lilibeth’s gay husband Val: “Imaginei Val e Lilibeth na cama. Não senti ciúmes, ele era o marido, era homossexual, era ridículo. O que senti foi uma espécie de amargura difusa” (260).<sup>197</sup> Mandrake’s judgement of Val comes at a moment when he ponders his own behavior, which indicates his narcissistic aggression and that his resentment can best be attributed to the characteristics of Val that Mandrake sees in himself.

Not until an important dialogue between these two towards the end of the novel, does the text redeem its overall homophobic discourse. Lilibeth's description of Valdomiro depicts a paradigmatic sinthomosexual. First, Val hates being called his real name prefers a shortened, more androgynous version (38), which casts ambiguity upon the gender that the name is supposed to signify and defies the symbolic order’s gender binary. Then, Lilibeth portrays him as a villain who destroyed their marriage and her idea

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<sup>196</sup>“I’m debating whether I should tell you to go to hell or to stick your checkbook up your ass” (Watson 46).

<sup>197</sup>“I tried to imagine Val and Lilibeth in bed together. I wasn’t jealous. He was her husband; he was homosexual; he was ridiculous. What I felt was a sort of diffuse bitterness” (Watson 304).

of the future, because of his drunkenness during their honeymoon and his refusing sex with Lilibeth until they have first been to the adult theater to see gay porn (39). She condemns his refusing to procreate and his engaging in homosexual behavior. As she relates all of this to Mandrake, the text represents her as the quintessential advocate for Reproductive Futurism in her bargaining phase between her accepting discourse's changing parameters or not. Val's being queer, negates her being fully 'woman,' and disrupts her locus of the Other, which, until Val, was an allegiance to Reproductive Futurism that presented itself as Truth:

Eu queria, quero, ter filhos. Val odiava crianças ... que era melhor termos um cachorro, que eu já estava me tornando a megera que são todas as esposas burguesas. Veja você, um parasita que nunca trabalhou falar em burguesia. Resumindo .... Eu havia saído para jogar tênis no Country, à tarde, mas começou a chover e voltei para casa e lá estava Val deitado na cama fazendo coisas com um amigo nosso. Igual no filme” (39-40).<sup>198</sup>

His preferring a pet over children reaffirms this queer characteristic in Mandrake. His associating a nagging wife with the bourgeois nuclear family also depicts Reproductive Futurism in the same light that scares Mandrake away from commitment with Ada.

Divorce does not interest Lilibeth, because she believes it lacks the degree of punishment and retribution that she deserves for the symbolic damage that Val's non-hegemonic masculinity has brought upon her fulfillment of the conditions of

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<sup>198</sup>“I wanted, I want, to have children. Val hated children, at least that's what he said then, that it would be better to get a dog; that I was turning into a shrew already that all wives were bourgeois. Can you beat that? A parasite who never worked a day in his life talking about the bourgeois. To sum it up .... I was out playing tennis at the country club, but it started to rain, so i came back home, and there was Val in bed messing around with a guy we knew. Exactly like in the movie (Watson 35).

‘woman.’ Aside from the scandal that Val creates among the families, Val is most effective in his deceiving when he is amicable and altruistic: “Ele é uma pessoa, como direi, boa [...] tem um senso do humor fantástico, é inteligente e culto, sabe tudo sobre o arte, lê muito. Está sempre ajudando os outros sem retribuição” (40).<sup>199</sup> As Edleman points out with respect to altruism,<sup>200</sup> this virtue is not without its negative attachment and therefore does not preclude Val’s embodying a greedy, sinthomosexual. By the novel’s end, when Lilibeth openly has an affair with Mandrake and Val allegedly sleeps in the living room, Val brings up the topic of money, and the text represents through Mandrake’s discourse, the ‘Brazilian virtue’ of immaterialism from version of the Brazilian ‘man’ of the “Ação Integralista Brasileira” (AIB) ‘Brazilian Integralism’.<sup>201</sup>

‘Não queremos deixar o nosso dinheiro apodrecer.’ ‘O que apodrece sem remédio é o sangue,’ eu disse.... É horrível ter dinheiro para investir,’ continuou Val.... ‘Onde você botaria o seu dinheiro?’ ‘Não tenho dinheiro.’ ‘E se tivesse?’ ‘Se tivesse talvez fosse igual a todos os especuladores que fazem tudo para salvar a grana deles, e o mundo que se foda.’ ‘Eu não quero que o mundo se foda,’ disse Val. ‘Adoro o mundo. Adoro a vida. Mas a inflação está comendo o meu

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<sup>199</sup>“Val’s a- how shall I say? - good person. If you met him, you’d like him. He’s really fun, he’s got a fantastic sense of humor, he’s intelligent, and cultured, knows everything about art, reads a lot. And he’s always helping people without expecting anything back” (Watson 35).

<sup>200</sup>“The logic according to which altruism ... would necessarily carry with it the trace of negativity it negates” (Edleman 168).

<sup>201</sup> In the AIB’s manifesto of October 7, 1932, its first section, entitled ‘*Concepção do homem e do universo*’ (“The Concept of Man and of the Universe”) states: O Homem deve praticar sobre a terra as virtudes que o elevam e o aperfeiçoam.... A riqueza é bem passageiro, que não engrandece ninguém, desde que não sejam cumpridos pelos seus detentores os deveres que rigorosamente impõe, para com a Sociedade e a Pátria. ‘Man must practice on earth the virtues that lift him up and that perfect him.... Wealth is quite fleeting and makes no one great as long as the obligations that it rigorously imposes are not fulfilled by its possessors on behalf of Society and the Nation.’

dinheirinho. Dinheirinho que me custou muito a herdar. Outra coisa' -ele bateu com o pé no chão- 'eu não dormi na sala, entendeu?' (259).<sup>202</sup>

I do not interpret Mandrake's reference to rotting blood as a eugenicist condemnation of racial blending, but rather, as a condemnation of those who aim to accumulate wealth and still further indication that hegemonic discourse continues to be tainted by eugenicist vocabulary. His stance here and his earlier observations of price regulation and contraband, point to an ideology that opposes neoliberalism and/or socialism, which, therefore, suggests a representation of the AIB virtue of immaterialism. Mandrake's experience chasing revenge against Fuentes has changed him, and by the end of the novel, he is disillusioned by the emptiness that remains despite his frustrated attempts at fulfillment through his promiscuous sexual behavior, and he represents even more disappointment from his view of the world around him. Still, if there is one aspect of his society that Mandrake can specifically criticize and blame, it is capitalist greed. His argument, that folks with money will do anything to hold on to it, speaks to Rolnik's critique of a 'falocratic' mode of producing a subjectivity (referenced in the introduction) that is a "... modo de producción que tiene en la acumulacion de de capital su único principio de organización" (100).

The big cost that Val refers to, was his denying his homosexuality throughout life, in order to inherit the money that, he is now worried, will disappear because of inflation. Paradoxically, the money that he had hoped would make him happy actually troubles

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<sup>202</sup>“We don't want our money to rot, after all.' 'The thing that rots beyond repair is blood,' I said.... 'It's terrible having money to invest,' continued Val.... 'What would you do with your money?' 'I don't have any.' 'What if you did?' 'If I did, maybe I'd be just like all the speculators who do everything they can to save their stash and the world can go fuck itself.' 'I don't want the world to fuck itself,' said Val. 'I adore the world. I adore life. But inflation is eating away at my money. The little that cost me so much to inherit. Another thing' -he stamped his foot- 'I did not sleep in the guest room. You got that?'" (Watson 303).

him. In this sense, the novel faults him, not for being gay but for his act of pretending to be ‘not-gay,’ which is a break from the conventional sinthomosexual characterization. Mandrake dislikes Val, not because he is queer, but because he is greedy and he sacrificed his queerness for an inheritance.

Mandrake, on the other hand, refuses to sacrifice his castration, but before he goes on his mission of violence, the novel specifically addresses the topic in four contexts: the domicile, the small town (versus big city), in nature, and its role historically. First, Mandrake recounts an incident of domestic violence in which a woman’s screaming in a neighboring building awakens him: “os berros duraram um longo período, eram desagradáveis e inquietantes, amedrontadores. A mulher parecia sofrer muito, e também ser forte e resistente,”<sup>203</sup> His narration indicates that her trouble stems from her strength and resistance, and, therefore is incongruent with her society’s established structure of gender. This incongruity is, ironically, so common that it requires no reaction from anyone else, including the building’s security guard on duty; “‘aquilo,’ os gritos, ‘devia ser briga de marido e mulher’ e, portanto, ele não ia se meter. Nem ele nem ninguém...” (89),<sup>204</sup> which depicts the ease with which discourse conditions everyone to ignore her unanswered cries for help and acquiesce in gender violence.

Mandrake expects the violence and the selfish indifference of Rio, to contrast with the village of Pouso Alto in the interior where “as pessoas debían se vigiar umas às

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<sup>203</sup> ... the woman’s screams must have carried a quite a distance. And they went on for a long time, disturbing, frightening. It sounded as if she were suffering a great deal, and was stubborn and unyielding, since it was a powerful voice and the screams went on and on” (Watson 92).

<sup>204</sup>---””All that racket’ must have been ‘just some husband and wife fighting,’ there was no way he was going to get involved. Not him not anybody else” (Watson 92).

outras, oprimido-se reciprocamente” (90).<sup>205</sup> Mandrake’s conclusion, then, represents the philosophy that the villagers’ policing of one another is still violence, but of the epistemological sort.

Third, when he and Ada see of a couple geese trying to devour a frog, Mandrake comments about the ubiquity of violence in the natural world (95). Ada responds and speaks to its role in socially constructed orders like race, class, and gender: “a violência... era uma característica humana, algo, porém institucionalizado pelos homens, que eram por ela atraídos criando mitos aos quais aderiam e que não passavam de racionalizações enobrecedoras de seus impulsos destrutivos” (96).<sup>206</sup> Her use of the noun ‘homens’ instead of ‘pessoas’ and then her use of the third person plural instead of first, points to her desire to be kept away from the masculine quality associated with violence. These “racionalizações enobrecedoras” that “homens” use to justify violence belong to the ideological rhetoric used to rationalize war, foreign investment, invasions, and gender violence. Mandrake's retort, “que aquilo parecia psicologia barata” (96),<sup>207</sup> and his supporting examples only serve to fortify Ada's argument and indicate Mandrake’s temporary inability to separate the ideology that conditions his masculinity from that which is verifiable, showing with his arguments that he has been blinded by the acts of

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<sup>205</sup>“I decided that the self-centered indifference typical of people in Rio could not possibly exist here.... people in such a small city probably watched each other more closely, a sort of reciprocal oppression...” (Watson 93).

<sup>206</sup>“Violence... was a human trait, instituted specifically by men, out of their desire to create and agree on myths that in reality were nothing more than rationalizations to exalt their destructive impulses” (Watson 101).

<sup>207</sup>“I laughed and said that was two-bit psychology” (Watson 101).



violence committed against him and Ada, who, between the two of them, is the one who represents an objective view of violence.

When Mandrake awakens from surgery after having been left for dead by Lima Prado's thugs in search of the elusive video cassette (phallus), his conversation with the doctor marks a turning point for how his refusing castration (his attempt to transgress the symbolic order) will manifest: from his usual philandering 'not-gay' performance to his seeking revenge against Camilo Fuentes. What the doctor tells him carries enough weight symbolically that it ignites a fantastic desire to embody a ruthless, counterinsurgent-like masculinity: "Bem, ela foi seviciada. Uma coisa à-toa, foi tudo cosido direitinho. Alguns pontinhos.... Eles usaram o cabo da faca, me parece. Na vagina e no ânus" (82).<sup>208</sup> The doctor's insensitivity penetrates Mandrake's structure of reality, and he views this act carried out upon Ada as a violation of his masculinity, which, like all hegemonic versions of masculinity, is incomplete by definition, yet, somehow now it is irreparably damaged and nonetheless in need of repair.

Mandrake continues to bury his castration (that he denies) beneath his ego, and therefore must bear on another symbol to replace his irreparable imagined masculinity. Anything accessible is out of the question, because the moment it were acknowledged as a signifier, it would cease to have the symbolic effect of the imaginary unidentifiable signifier that joins logos with desire, which is what the Lacanian phallus represents. He is the neurotic who refuses to, "sacrifice his castration to the jouissance of an Other [who is,

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<sup>208</sup>“Well, they knocked her around a little. Nothing much, we sewed her up good as new. A couple stitches.’ I must strike my clients as callous , too, I thought, trying to overcome the aversion I felt towards the doctor. ‘Looks to me like they used a knife handle. In the vagina and the anus.’ He spoke so naturally; only doctors know how to talk about such things” (Watson 85).

for the purposes of this analysis, whomever plus hegemonic discourse] by allowing it to serve that jouissance” (*Écrits*, 323), and therefore he continues to venture into the prohibited, beyond the pleasure principal, towards death. Now, instead of signifying “man,” the signifier to which he (the subject) is barred from mastering completely is represented by “Percor,”<sup>209</sup> which is the knife fighting martial art form that the actor (Lima Prado) in the novel’s opening learned during his experience in the elite forces unit NUSE: “Quero usar uma faca. Tornou-se uma obsessão” (83).<sup>210</sup> Coincidentally, his former client Hermes, who still owes Mandrake for legal representation that resulted in Hermes being acquitted of murder, is a specialist in Percor and former member of Lima Prado’s NUSE team: “Hermes era um homem de estatura média, lacônico, de movimentos controlados. A pele do seu rosto inescrutável era polida e dura como ágata, com uma palidez homogênea de boneco” (82).<sup>211</sup> Mandrake’s detailed description of Hermes indicates at the very least an appreciation for his instructor’s physical appearance, through its describing his doll face and how he carries himself as, “lacônico, de movimentos controlados.” More than just an objective description, Mandrake’s narration indicates attraction, which means that in his quest to restore his violated, heteronormative masculinity, he evinces some homosexual overtones. This contradiction is part of the parody *A grande arte* does with Mandrake’s attempt at practicing this violent, counterinsurgent commando masculinity.

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<sup>209</sup>Watson translates *Percor* as *Persev* since *perforar e cortar* could be translated as ‘perforate and sever’.

<sup>210</sup>“... I want to use a knife, it’s become an obsession” (Watson 86).

<sup>211</sup>“Hermes was a laconic man of medium stature and deliberate movements. The skin on his inscrutable face was polished as hard as agate, and uniformly pale as a doll’s” (Watson 86).

It is clear from the beginning that Mandrake is not cut out for the masculinity he now wants to embody. His wounds from the attackers during the burglary make Hermes laugh: “Quem fez isso é um incompetente,” which incites Mandrake’s self-consciousness: “De quem ele ria? De mim ou da inabilidade do meu agressor?” (83).<sup>212</sup> Hermes knows Mandrake is not meant for Percor: “Compra um revolver e atira no terceiro botão da camisa do sujeito,”<sup>213</sup> but that might produce the signifier of a corpse, which would cease to be an inaccessible imaginary symbol. Ginway’s study picks up on the parallels between this Hermes and the Greek mythological character, but, the text’s choice of names within this thematic has more than one intertextual reference. In Mandrake’s apartment during the Percor lesson: “Hermes explicou, de maneira fria e didática, as técnicas consagradas... ‘Em Serviços Especiais conhecíamos todas as técnicas consagradas, mas usávamos a Araujo’” (87).<sup>214</sup> Hermes’s mentioning the name Araujo is significant because among historian Benjamin Cowan’s list of Allied forces military theorists who were involved in constructing the CI masculinity, he cites Colonel Hermes de Araujo Oliveira, whose, “pronouncements echoed those of Brazilians and North Americans concerned about a postwar masculine slump” (709).

Mandrake hints that he is aware of how absurd it was for him to think he was going to learn these “técnicas consagradas” to the point where he could actually apply them in action. Ada’s reaction to Mandrake’s new instructor (she is at a loss for words)

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<sup>212</sup>“The person who did this is an incompetent.’ Hermes laugh was cold, hollow, close-mouthed. Who was he laughing at? Me or the ineptitude of my aggressor?”

<sup>213</sup>“Buy a gun and shoot for the guy’s third shirt button” (Watson 87).

<sup>214</sup>“Cold and didactic, hermes explained the sanctioned techniques.... ‘In the Special Services we studied all the techniques, but the one we used was Araujo’” (Watson 90).

indicates the absurdity of the situation through an example of language crisis: “‘Quem é essa figura?’”, perguntou Ada.... ‘Parece um...’ Ada não conseguiu se expressar” (86).

Like a boy admiring a favorite superhero, Mandrake finishes her sentence, “Um Percor,” and his explanation about who and what is a Percor, leads to Ada’s making still more references to the phallus and to his refusing castration when she asks, “Perforar e cortar o quê?” (86).<sup>215</sup>

In this exchange of dialogue, their relationship appears more like that of mother and son than that of an adult couple, signaling childishness in Mandrake’s refusal of castration, as well as his demand for love. Well into his forties, Mandrake finds himself, “Metido num mundo de arterias cortadas e órgãos perfurados, pensando em tornar-me um herói sinistro e vingativo...” (94).<sup>216</sup> The obsession returns him to boyhood, when he read about courageous heroes who achieved honor through violence (44). By describing his thinking about becoming a sinister, vengeful hero, he identifies the silliness and also the violence in his plan to turn himself into the “hunter killer type” hailed by Cold War military theorists in their remasculinization efforts (Cowan 703). The book that connects Mandrake’s newly aspired, vengeful version of masculinity to Latin American Counterinsurgency special forces is the *Vade-mecum do Combate Individual a Faca*: “As técnicas e as tácticas do Vade-mecum... eram ‘adaptadas à condição física e ao temperamento do homem brasileiro’” (93-4).<sup>217</sup> The style with which he narrates what he

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<sup>215</sup>“‘Who is that guy?’ she asked. ‘A friend.’ ‘He looks like a...’ Ada couldn’t finish the thought. ‘A *Persev*.’ ‘What’s that?’ ‘Perforate and sever.’ ‘Perforate and sever what?’” (Watson 89).

<sup>216</sup>“Immersed in the world of slashed arteries and perforated organs, imagining myself as a sinister and avenging hero...” (Watson 99).

<sup>217</sup>“... Which contained techniques... developed by the instructors of the Brazilian Army in 1945 after the return of the Expeditionary Force from Italy, when the Nucleus of Special Services, NUSS, was created.... The techniques and strategies of the vade mecum... had been ‘adapted to the physical stature and

learns of Percor indicates his erudition and spells out in great detail the gruesome reality of hand to hand combat. The more he reads, the less he seems fit for Percor and, therefore, refutes neoliberalism's normalization of violence:

Uma coisa que me fascinava era o problema do sangue, a terrível quantidade que jorrava em qualquer manobra, do corte da garganta ou da subclávia e que podia esguichar na boca ou nos olhos do matador; a necessidade de manter a boca fechada e os olhos atentos para não ter uma reação de nojo (o sangue é doce e enjoativo)" (94-5).

In Mandrake's pursuit of Ada's violators, he realizes he is not able to perform this version of masculinity nor is he the "homem brasileiro" referred to in the Vade-mecum. The evidence that he lacks courage to truly carry out his declared mission of killing Ada's attackers, appears the moment he opens his mouth to identify Fuentes, in custody at police headquarters: "Senti que a minha voz tremia" (97).<sup>218</sup> Wexler and Raul's calling him crazy and imploring him to let the feds carry out their operation to bust Fuentes, indicates the quixotesque nature of his exhibition of his refusing castration (99). He even starts to botch their operation, literally, before the train to the Bolivian border leaves the station, "tentei identificar na fila algum agente da Polícia Federal. Não havia ninguém com cara de tira" (100).<sup>219</sup> His relapse to the philandering womanizer while on the train and his failure to think that perhaps a woman might be part of the feds' assignment, prove to be myopic errors that his more experienced target does not make.

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temperament of the Brazilian male"" (Watson 98-99). It is important to emphasize that the Força Expedicionária da Itália was sent to fight alongside Northern allied forces from the US and UK.

<sup>218</sup>"I realized my voice was still trembling" (Watson 103).

<sup>219</sup>"There was no one who looked like a cop" (107).

While Mandrake's narrates his journey to hunt down Fuentes, the text constructs the absurdity of his aspired masculinity. In his conversations with the undercover agent Mercedes, she is able to identify him as a pretender, but he is oblivious to her act, as he admits: "faltou-me imaginação ... para interpretar corretamente o comportamento de Mercedes" (107),<sup>220</sup> and he can only think that she is a prostitute: "'E você, o que faz?' 'Adivinha.' 'Dona-de-casa.' 'Ou você é muito bobo ou muito esperto.' 'Sou muito esperto.' Començava a sentir uma certa atração pela mulher (102).<sup>221</sup> His narration of that dialogue implies that now he knows his uncastrated mission was absurd, especially because the awful fate awaiting Mercedes is his fault, and a result of his not being very wise at all.

The NUSE warrior masculinity that Mandrake aims to practice, ridicules neoliberal masculine gender performance. The text makes this parody evident through Mandrake's only real use for the Randall knife: "Ao chegar à cabine abri a janela, liguei o ventilador e deitei-me no beliche com a Randall na mão. Meu pênis estava duro e tirei-o para fora das calças. Devia ser horrível ter o pau cortado, pensei passando o fio da Randall de leve na verga... O braço grosso dele apareceu na janela..." (101).<sup>222</sup> In Mandrake's caressing himself with his knife, as he looks out the window and notices

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<sup>220</sup>"In any case, I lacked the imagination, at that moment, to interpret Mercedes' behavior correctly" (Watson 114).

<sup>221</sup>"'And you, what do you do?' 'Guess.' 'Housewife.' 'You're either very stupid or very smart.' 'Very smart. I began to feel a certain attraction to this woman'" (Watson 110).

<sup>222</sup>"When I got back to my cabin I opened the window, turned on the fan, and lay down on the bunk bed with the Randall in my hand. My penis was aching; I took it out of my pants. It must be terrible to have your cock cut off, I thought, running the edge of the Randall ever so lightly across the shaft.... Eventually his massive arm appeared on the window ledge" (Watson 109).

Fuentes's thick arm, the text indicates that these two may be on the same train, but only one is able to have or be "the phallus."

Mandrake's depictions of Mercedes indicate that, unlike him, she is an expert of this lawless land and suggest that in this hegemonic sense, she is more 'masculine' than he. She provides a fascinating description of the border region between Matto Grosso and Bolivia, where she makes a dual critique of the drug trade and the bourgeois obsession with it:

Mercedes acrescentou que lá existia apenas uma feira livre em frente à estação, sempre cheia de bolivianos ... e adolescentes brasileiras de mochilas nas costas esperando o Trem da Morte, que demorava vinte horas para chegar a Santa Cruz de la Sierra, onde os mochileros, 'jovens burgueses que se sujaram de merda e mijo esperando se redimirem da sua condição de parasitas, acreditam que a coca cai do céu' .... Mercedes fez o seu discurso com voz pastosa, a cerveja porejando da sua pele em camadas viscosas que ela limpava com o dedo indicador e a palma da mão (103).<sup>223</sup>

Her observation with respect to the "jovens burgueses" speaks to Mandrake's situation, only in his case, his redeeming "sua condição de parasita" stems from his having used Ada to signify his masculinity and then failing to protect her, and instead of thinking that cocaine is a gift from heaven, he thinks that his Randall knife and his newly acquired knowledge of Percor are his chance at revenge and ultimately forgiveness. The young

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<sup>223</sup>Mercedes added that all there was in Quijarro was an outdoor market and, directly across from it, a railroad station, which was always full of Bolivians... and teenage Brazilians with knapsacks on their backs waiting for the Death Train to take them twenty grueling hours to Santa Cruz de la Sierra, because these middle-class kids, who shit and piss all over themselves expecting redemption from their life as parasites, believed that was where coke fell from the sky.... She delivered her tirade in a husky voice, wiping away the sheen of beer sweat with the palm or forefinger" (Watson 111).

evangelist on the train detects Mandrake's need for redemption: "Você é um pecador, eu sei que é um pecador, vejo no seu rosto. Há caminhos que parecem direitos ao homem, mas são os caminhos da morte" (107),<sup>224</sup> and his comment points not only to Mandrake's being on the wrong path by seeking revenge, but also to the death drive underneath his insatiable practice of gender relations.

Mandrake's descriptions of his enemy's intimidating size indicate that Mandrake knows he has no chance against Fuentes:

Um homem daquele tamanho não devia demorar a sentir fome.... Seu corpo enorme parecia não ter espaço suficiente para caminhar entre as mesas.... Apesar do seu tamanho, Fuentes era muito agil.... Enquanto conversava, Fuentes amassou com uma das mãos uma lata de cerveja vazia, dobrando-a em duas partes, sem esforço, casualmente, como se estivesse amassando uma bolinha de papel (100-1).<sup>225</sup>

Mandrake's fascination with Fuentes' physical presence is the same admiration and repressed homosexual attraction seen earlier with Hermes. The text increasingly hints at Mandrake's repressed homosexuality during this train episode, especially through Fuentes's focalization: "Havia no trem outra pessoa suspeita, um sujeito de barbas que o observara ... e desviara os olhos como um maricón indeciso, procurando contacto; mas aquele sujeito... não era um homossexual.... (Felizmente Fuentes não me reconheceria.)"

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<sup>224</sup>"You're a sinner. I know that you're a sinner, and I can see it in your face. Many paths that seem right to man's limited vision are, in truth, the paths of death" (Watson 115).

<sup>225</sup>"A man of that size wouldn't take too long to get hungry" (Watson 107)... He was so enormous that it looked as if there wouldn't be enough room for him to walk between the tables... His difficulty squeezing between tables was just a ruse... While making conversation, Fuentes effortlessly crushed an empty beer can with one hand, caually doubling it over as if it were a wad of paper" (Watson 108-9).



(105-6).<sup>226</sup> Mandrake's comment here at the end is in parenthesis to indicate he is interrupting Fuentes's narration, and it carries an overt double meaning. On the one hand, he is saying that he is glad Fuentes does not recognize him and tear him to shreds. On the other, he is saying he is relieved Fuentes does not recognize his homosexuality.

Mandrake undergoes some transformations during the story, but not from one definitive state to another, and especially not from sick to cured, which is another of the novel's messages, and it is Bebel who reminds Mandrake that he once said, "Não existem verdades absolutas, só obsoletas" (285).<sup>227</sup> The obsolete, absolute truths reference, denounces knowledge represented in discourse that "presents itself as autonomous" (*Écrits*, 311), and it also points to an obsolete simplicity in the political right/left dichotomy. Mandrake's position is clear enough: he resents the social injustices that surround him and his representation as a confused intersubjectivity falls in line with the novel's portrayal of a reality governed by ideological contradictions. The only thing left for Mandrake to do is, as he says, live a long time (287), and love (or pretend to love [260, 295]). His conversation with Raul at the novel's closing only casts doubt on whether the ending was really meant to cast doubt. What is certain to the reader, by the end, is the text's denouncing violence as a social crime, for which even the reader is partially to blame.

In conclusion, the commonality in these character analyses is that, in their representations of male gender performance, they show no set pattern. The text indicates

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<sup>226</sup>"There was another suspicious person on the train, a bearded guy who had kept stealing looks at him in the dining car and then averting his eyes like an indecisive queer suddenly afraid to make contact; but his hostile expression and clenched teeth said he was no homosexual.... (Fortunately, Fuentes had not recognized me)" (Watson 113).

<sup>227</sup>"There are no absolute truths, only obsolete" (Watson 334).

that there is no specific way to be a 'man' in their society. The only men who approach representations of conventional gender relations are minor characters like Ada's father Pedro and his wife, "D. Lazineira era um tipo de mãe altruísta que se sacrifica pela família e, em troca, cobra de todos total submissão às regras e valores que estabelece arbitrariamente" (91).<sup>228</sup> D. Lazineira has nothing but disdain for Mandrake, and not coincidentally he hates her and her little town of Pouso Alto. There is also the restaurant owner from Belém who ended in Corumbá because he followed a girl he loved so much he spat blood (121). Of course, marriage is an important part of the performance of conventional gender practices in Brazilian society, as seen in the conversation between Mandrake and Arquelau, who is the erudite cop/professor of Portuguese in Corumbá. In his referring to (their mutual friend) Raul's recent separation from his wife, Arquelau says: "Também me separei da minha primeira mulher.' Esperei. 'Mas casei de novo. Aqui em Corumbá a gente tem que casar'. 'Aqui e ali'" (117).<sup>229</sup> Arquelau means that one must marry in order to avoid social marginalization, but the fact that Mandrake has not married, coupled with the fact that everyone is separating, shows a resistance within their society against the pressure to perform these conventional practices of marrying, raising a family, and monogamy.

Apparently, Thales Lima Prado had a problem with it too. The most predictable reason for one's resisting the conventional gender performance, is that marriage and children require reliable, stable, significant income in a world where this is not accessible

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<sup>228</sup>"Dona Lazineira was the typical altruistic mother who sacrificed herself for her family and in exchange expected total submission to the rules and values she arbitrarily established" (Watson 94).

<sup>229</sup> "I separated from my first wife too.' I waited. 'But I remarried. Here in Corumba you've got to get married.' 'Here and everywhere'" (126-27).

to the masses, so the the nuclear family ideal conflicts with the economic conditions that result from the neoliberal ideology of dominance. In their representing the performativity of their masculinities, the characters analyzed in this chapter ridicule the conditions of neoliberal masculinity and denounce the violence it causes when it is the un-signified, unattainable imaginary object. The “grande arte,” is language, and *A grande arte*'s author recognizes its power.

### Chapter 3

#### Knowledge, Class-privileged Power, and Gender in *Bufo & Spallanzani*

Da Silva relies on Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1978) to posit Fonseca's representations of marginalized sexualities, pathological erotisms, and violations of "respect for good moral customs," as a means of resistance against the ideology of the privileged classes (53, 142). This chapter analyzes representations of gender in Fonseca's *Bufo & Spallanzani* (1985), and relies on Foucault's use of the term 'power' in "Power/Knowledge," whereby 'power' represents the distribution and circulation of what society considers to be 'knowledge' that it reproduces in discourse, which establishes norms that society polices (93 I argue that by uncovering the authoritative guises of ideological rhetoric and empirical verifiability, and by ridiculing heteropatriarchal conditions for masculinity, *Bufo & Spallanzani* attacks the stagnating power reproduced by institutions versions of gender conventions, and represents the social consequences of repeating history: increased violence, poverty and corruption in Rio de Janeiro of 1980's Brazil. The text uses several narrative techniques to create representations of gender that undermine knowledge and power. Through allegory and paradox, it denounces ideologies that underpin the following: authoritative knowledge, the relationships between class privilege and gender performance, and the hegemonic allegiance to Reproductive Futurism and materialism in Brazil of the 1980's. The text employs chronological variation, metafiction, several stories within the story, and

countless intertextual references, in order to depict knowledge as subjective and vulnerable, and gender as a learned, not innate human characteristic, that is performed according to the conditions established by the symbolic order of dominant Western ideologies.

Socio-economically and politically, the dominant ideology during that socio-historical context is the neoliberalism that the Right-wing military dictatorship bequeathed to the 'democracy' during the 'transition.'<sup>230</sup> The cultural ideology in 1980's Brazil that forms the base of not only neoliberalism's conservative underpinnings and its discursive stronghold, but also ideology from the political left, is the 'Reproductive Futurism' that Lee Edelman denounces for ignoring history and reproducing patterns of violence (22). Additionally, the role of science in defining conditions of gender in Western capitalist society is undeniable, as Maria Lugones points out when she questions the male/female dimorphism of Western biological traits and implies that these signifiers carry out their signifying, according to the heteropatriarchal cultural ideologies that maintain global Eurocentric capitalist exploitation (194-196).<sup>231</sup> The text's overall

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<sup>230</sup> In Milton Pinheiro's collection of essays called *Ditadura: o que resta da transição* (2014) Marcos Del Roio of the *Universidade Estadual Paulista* (UESP) considers the transition to have been no more than a reunification of the political power of capital that based itself on the neoliberal project that in its entirety presupposes a 'market democracy' for capital but for workers is more like a 'liberal fascism' (12-13).

<sup>231</sup> For more insight on the connection between gender performance and capitalism, R.W. Connell, in "Global tides: Market and Gender Dynamics on a World Scale" (2014) emphasizes that one must escape the Eurocentric discourse engulfing our own academic institutions and turn to social sciences coming from the global South. Connell's first recommendation is feminist theory like that of the Brazilian marxist Helieth Iara Bongiovani Saffioti's *A mulher na sociedade das classes: mito e realidade* (1976), which proposed the now widely accepted belief (e.g. hooks) that increased social freedoms and labor opportunities for women are the sign of an advanced society with greater freedoms for all who are otherwise oppressed (78). Then, Connell suggests the work of Maria Lugones, whose "Heterosexuality and the Colonial Modern Gender System" (2007) discusses specifically the connection between gender and capitalism by dialoguing with Anibal Quijano's "The Coloniality of Power" (2000), a text famous for denouncing capitalism's imposition of a race hierarchy advantageous to white Europeans. Lugones feels Quijano's account of gender does not escape the Eurocentric discourse that it is trying to scrutinize, calling it: "too narrow and overly biologized as it presupposes sexual dimorphism, heterosexuality, patriarchal distribution..." (193). She turns to Julie Greenberg's "Definitional Dilemmas" (2002) to counter Quijano's

coherence implies a similar perspective on the power wielded by the signifiers that construct gender, especially ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ and it denounces the role of gender performance in reinforcing the social acquiescence to the injustices of class privilege.

The novel is divided into five parts. In the first, the protagonist/narrator, who goes by the pseudonym Gustavo Flavio, portrays himself as a novelist, a glutton, and above all, a womanizer. Gustavo narrates to Minolta, his muse and life partner, telling her a risqué story about his affair with the socialite Delfina Delamare, who, like Gustavo, comes from humbler origins than the man with whom she is unhappily married, the wealthy Eugênio Delamare. Gustavo’s depictions of his sexual escapades with Delfina

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presupposed sexual dimorphism, “throughout U.S. history the law has failed to recognize intersexuals, in spite of the fact that 1 to 4 percent of the world’s population is intersexed” (194), and Lugones then questions how dimorphism and the fact that “‘gender’ is antecedent to the ‘biological traits’ and gives them meaning” serves global Eurocentric capitalist exploitation (195-6). She turns to Oyeronke Oyewùmí’s study of the Yoruba’s non gendered egalitarian society prior to Brazilian colonization to provide an example of the imposition of a gender system where one did not previously exist (196), and then Lugones cites Paula Gunn Allen’s study of Native American tribes described as examples of Gynocratic Egalitarianism (like the Cherokee) to explain colonialism’s epistemological violence through its concept of gender as opposed to a very different intersubjectivity from within which knowledge is produced than that of the coloniality of knowledge in modernity. Many American Indian tribes ‘thought that the primary potency in the universe was female, and that understanding authorizes all tribal activity’ ....Replacing this gynocratic spiritual plurality with one supreme male being as Christianity did, was crucial in subduing the tribes.... (Lugones 198-9)).

Thus, from its very beginning, capitalism in the Americas was founded on slavery’s narrative of race and on Judeo-Christian gender practices, namely, patriarchy, which, Lugones points out: “congealed as Europe advanced the colonial project(s) [and] took shape during the Spanish and Portuguese colonial adventures and became full blown in late modernity” (206). Lugones historically links ideology to gender performance by pointing out that, through repressive State apparatuses like slave masters, the military, or the police, and through ideological State apparatuses like the Church and education, the colonists were able to impose a patriarchal system of gender relations, and crucial to this patriarchal system is heteronormativity, about which Lugones says, “heterosexuality is not just biologized in a fictional way; it is compulsory and permeates the whole of the coloniality of gender in the renewed, large sense. In this sense, global, Eurocentric capitalism is heterosexualist” (201).

With respect to the heterosexual/homosexual binary, Mary McIntosh in “Queer Theory and the War of the Sexes” (1993) explains that identities of ‘heterosexual’ and ‘homosexual’ are but mere constructions of culture and further illustrates society’s role in the construction of sexual identities. These points made by McIntosh and Lugones (and of course Judith Butler’s earlier contributions) about the social process of gender and sexual identification continue to be at odds with dominant discourse that considers conventional gender norms unquestionable. Their theories are reminders of the malleability of knowledge.

seem more peculiar after he clarifies that he chose his pseudonym, because he identified with the French novelist Gustave Flaubert's aversion to women (142).<sup>232</sup> This ironic choice is one of the first indicators of *Bufo & Spallanzani*'s parody of heteronormativity, and Gustavo's description of the fiction that he writes also speaks to the novel's gender thematic: "Os velhos e sovados temas da liberdade sexual, da paixão sem possessão, do hedonismo, do direito ao prazer foram diretamente abordados por mim" (12).<sup>233</sup> Despite his calling these themes overused, the success that they bring him as a famous novelist, speaks to Minolta's influence in his life and to the popularity of a fictional representation of these topics in 1980's Brazil.

Eugênio Delamare's violent character indicates the text's intent to criticize his version of masculinity that is based on dominance and power obtained from class privilege, especially when he threatens to castrate Gustavo for his having cuckolded him. A more subtle subversion of Eugênio's masculinity occurs through the Police Detective Guedes; this humble, non-violent character, driven by an acute sense of criminal justice, suspects Gustavo may be guilty of murdering Delfina, because he finds an autographed, dedicated copy of Gustavo's novel "Os amantes" "The Lovers," in the same car where her body is discovered. Guedes's bosses call off the investigation after Eugênio's bribes arrange for a false murder confession by the gullible low-life Agenor. Although Guedes uncovers the ruse, in the end, a distorted version of the truth, far more favorable to Eugênio and his masculinity, is presented as fact in the news.

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<sup>232</sup> Aside from Delfina and Gustavo's names giving a nod to Flaubert, Gustavo's 'real' name of Ivan Canabrava seems to pay homage to Dostoyevsky's character Ivan Karamazov.

<sup>233</sup> "Los viejos y manidos temas de la libertad sexual de la pasión sin posesión, del hedonismo, del derecho al placer, fueron hábilmente abordados por mí" (Losada 10).

In Part II, Gustavo narrates about his earlier years in adulthood, when he still feared women, had no intentions of becoming a writer, and went by his real name of Ivan Canabrava.<sup>234</sup> The flashback sets up the novel's parody of heteronormativity, and, like the media's version of "O caso Delamare" ('the Delamare case'), it represents the subjectivity of empirical knowledge and truth. Ivan/Gustavo, convinced of his observations while working for the insurer Seguros Panamericana, uncovers a million dollar life insurance fraud, whereby the insured fakes his own death. Using a mixture of science, witchcraft, and himself for a guinea pig, Ivan/Gustavo is able to duplicate the client's faked death, only to be ignored and treated like a lunatic by everyone, including his bosses who are complicit in the insurance fraud. Enraged by this manipulation of truth, he goes to dig up the empty grave of the alleged deceased, but when a gravedigger from the cemetery tries to stop him, Ivan/Gustavo ends up wielding his shovel too forcefully and killing him. He is eventually rescued from an asylum by the teenage-hippy, Minolta, who had made her way into his life (and apartment) and saved him from his domineering girlfriend Zilda. Minolta hides Ivan/Gustavo for ten years, teaches him to love sex, and lives out her dream of being a writer by turning him into a famous author.

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<sup>234</sup> Losada's Spanish translation of the novel is entitled, '*Pasado negro*' ('dark/black past'), which is the title of Part II of the original Portuguese text, "*Meu passado negro*." Losada's title, like Fonseca's choice for Part II, is at minimum a double entendre that plays on the different meanings of '*negro*,' which could mean 'dark' as dark in color, dark as in Afro-Brazilian, or dark referring to morbidity. Given its complexity, all of these possibilities may apply. A similar play on words is available to '*pasado*,' which means not only 'past' or 'spoiled/rotten,' but also 'bold' or 'impudent,' especially in the context of gender relations. This latter meaning would then refer simultaneously to the protagonist's exaggerated heterosexual prowess and his Afro-Brazilian heritage. This interpretation points to the savage-versus-civilized race dichotomy that once had science's 'empirical' backing. Since the text indicates that Gustavo's 'savage' sexual prowess is a learned trait (and not inherited), this dichotomy is subverted. The text occasionally reminds readers that Gustavo is black in (the likely) case they are imagining him white, perhaps because of his particular style of discourse.



Part's III, IV and V take place in the literary present of the early to mid 1980's, mainly at a country resort called O Refugio do Pico do Gavião ('Falcon Peak Retreat'),<sup>235</sup> where Gustavo brings his TRS-80 computer to write his latest novel, yet is unable to overcome the whims of the market and his fear over Guedes's investigation which, like the TRS-80, impedes his creativity. Aside from Gustavo, among the guests at O Refugio are two heterosexual couples and a lesbian love triangle that ends up in another murder, before the arrival of Minolta and Guedes to the resort. Eventually, Gustavo becomes resentful of his philanderous, gluttonous existence, and nearly meets his death when Eugênio carries out his threat. The novel ends with Gustavo's confessing to Minolta about his role in assisting Delfina's suicide.

The text indicates its intention to portray the subjectivity of knowledge with the following phrase from Gustavo's dedication to Delfina in her copy of "Os amantes": "Para Delfina que sabe que a poesia é uma ciência tão exacta quanto a geometria."<sup>236</sup> Gustavo uses his erudition to impress and flatter Delfina, and he aims to accentuate the importance of his role as a writer by equating science with literature. When investigating Delfina's murder case, Guedes questions Gustavo about the dedication and his relationship with the victim, and Gustavo improvises the following explanation:

É uma frase do Flaubert. Que estava enganado, felizmente. Ele não conhecia, surgiu depois, a Filosofia da Dubitabilidade (V. Laktos): não existem ciências exactas, nem mesmo a matemática, livres de ambigüedades, de erros, de

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<sup>235</sup> 'Gavião' has a second connotation of a sexual nature used for several meanings. The two that best apply in the context of Gustavo's trip to the resort, and for his character in general, are 'pervert' and 'man who sleeps with wives of others, homebreaker.' <http://www.dicionarioinformal.com.br/gavi%E3o/>

<sup>236</sup> "Para Delfina, que sabe que la poesía es una ciencia tan exacta como la geometría" (Losada 14).

negligências. O valor da poesia está no paradoxo, o que a poesia diz é aquilo que não é dito. Eu devia ter escrito, ‘para Delfina que sabe que a poesia é aquilo que não é’” (24).<sup>237</sup>

Gustavo refers to ‘a poesia’ in the broader sense to include fiction, and he draws attention to the capacity for a story to represent what is not publicly said or what is not capable of being expressed, using conventional discourse, and indeed in part III, he writes a story that uses an allegory to denounce human behavior and gender performance. However, in the above citation, Gustavo undermines the significance that he wants to give to “a Filosofia da Dubitabilidade.” His problematic enthusiasm, as if the philosophy meant victory for the writer, is where *Bufo & Spallanzani* uses Gustavo to show the silliness in steadfastly holding one philosophy over another.

The humorous misspelling of ‘Laktos’ for the mathematician Lakotos, alludes to the inevitable clouding of knowledge as it is reproduced in discourse. And, if “A Filosofia da Dubitabilidade” were really so revolutionary, wouldn't telling Guedes be unnecessary, given that he is a detective whose job is to find the truth using empirical evidence? Informing Guedes, indirectly indicates the philosophy’s absence in hegemonic discourse. Conversely, during Guedes’s efforts to prove that Agenor’s confession is false, he uses his extensive knowledge of popular Brazilian culture in order to gain the suspect’s rapport: he correctly predicts Agenor is a devotee of São Jorge, belongs to the Mangueira samba school, and is either a fan of Vasco or Flamengo (233). In fact,

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<sup>237</sup> “Es una frase de Flaubert. Que estaba equivocado, por fortuna. El no conocía (apareció después) la Filosofía de la Dubitabilidad (véase Laktos): No existen ciencias exactas, ni siquiera la matemática, libres de ambigüedades, errores, negligencias El valor de la poesía está en su paradoja; lo que la poesía dice es lo que no se dica. Debía haber escrito: ‘Para Delfina, que sabe que la poesía es lo que no es’” (Losada 17-18).

Guedes's profiling of the lower class subject willing to give up his miserable freedom (and existence) for money represents a strong critique of the stagnating power in three of Brazil's most recognized cultural activities: church, futebol e carnaval.

While recognizing fiction's power to represent the weaknesses of structure, Gustavo's phrase, "a poesia é aquilo que não é," aside from thought provoking, indicates further hegemonic indifference to theoretical concepts that fiction is capable of demonstrating, because the phrase can be interpreted simply, to say that the concepts do not exist. Still, as the novel progresses, Gustavo's narration succeeds in ridiculing those who obtusely spurn poststructuralism while defending their claim to hegemonic discourse. For example, Orion annoys Gustavo with his banal perspective on literature and refers to, "...esses filósofos franceses que ... não tendo o que dizer optam por ser verborragicamente crípticos" (178).<sup>238</sup>

Orion's simple generalization resonates with the biologist Richard Dawkins who insults Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Julia Kristeva, referring to them as, "icons of Francophonyism" (347). The novel exposes the vulnerability of taking sides with one particular form of knowledge over another, and it does not leave out Gustavo's all-out attack on authoritative knowledges. This next passage announces the Gustavo's defiance of authoritative knowledge, and it is *fonsequian* metafiction at its finest. The protagonist/narrator, who is a writer, discusses the how a writer should write:

O escritor deve ser essencialmente um subversivo e a sua linguagem não pode ser nem a mistificatória do político (e do educador), nem a repressiva, do governante.

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<sup>238</sup> "Me parece que las palabras raras para esos filósofos franceses que... cuando no tienen qué decir, echan mano de una verborrea críptica..." (Losada 116).

A nossa linguagem deve ser a do não conformismo, da não falsidade, da não-opressão. Não queremos dar ordem ao caos, como supõem alguns teóricos. E nem mesmo tornar o caos compreensível. Duvidamos de tudo sempre, inclusive da lógica. Escritor tem que ser cético. Tem que ser contra a moral e os bons costumes. Propércio pode ter tido o pudor de contar certas coisas que sua olhos viram, mas sabia que a poesia busca a sua melhor matéria nos ‘maus costumes’ (V. Veyne). A poesia, a arte enfim, transcende os critérios de utilidade e nocividade, até mesmo o da compreensibilidade. Toda linguagem muito inteligível é mentirosa (147-8).<sup>239</sup>

The opposition to political rhetoric and institutional/cultural oppression jumps from the page. Critic Nelson Vieira points out that the novel’s use of metafiction cautions, “... readers to be suspicious and aware of those established codes, discourses, and patterns, exuding power, control and authority” (584).<sup>240</sup> Vieira’s summary indicates the all encompassing style of Gustavo’s corrosive attack on any sort of intellectual/authoritative discourse: scientists, poststructuralists, or whoever claims to signify knowledge. However, this all-inclusiveness is problematic, because it is just as rhetorical as the ideology about which he warns.

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<sup>239</sup>“El escritor debe ser esencialmente un subversivo, y su lenguaje no puede ser ni el lenguaje mistificador del político (y del educador), ni el represivo del gobernante. Nuestro lenguaje debe ser el del no conformismo, el de la no falsedad, el de la no, opresión. No queremos poner orden en el caos, como suponen algunos teóricos. Ni siquiera ser el caos comprensible. Dudamos de todo siempre, incluso de la lógica. El escritor tiene que ser escéptico. Tiene que estar contra la moral y las buenas costumbres. Propércio puede haber tenido el pudor de contar ciertas cosas que sus ojos vieron, pero sabía que la poesía busca su mejor materia en las ‘malas costumbres’ (Vease Veyne). La poesía, el arte en fin, trasciende los criterios de utilidad y nocividad, incluso los de comprensibilidad. Todo lenguaje muy inteligible es mentiroso” (Losado 97).

<sup>240</sup> In “Metafiction and the Question of Authority in the Postmodern novel form Brazil” (1991), Vieira refers to the use of metafiction as a subversive aspect of *Bufo & Spallanzani*.

Silva's considering the fonssequian narrator as the voice of the author (52, 107), is a tempting conclusion to draw for the above passage, especially because Gustavo mentions how Propercio found his muse, "nos 'maus costumes,'" which is verbatim a phrase from the judicial findings that censored Fonseca's *Feliz ano novo* (1975).<sup>241</sup> Also, his appealing to the taboo in order to corrode knowledge and authority resonates with queer theory's resistance to the symbolic order.

In his criticizing the utilitarian absolutes of *utilidade e nocividade*, Gustavo resists the absolutism that lines political language, which is similar to David Harvey's cautioning against the unverifiable 'common sense' rhetoric that underpins neoliberal ideology and principles (23). However, Gustavo corrodes his own statement about absolutes when he makes the absolutely broad generalization that works with both meanings of *inteligível*: either all accessible language is a lie or all philosophical and intellectual language is a lie. Gustavo shares a few other subversive texts within the text, one of which uses allegory to criticize his own 'masculine' gender performance. The fact that he never mentions this specific interpretation becomes part of the text's critique of his masculinity.

In Part one, Gustavo explains how he and Delfina's initial sexual encounter inspired him to write a story, entitled, "Ouverture de *Bufo & Spallanzani*": While unable to perform sexually, Gustavo's nervousness and pitiful attempts to gain an erection cause Delfina to run to the bathroom, where Gustavo follows and accidentally creates an explosion while lighting the gas-powered water heater. He covers Delfina's body with

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<sup>241</sup> Silva documents how *Feliz ano novo* was banned on the grounds that it violated respect for good moral customs. This decision was followed by a thirteen year court battle that lasted well into the 'transition to democracy' (121).

his, to protect her from the flames that he cannot feel, because of the wonderful sex that ensues from all the excitement (12-14). “Ouverture de *Bufo & Spallanzani*” is part of his unfinished novel, also entitled *Bufo & Spallanzani*, and this gene-like replicating of titles and criticisms indicates his story’s function as the nucleus of the actual novel by Fonseca. This model of replication coincides with the Ouverture’s plot that involves an experiment in reproductive behavior, and allegorically implicates Western society’s unquestioned allegiance to heteronormative masculinities and Reproductive Futurism.

Taking place in Italy during the eighteenth century, Spallanzani is a catholic priest and a biologist who demonstrates to his companion/colleague Laura, that the Bufo toad’s instinctive obsession with reproduction cannot be deterred. He proves this by exposing the male *Bufo marinus* to the female. As they begin to copulate, Spallanzani holds a candle flame to the male’s leg and burns it off. Unphased, the male does not release the female while his toad-flesh is burning, and he keeps her within his grasp as he copulates, eventually releasing a final song “um som forte e mavioso, cheio de harmonia e beleza,” (175) before dying.<sup>242</sup> Spallanzani and Laura conclude that this unbreakable obsession to reproduce is why the *Bufo marinus* has survived for three-hundred million years, but the story ends abruptly: “O sábio não percebeu as badaladas do sino da Ghirlandina, nem o peso delicado da mão de Laura sobre o seu ombro. Logo a noite caiu fria sobre a praça deserta. “‘Inferno’, murmurou Spallanzani” (175).<sup>243</sup>

Gustavo’s interpretation of the ending seems questionable: Spallanzani’s murmuring “inferno” in the end is due to his frustration at his inability to explain the

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<sup>242</sup> “... un son fuerte y maravilloso, lleno de armonía y belleza (Losada 114).

<sup>243</sup> “El sabio no percibió las campanadas de Ghirlandina, ni el peso delicado de la mano de Laura en su hombro. Luego cayó la noche fría sobre la plaza desierta. ‘Inferno,’ murmuró Spallanzani” (Losada 114).

existence of toads in relation to humans, given that Darwin was not yet born and science still held the belief that the sun orbited the earth (190). However, not long before this text appears in the main storyline, Gustavo specifically mentions how one day, he would like to write about the reptilian part of the human brain, “responsavel, para alguns, pelo lado mais ‘humano’ do nosso comportamento e, para outros, pelo mais ‘animal.’” (159).<sup>244</sup>

Of all the interpretive explanations that he offers the guests at O Refugio, he never mentions the possibility of Bufo being an allegory for human behavior. Gustavo focuses on Spallanzani, saying he symbolizes the arrogance of scientific authority (180),<sup>245</sup> even though his story includes the reptilian/human behavior theme that wanted to explore. If, in the end, Spallanzani were contemplating Bufo’s representing ‘man’s obsessively copulating amidst the flames, in fulfillment of his duty as preserver of the species, he would have much more reason to say “inferno” after the experiment. Both ironically and paradoxically, the story says what Gustavo does not say.

In Bufo’s perseverance, he represents the Western subject willing to torture himself (or others) in the name of future generations and in fulfillment of his duty as a ‘man.’ He denounces the reptilian simplicity of human obsessions with heteronormative gender performance and Reproductive Futurism. The flames and the ‘inferno’ symbolize the war and violence that result from the importance attributed to the signifier ‘man.’ This interpretation speaks to Edleman’s critique of the power granted to the signifiers of gender, in which he also implicates the authority of science as a producer of knowledge:

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<sup>244</sup> “...responsable, para algunos, del lado más ‘humano’ de nuestro comportamiento, y para otros, del más animal” (Losada 104).

<sup>245</sup> Losada’s Spanish translation about the meaning of ‘Bufo’: “El Aurelio, que es el diccionario que consulta habitualmente el inspector Guedes, da para “Bufo” las siguientes acepciones: lechuza, usurero, misántropo” (19).

“It is only, after all, to [science’s] figures of meaning, which we take as the literal truth, that we owe our existence as subjects and the social relations within which we live -- relations we may well be willing, therefore, to give up our lives to maintain” (18). In the interpretation of the ending that is not said, but to which the text unequivocally indicates, Spallanzani, a scientist, comes away with theoretical knowledge about human gender performance. What is paradoxical about Gustavo’s forgetting the reptilian/human allegory is that in both instances where he offers explanations for his story, he is making an effort to impress women: first Juliana (180), and then Roma (190). He is trapped in his own heteronormative gender performance to discuss it. By Gustavo’s not spelling out the allegory, the text is able to say what is not said.

In Gustavo’s construction of his own identity, his self-identification with the “sátiro” ‘satyr’ or ‘lecher’ type of masculinity, parodies both heteronormative masculinities and the use of the sinthomosexual in Western cultural productions.<sup>246</sup> He is paradoxical because he simultaneously represents the acquiescence to and incongruence with heteronormative masculinity and Reproductive Futurism. He is unmarried, has no children, and has always allowed women to dictate his life. Also, as if he were pledging allegiance to Edleman’s queer resistance against the Child, Gustavo specifically explains that since his days as a primary school teacher, he hates children and always has: “... odiava crianças (ainda odeio até hoje) .... não existia para mim, nada tão repugnante, tão

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<sup>246</sup> For Edleman, the sinthomosexual is crucial for Reproductive Futurism’s cultural productions, since the character functions as a necessary target to be humiliated because he does not reproduce (45). Edleman mentions Charles Dicken’s childless ‘Scrooge’ from *A Christmas Carol* as an example of a sinthomosexual villain, and he analyzes the effeminate and childless ‘Scar’ from Disney’s *The Lion King*. Other sinthomosexual characters easily come to mind, such as *The Smurfs*’s Gargamel.



irritante, tão chato, repulsivo, abominável quanto um aluno de tenra idade” (77).<sup>247</sup>

However, despite this overt aspect of his queer resistance, Gustavo indirectly resists Reproductive Futurism and heteronormativity by maintaining some structures of conventional gender discourse. His embodying a ridiculously high, heterosexual drive is so ‘over-the-top,’ it parodies the same compulsory repetition represented by the male Bufo toad, and similarly, he represents the socially compulsory repetition of a fearfully ‘not-gay’ identity. The texts uses these aspects of him in order to depict the self-policing and repetition required by his heteronormative version of masculinity, which the following paragraphs further illustrate.

Before meeting Minolta, Gustavo’s first real relationship with any woman is clearly an act against his will: “a visão do corpo feminino não me atraía, a proximidade do sexo feminino me assustava, quando eu ia para cama com a Zilda eu evitava olhar para sua vagina...” (69).<sup>248</sup> Minolta encourages Gustavo to develop his masculinity when they first meet, saying, “Seu lado feminino é inexpressivo, sem substância, desenraizado. Desista. Desenvolva o seu lado masculino, que tal vez dê alguma coisa” (93).<sup>249</sup> Shaping Gustavo’s sático masculinity, Minolta embodies the female role in the construction of masculinities. His early adult years in Part II are a far cry from the “satíriase” ‘insatiable sexual appetite’ towards women that he shows in Parts I and III.

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<sup>247</sup> “... odiaba a los niños (aun los odio hoy). Cuando era maestro, no existía, para mí, nada tan repugnante, tan irritante, tan pesado, tan repulsivo, como un alumno de tierna edad. Me hubiera gustado matar a varios antes de abandonar aquella profesión” (Losada 51-2).

<sup>248</sup> “No me atraía la visión del cuerpo de una mujer, me asustaba la proximidad del sexo femenino; cuando iba a la cama con Zilda evitaba mirarle la vagina, cuyo hedor, aunque acabara de bañarse, me repugnaba” (Losada 47).

<sup>249</sup> ““Tu lado femenino es inexpressivo, insustancial, desarraigado. Dejaló. Desarrolla tu lado masculino; de ahí tal vez puedas sacar algo’ sentenció Minolta” (Losada 61).

Gustavo's heteronormative 'not-gay' anxiety and 'masculine' self-policing echo early studies on Western masculinities indicating homosexuality oppressed, repressed, and positioned lower in the socially constructed, collectively imagined hierarchies of masculinities (Connell 831). He repetitiously self-polices with phrases like, "Não existe coisa mais bonita do que uma mulher bonita" (194),<sup>250</sup> or, "Se há uma coisa que me irrita é conversar com homem" (185).<sup>251</sup> Also, Gustavo repeatedly mentions his heterosexual desire and prowess; for example, he discusses his daily sexual encounters with Delfina, who, he claims, had never had an orgasm before being with him (14).

Nevertheless, he is candid with his remarks about this desire having developed during his transformation over ten years in hiding with Minolta:<sup>252</sup> "Minolta me ensinou a amar. Me ensinou a gostar de comer. Fazíamos amor várias vezes, todos os dias. Engordei trinta quilos" (142),<sup>253</sup> and eating is important for the insatiable aspect of his sátiro identity, as is his size (Gustavo is about 6'3" and weighs well over 300 lbs.). In this next fragment, Gustavo implicates his sátiro masculinity as a performance governed by conditions that he must constantly affirm: "O rosto dela, porém, me parecia despidiendo, pelo menos naquele momento de ódio. Odeio todas as mulheres enquanto inatingidas.

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<sup>250</sup> "No hay cosa más hermosa que una mujer hermosa" (Losada 126).

<sup>251</sup> "Si hay algo que me irrita, es conversar con un hombre" (Losada 120).

<sup>252</sup> This period can be seen as an allegory for those forced into hiding from political persecution during the dictatorship for their leftist or subversive ideas. Ivan commits the homicide that results in his hiding while trying to uncover the scam committed against employer *Panamericana* insurance, whose name hints towards Northern economic and political impositions. The narration depicts Ivan's efforts as perceived by his co-workers and employers, who are either cautiously silent or complicit in the scam, as subversive actions that they successfully skew towards insane actions.

<sup>253</sup> "Minolta me enseñó a amar. Me enseñó a amar la comida. Hacíamos el amor varias veces al día. Engordé treinta kilos" (Losado 92).

Creio que todos os sátiros são assim” (149).<sup>254</sup> His confessing a shallow hatred for women not physically possessed seems strikingly reptilian/human. He alludes to more of these conditions in the following monologue: “Não estou interessado no que ... as mulheres pensam de mim, desde que continuem indo pra cama comigo. Chamam-me de maníaco sexual, mas o que querem que eu faça com o meu pau que vive duro? Pau duro foi feito para enfiar na boceta das mulheres et cetera” (217).<sup>255</sup>

In this sample of his act, the ‘et cetera’ is important because it indicates that his audience recognizes this list of heteronormative ‘masculine’ phrases, and that they would know how to complete it. It is an excellent example of the compulsory repetition of performed, gendered discourse. Gustavo depicts the Western male’s ongoing attempt to embody and fulfill the requirements of meaning for the signifier ‘man,’ in order to be considered fully “man”: “The Symbolic Order repeats and displaces this lack as desire” (Edelman 97). From the point made by Edelman and through Gustavo’s paradoxical performance, one is able to conclude that his “displacing this lack as desire” is simply filling the void with still more void.

For Minolta, paradoxically, his feigning heteronormative desire is sufficient for her definition of developing his ‘masculine side,’ and therefore, sufficient for fulfilling the meaning of the signifier ‘man.’ As part of this effort, Gustavo maintains the gender binary at every opportunity, by expressing a natural attraction towards women and

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<sup>254</sup> “Su rostro, sin embargo, me parecía displicente, por lo menos en aquel momento de odio. Odio a todas las mujeres mientras están intactas. Creo que todos los sátiros somos así” (Losada 98). Here, Losada’s translation of ‘*intactas*’ for ‘*inatingidas*’ is remarkable and brilliantly pertinent for Gustavo’s chauvinistic performance of male dominance.

<sup>255</sup> “No me interesa... lo que piensan de mi las mujeres, a condición de que sigan acostándose conmigo. Me llaman maniaco sexual, pero ¿qué quieren que haga cuando se le empalma? El chisme ese fue hecho para meterlo en las mujeres, etc.” (Losada 140).

aversion to men, which keeps him in constant conflict. Below is an example of this self-defeating self-policing:

uma enorme limusine chegou à praça e dela saltou uma mulher (eu sempre via as mulheres primeiro) e um homem ... Quanto ao homem, apesar do queixo forte e dos ombros largos, havia qualquer coisa nele de criança mimada, um jeito fricoteiro de apor um lábio sobre o outro, de virar a cabeça, de colocar e tirar as mãos dos bolsos (148-50).<sup>256</sup>

Gustavo's 'not-gay' performance above, tangentially provides a description of the man's nervous gestures, which he depicts as features of a spoiled-brat, bourgeois masculinity. His aversion to males is especially apparent at the country resort O Refúgio, where he meets the aforementioned Orion, whose version of masculinity has conditions quite similar to Gustavo's, such as a feigned arrogance that is repelling to other males: "O que teria causado aquela hostilidade? O meu tamanho? Isso acontece muito, os sujeitos baixinhos ficam ressentidos porque sou grande e as mulheres me acham bonito" (164).<sup>257</sup> His explanation reassures his large, 'masculine' identity, as does attributing Orion's perceived resentment, to envy.

Lastly, Gustavo's performance requires the approving gaze of a woman: "A mulher, com ar enfadado, correu um olhar desinteressado pela praça, passando por cima da minha cabeça, o que deve ter sido uma atitude deliberada pois sou muito grande e

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<sup>256</sup> "...una enorme limusina llego a la plaza y de ella saltó una mujer (yo veía siempre primero a las mujeres) y un hombre.... En cuanto al hombre, pese al mentón fuerte y los hombros anchos, había algo en él de niño mimado, una manera afectada de montar un labio sobre el otro, de volver la cabeza, de meter y sacar las manos de los bolsillos" (Losada 98).

<sup>257</sup> "¿Cual sera el motivo de aquella hostilidad? Mi estatura? Eso ocurre mucho, los tipos bajitos sienten irritación ante mi porque soy alto y las mujeres me encuentran guapo" (107).

atraente para ser ignorado por qualquer mulher numa praça vazia” (149).<sup>258</sup> This generalization assumes no woman would ever fail to provide the gaze that his big-sexy version of masculinity commands.

Gustavo’s objectification of females during his trip to O Refugio enhances his heteronormative self-policing and informs his interpretation of their gender performance in relation to his perception of their class privilege. He uses the metaphor of a ballerina, in order to describe the inherently feminine, refined movement that he approvingly observes in Roma: “Nos momentos em que o ônibus caía num dos muitos buracos da estrada... ela era a única pessoa cujos movimentos não se tornavam grotescos, conseguia ser jogada cima e para baixo com a graça de uma bailarina” (152).<sup>259</sup> The metaphor serves to reinforce his masculinity, which obligates him to appreciate her graceful femininity.

The ballet thematic resurfaces when he says that of all the arts, he hates ballet the most (153), but then Minolta later catches him expressing intrigue for ballet and points out that he is knowledgeable of the moves (291), thus exposing Gustavo’s act for the reader and making the parody all the more apparent. Also, his depiction of Roma’s class privileged, emphasized femininity includes her bragging about her mink coat, which Gustavo perceives as a heartless extravagance: “Nesse instante ouvi a mulher elegante [Roma] dizer ao seu acompanhante que devia ter trazido o seu casaco de vison. Então ela tem um casaco de vison, pensei, essa torpe predadora, essa exibicionista ridícula. Fiquei

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<sup>258</sup> “La mujer, con aire enfadado, paso una mirada indiferente por la plaza, pasando por encima de mi cabeza, cosa que debió de ser una actitud deliberada, pues soy muy alto y atractivo para ser ignorado por cualquier mujer en una plaza vacía” (Losada 98).

<sup>259</sup> “En los momentos en que el microbús caía en uno de los muchos baches del camino... ella era la única cuyos movimientos no resultaban grotescos: gracia de una bailarina” (Losada 100).

olhando o seu belo, mas frio perfil (152).<sup>260</sup> So, although he first praises the ‘natural,’ ballerina-like conditions of her femininity, which, given his history, is questionable, he then opposes himself to the exclusivity of her class privileged gender performance, and indicates an aversion to this ‘predatory,’ bourgeois condition of her femininity, which the text indicates is a more genuine criticism of her class-privileged gender performance.

Gustavo’s peculiarities, eccentricities, and his occasionally ‘breaking character’ during his heteronormative performance, carry out a direct queering of heteronormative masculinity. These queering aspects of him come to a head in his following ‘confession’: “Uma confissão: tenho atração pelos ofídios em geral, talvez por ser tão pouco feminino” (158).<sup>261</sup> He implies his queer affinity to the indicated phallic reference of the serpent, but also to what the serpent represents biblically which is Satan, the creator of all evil for those who pledge allegiance to Reproductive Futurism’s judeo-christian dogma.

At times he fails to cover the repressed homosexuality within him: “os rios são mais bonitos que as montanhas porque se movimentam para onde querem e os homens, quer dizer, as mulheres, mais bonitas do que os cavalos porque...” (333-4).<sup>262</sup> He is quick to make the correction, “quer dizer, as mulheres,” because something dangerously ‘gay’ surfaced, but the slip is overt and indicates its parody of heteronormative self-policing.

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<sup>260</sup> “En ese instante oí a la mujer elegante que decía a su acompañante que debía haberse traído el abrigo de visón. Es decir, que tiene un abrigo de visón, pensé, esa torpe predatora, esa exhibicionista ridícula” (Losada 100).

<sup>261</sup> “Una confesión: me atraen los ofídios en general, tal vez por ser tan poco femenino” (Losada 104).

<sup>262</sup> “... los ríos son más bonitos que las montañas porque se mueven, y los caballos más bonitos que los ríos porque se mueven hasta donde quieren, y los hombres, es decir las mujeres, más bonitas que los caballos porque inventan movimientos” (Losada 217).

When Gustavo is around food, his language reflects his effort to perform according to his act of *satíriase*. Meal-time at O Refugio becomes the perfect context to portray himself as an insatiable ‘man’: “O odor e a visão daquelas panelas fumegantes deram-me saudade da presença feminina” (160).<sup>263</sup> In his effort to make his heteronormative identity seem genuinely gluttonous, he struggles to keep up with all of the specifications that he makes for it, and contradicts himself.

One minute he is saying, “Quando devoro iguarias não penso em mulheres e vice versa”(161),<sup>264</sup> and then later he negates this rule and sexualizes his food, saying, “Roma sentara-se numa mesa próxima à minha e houve um momento em que eu, ao mastigar o tenro coelho, imaginei, sem nenhuma lubricidade porém, estar mordendo as viçosas bochechas dela. Seus zigomas eram salientes e nobres, tinham exuberancia terrena e pura dos frutos da natureza. Uma mulher edível, sob todos os aspectos (181).<sup>265</sup> Similar to his mistakes when attempting to maintain heteronormative language, this contradiction begs for readers to call him out on his act, as does his interaction with one particularly effeminate ‘male’ at O Refúgio, named ‘Carlos,’ who unnerves Gustavo.

His being troubled by this androgyny, speaks to the disruptive resistance of the *sinthomosexual*: “A voz dele era esquisita, ele tinha qualquer coisa de inquietantemente feminino” (169).<sup>266</sup> ‘Carlos’ is the only guest to ever ride the resort’s unbroken horse

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<sup>263</sup> “El olor y la visión de aquellas cacerolas humeantes despertaron en mí la añoranza de presencia femeninas” (Losada 105).

<sup>264</sup> “Cuando devoro un manjar apetitoso, no pienso en las mujeres y viceversa” (Losada 105).

<sup>265</sup> “Roma se había sentado en una mesa próxima a la mía, y hubo un momento en que yo, al masticar el tierno conejo, imagine, creo que sin ninguna lubricidad, estar mordiendo las lozanas mejillas de la mujer. Sus zigomas eran salientes y nobres, tenían la exuberancia terrenal y pura de los frutos propios de la naturaleza. La mujer edible, en todos los sentidos” (Losada 118).

<sup>266</sup> “Su voz era rara, tenía algo de inquietantemente femenino” (Losada 110).

named Berazabum, which, as Gustavo explains, is “uma corruptela de Belzebu. O Demônio” (156).<sup>267</sup> Like Lacan’s term *sinthome*, from which Edleman created the term *sinthomosexual*, the horse’s name is a corrupt signifier, and like an unbroken horse that refuses to be ridden, corrupt signifiers are intractable in their resistance to signification. ‘Carlos,’ we later discover, is really Maria, and Gustavo refers to her as ‘Carlos-Maria,’ which is still another corrupt signifier. She fits the *sinthomosexual* designation because of her cross-dressing lesbianism and because she disrupts the order at O Refugio, when she inspires Euridice’s jealousy, resulting in Suzy’s being murdered. Their love triangle becomes clear through the stories that the participating guests share in their little contest.

Inspired by a personal attack from Orion, Gustavo challenges the guests to a writing contest (165). Suzy’s story, about a passionate, young, wealthy couple named Maria e José, depicts what Judith Butler calls “a different sort of repeating” (520), because Maria, differs from the heteronormative self-policing that is typically associated with her name. She rides horses every morning with exceptional ability, while José takes care of the, “rituais masculinos.” Suzy comments that the rich, “são ritualistas, você sabe” (213).<sup>268</sup> Although this comment and the biblical names indicate a relationship between the the class privileged and the cultural reproduction of Christian heteropatriarchal gender practices, Maria’s horseback riding, as Gustavo is quick to mention, alludes to a sexualized defiance of that ideology.

Equally defiant of that ideology is Maria’s vow to kill José should he ever betray her. ‘Carlos-Maria’ is a *sinthomosexualized* reference to Mary of the New Testament for

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<sup>267</sup> “Es una corrupción de Belcebú. El Diablo (Losada 102).

<sup>268</sup> “... rituales masculinos. Los ricos son ritualistas. Usted lo sabe” (Losada 138).



three reasons: because of her lesbianism, because she shot José (Joseph) for having broken the pact of fidelity, and because she is without The Child (Jesus). When Suzy shares her story with Gustavo, she shows him a scrap of paper containing the description of a beautiful woman, taken from an unspecified text. Suzy's comment about it, "nenhum homem escreveria assim, só uma mulher seria capaz de escrever assim sobre outra mulher"<sup>269</sup>(215), points to the idea of a gendered style of writing, but since she is aiming this comment at Gustavo, a famous novelist, she also denounces male-author privilege.

Additionally, their dialogue echoes the Foucauldian perspective on authorship,<sup>270</sup> which becomes more apparent when Gustavo parenthetically mentions that the description she shared was taken from an interview with "M. Duras," which, more than likely, is a reference to Marguerite Duras, author of *The Lover* (1984), whose title is eerily similar to Gustavo's novel *Os amantes* ('The Lovers'). Additionally, Suzy's discussion of her palm readings and Tarot cards, hint at her knowledge of Gustavo's role in the death of Delfina Delamare (216), which recalls the novel's thematic of multiple knowledges.

Roma's story provokes more dialogue around the sinthomosexual thematic. Gustavo shares a summary of Roma's story with Minolta, and his description of one of the characters, leads to a brief yet significant conversation between Minolta and Gustavo about the sinthomosexual: "ex-bailarino, homossexual, que pinta os cabelos ... não sei bem se é o vilão'... 'Ele é o vilão por ser homossexual ou por pintar os cabelos?'"

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<sup>269</sup> "Ningún hombre escribiría así. Solo una mujer sería capaz de escribir así sobre otra mujer" (Losada 138).

<sup>270</sup> Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?" *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*. New York: New, 1998. 205-22. Print.

(288).<sup>271</sup> Minolta's question indicates that she is aware of the homosexual/villain cliché. Gustavo's response not only affirms both of her suppositions, but also indicates that he too is aware of the cliché: "Tem também as pernas magras e provavelmente fez uma operação plástica no rosto" (288).<sup>272</sup> Then, he adds more description as if it could 'redeem' the character's homosexuality: "Porém Roma reconhece que é um homem charmoso, erudito e inteligente" (288).<sup>273</sup>

Gustavo indicates that he understands the absurdity in Roma's attempt at 'redeeming' homosexuality, but Minolta's questioning whether he was 'cured' of condition (297) points to a residual homophobic ideology in hegemonic discourse. Like, Carlos-Maria and the characters in Roma's story, Gustavo too embodies the sinthomosexual in *Bufo & Spallanzani*, despite his whole heterosexual act and because of it. During the investigation of Suzy's murder at O Refugio, it is Gustavo who suddenly is seen as the resort's villain. Suzy's murder is nearly pinned on him (301-2); he is the only single man at O Refugio; he hates kids, writes for a living, and is uninterested in reproducing.

He and Trinidad, the resort's owner, represent conflicting masculinities and ideologies. The name 'Trinidad' references the 'Holy Trinity' of Christianity, heretofore (though not all sects) intolerant of homosexuality. At breakfast when Trinidad convinces Gustavo to try the eggs from his 'hormone free' chickens, his language is indicative of Reproductive Futurism's dependence on villainizing the homosexual to protect The

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<sup>271</sup> "Entonces aparece en la historia un individuo, que no se bien si es o no el malo..." '¿Él es malo por homosexual o por teñirse el pelo?' (Losada 188).

<sup>272</sup> "También tiene las piernas muy flacas, y probablemente se hizo una cirugía plástica" (Losada 188).

<sup>273</sup> "No obstante, Roma reconoce que es un hombre encantador, erudito e inteligente" (Losada 188).

Child, as well as the ideology's need for a constant, collective reaffirmation of the homosexual's status as the enemy: "Tenho a impressão ... que o aumento do homossexualismo e outras formas de perversão sexual resultam disso ... O senhor não acha?" (187).<sup>274</sup> Although he finds Trindade's theory to be a sure sign of ignorance, Gustavo's response at first maintains the 'othering' apparent in Trindade's discourse, and projects himself apart from homosexuality, but then breaks from his repetitious heteronormative discourse and subtly ridicules Trindade by exposing how essential his condition of homophobia is to his performance of masculinity: "Homossexualismo não é perversão ... são pessoas normais como o senhor.' 'Como eu, não!' 'Como eu, então'" (187).<sup>275</sup> The remainder of their dialogue at breakfast, and their interaction throughout the novel proves crucial to the text's parody of the hetero/homosexual binary.

Perhaps the novel's most extreme mockery of gender performance occurs when Gustavo finds Trindade in the forest using a flamethrower, "desses que se vêem no cinema,"<sup>276</sup> for pest control (207). An enormous (but completely singed) spider scares Gustavo to the point that he fears he could lose his reproductive organs (208), which indicates his need for the assurance these afford his 'masculine' performance. The flamethrower incident is an intertextual reference within the text (to the "Ouverture"),

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<sup>274</sup> "Tengo la impresión... que el aumento de la homosexualidad y otras formas de perversión sexual tienen algo que ver con esto... ¿No cree?" (Losada 122).

<sup>275</sup> "La homosexualidad no es una perversión... son personas normales, como usted.' '¿Como yo no!' 'Bueno, pues como yo'" (Losada 122).

<sup>276</sup> "... como los que se ven en el cine" (Losada 133).

that also ridicules the bellicose glorification typical of U.S. (Hollywood) cultural productions from this time period.<sup>277</sup>

More parody of the hetero/homosexual binary occurs when Gustavo automatically interprets Suzy's inviting him to her Bungalow as an attempt to get him into bed. Under this erroneous assumption, his reaction conveyed via inner monologue parodies the binary by exposing inconsistencies in his logic concerning it: "Que diabo queria ela? Suas preferências sexuais me pareciam definidas, todavia... Eu já havia ido para a cama com algumas mulheres homossexuais e não via diferenças fundamentais entre uma homo e uma hetero" (210).<sup>278</sup>

On the one hand, his thoughts continue to represent an effort to perform heteronormative promiscuity by boasting of a personal experience with lesbians and by signaling towards their supposed 'otherness,' which strategically denies his own homosexuality. On the other, his 'raised consciousness' as a result of this personal experience serves to make his heteronormative performance seem all the more natural, again, keeping himself on the safer, heterosexual side of the hetero/homosexual binary.

What further enhances the irony of the situation is that on the table in Suzy's bungalow, where Gustavo tries and fails to seduce her, stands a thirty centimeter high statue of an owl that is an intertextual reference to Dashiell Hammet's *Maltese Falcon*. The 'falcon' parodies Gustavo's attempt at acting the part of the irresistibly 'masculine'

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<sup>277</sup> Ted Kotcheff's *Rambo First Blood* (1982) and *Rambo First Blood Part II* (1985) come to mind, the latter having been released the year *Bufo & Spallanzani* was published.

<sup>278</sup> "¿Qué diablos querría? Sus preferencias sexuales me parecían muy definidas, pero... Yo me había acostado con lesbianas, y no veía diferencia entre una homo y una hetero" (Losada 135).

detective Sam Spade (210). His awkward, rejected attempt at making a pass on Suzy depicts the artificiality in his forced heteronormativity.

The dialogue produced by the short story competition also condemns the social tendency to envy class-privilege. First, when Gustavo gives Suzy feedback on her story, he criticizes its obsession with the upper class: “A preocupação com os ricos é típica dos periféricos da alta burguesia” (214).<sup>279</sup> Similarly, as Gustavo resumes Roma’s story, he skips the parts reflecting Roma’s obsession with her rich and famous lifestyle: “Vou pular essa parte contendo descrições das festas dos grã-finos. Festa de rico é igual no mundo inteiro.... Há um trecho enorme sobre os hábitos decadentes dos ricos. Mas ricos cheirando cocaína é um lugar comum demais e vou pular esse pedaço” (288-9).<sup>280</sup>

Then, Gustavo reveals how his own obsession with being rich and white has impeded his creativity: “lembrei-me de Minolta ... quando comentava minha dificuldade em escrever *Bufo & Spallanzani*: ‘o seu mal’, dissera Minolta, ‘foi não querer ser negro e pobre, por isso você deixou de ser um grande escritor... preferiu ser branco e rico e a partir do momento em que fez essa escolha matou o que de melhor existia em você’” (214).<sup>281</sup> Minolta’s assessment gives another twist to the title of Part II, “Meu passado negro,” because it indicates that in constructing his new identity, he made a decision to negate his ‘negritude.’

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<sup>279</sup> “La preocupación por los ricos es típica de los periféricos de la alta burguesía, como *coiffeurs*, dueños de restaurantes, putas joyeros, cartománticos, etc.” (Losada 138).

<sup>280</sup> “Voy a saltarme esta parte, que son todo descripciones de fiestas de la buena sociedad. Las fiestas de los ricos son iguales en todo el mundo.... Hay un párrafo enorme sobre los hábitos decadentes de los ricos, pero lo de los ricos tomando cocaína es un tópico excesivo y voy a saltar ese pedazo” (Losada 189).

<sup>281</sup> “Recordé a Minolta, la víspera de mi viaje al refugio, cuando yo comentaba mi dificultad para escribir *Bufo & Spallanzani*: ‘Tu mal,’ dijo Minolta, ‘fue no querer ser negro y pobre. Eso es lo que te ha impedido ser un gran escritor. Equivocadamente, elegiste ser blanco y rico, y a partir del momento en que hiciste esta elección mataste lo mejor que había en ti’ (Losada 138).

As Gustavo recognizes that he has been motivated and impeded by his envy of the class-privileged, and by his longing for their acceptance, he indicates that this obsession to be rich and white has influenced his exaggerated gender performance, even beyond Minolta's influence.

Another critique of the class-privileged gender performance happens through Roma's mostly autobiographical story which repeatedly mentions that the character representing her is extremely wealthy, provoking the following dialogue between Gustavo and Minolta, reflecting the interweaving of class-privilege and gender performance: “‘Ela tem cara de rica?’ disse Minolta. ‘Como é cara de rica?’, perguntei. ‘Uma mistura de arrogância com tédio.’ ‘Isso é um mísero clichê.’ ‘Só porque é clichê deixa de ser verdade?’” (294).<sup>282</sup>

Minolta's point, that there is truth in the cliché about class-privileged women emanating a tedious arrogance, corresponds with Gustavo's resentment in his initial description of Roma and her mink coat, and with a condescending remark Roma makes to Juliana, when she admits she does not know how to ride a horse: “‘Não entendo como alguém não sabe montar,’ disse Roma, “para mim é a mesma coisa que não saber ler” (194).<sup>283</sup> As with those instances where her sense of superiority is made noticeable, the dialogue about a ‘rich-girl face’ represents a social acknowledgement of the relationship between class-privilege and gender performance.

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<sup>282</sup> “‘Tiene cara de rica,’ dice Minolta. ‘¿Cómo es la cara de rica?’ pregunte. ‘Una mezcla de arrogancia y aburrimiento.’ ‘Eso es un mísero tópico.’ ‘Y por ser tópico no va a ser verdad?’” (Losada 192),

<sup>283</sup> “‘No entiendo como puede haber alguien que no sepa montar,’ dijo Roma. ‘Para mí, es lo mismo que no saber leer’” (Losada 126).

Orion's story is an autobiographical, male fantasy/bildungsroman that is so far-fetched; it ridicules its author's projection of himself in his story. An orchestra maestro has an affair with the first violinist's wife (271). After a series of events which only make him more depressed, the guilty maestro heads to a country retreat (much like the Refúgio), where singing toads call him to the water's edge, at which point he encounters fifty smaller toads singing praises to a much larger one, who leads their glorious chorus and causes the maestro to realize that a man's happiness comes from his creating beauty. Returning to his orchestra, the maestro makes peace with the violinist, and lives happily ever after in a ménage a trois (a male, female, male 'threesome' in this case), adding an unexpected twist that, Orion indicates, makes it a fairy tale for Roma (281), presumably because the threesome is an attractive violation of the conventional gender norms required by her class-privileged gender practices.

As Orion tells the story, Roma works to aid the construction of the masculinity that Orion projects onto his maestro protagonist, who is evidently his alter ego. This tendency is especially notable in her reaction to the question Vaslav asks as Orion begins to narrate: “Bem, o maestro era amante da mulher do spala...” ‘Por que não ao contrário?’, perguntou Vaslav. ‘Ele está defendendo a classe dos maestros. Adúltero sim, cocu jamais,’ disse Roma” (271).<sup>284</sup> According to the conditions posed by Roma, the conductor's masculinity is performed correctly through his ‘conquest’ of ‘another man's woman’ and by never being on the ‘losing end’ of the kind of betrayal he has effectuated.

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<sup>284</sup> “Bueno, el maestro era amante de la mujer del *spala*...” ‘¿Por qué no al contrario?’, pregunto Vaslav. ‘El defiende a su clase, los maestros. Adulterio, sí; cornudo, jamás,’ dijo Roma” (Losada 178).

Also according to Roma's comment, an adulterous husband is more acceptable than an adulterous wife, and this position reflects her maintenance of male-dominant, heteropatriarchal gender relations. Orion admits he has no idea what to do with the betrayed husband, and cuts him out of the story. Gustavo's remarks about this omission indicate that, once cuckolded, the masculine subject falls so precipitously down the masculinity hierarchy, that he is a subjectivity without voice, even in literature: "os maridos enganados possuem um lado patético interessante; a ilusão e a confiança perdidas, a traição sofrida deviam merecer mais atenção" (278).<sup>285</sup> Apparently, a wife betrayed is a non-issue for Gustavo.

No character in *Bufo & Spallanzani* opposes conventional gender norms as overtly as Minolta, who like her namesake, is depicted as a woman who adheres to the principles of innovation and humility.<sup>286</sup> Minolta abjures culturally dominant ideology, and seeks out alternative knowledges, like Afro-brazilian 'witchcraft,' saying "Me amarro em feitiçaria" (92).<sup>287</sup> The narration depicts Ivan/Gustavo as sheepishly conservative by comparison. Minolta's vocabulary, which he calls, "uma mistura de gírias velhas e novas," is indicative of a resistance to institutional language structures.

She indicates that she pays close attention to discourse, saying "meu negocio é a polissemia" (115). Also, Minolta is the one who initiates their relationship (92), and from

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<sup>285</sup> "Los maridos cornudos tienen un lado patético interesante; la ilusión y la confianza perdidas, la traición sufrida, debían merecer más atención..." (Losada 182).

<sup>286</sup> "The name was given by founder Kazuo Tajima due to its similarity to the Japanese term "minoru ta" ..., which came from an ancient Japanese proverb that was a favorite of Tajima's mother meaning 'the ripest ears of rice bow their heads lowest,' and a desire from Tajima to run an innovative, yet humble business. *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 19 Jan. 2016.

<sup>287</sup> "Me encanta la brujería" (Losada 61).



that moment, she establishes her role of dominance over Ivan/Gustavo, by sleeping in his apartment without any concern for Zilda or consent from Ivan/Gustavo. As mentioned, she insists that he develop his masculine side, but she staunchly maintains her independence, refusing to be told that she has to wear clothes in the apartment, and warning Ivan/Gustavo he dare not try to control her (106-7).

This aspect of Minolta suggests that respecting the independence of women, and developing one's masculinity, are not mutually exclusive, which is indeed innovative, in comparison to other characters' perspectives on gender relations, like Roma's or Trinidad's.

The question that must be asked about Minolta is whether her representation of presumably 'unconventional' thinking on the part of a sixteen year old girl in late 1960's-early 1970's Brazil (approximately the context of Part II), subverts or reinforces the gender repressive dominant discourse that she criticizes. Certainly Minolta convincingly portrays a 'different sort of repeating' with respect to gender relations, which is evident when she and young Ivan/Gustavo have a discussion about reintroducing the lion monkey to the Mata Atlántica ecosystem (in the state of Rio de Janeiro): "A fêmea é sempre prisionera das convenções ... Vê como a monogamia é uma coisa complicada" (104).<sup>288</sup> Her perspective here indicates her ability to think independently and avoid automatically buying in to socially imposed constructions, like the family unit with patriarchal head.

That a young woman in a heteropatriarchal society questions whether the concept and institutionalization of monogamy is simply another consequence of male dominant,

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<sup>288</sup> "¡Siempre la mujer prisionera de las convenciones! ... ¿Ves cómo la monogamia es cosa complicada?" (Losada 68).

phallogocentric thought and discourse, shows her ability to think critically and independently from hegemonic discourse. However, Minolta does not fit the women's liberation model of feminism either. She and Gustavo's lifetime arrangement whereby Minolta visits him in Rio every six months (142), is an especially non-conventional relationship. Also, their agreement with respect to his womanizing is, like their arrangement, very much a heteronormative male fantasy that, for the most part, Minolta constructs, as Gustavo points out: "nós combinamos que eu contaria minha vida sexual com as mulheres que tive ou tenho, mas que a identidade delas não seria revelada. Satisfaríamos assim sua curiosidade libidinosa e a minha lascívia verbal" (53).<sup>289</sup> Minolta's satisfying her libidinous curiosity vicariously through Gustavo seems to add to the heteronormative male fantasy construction, and one cannot help but wonder whether Gustavo's obesity and his philosophy of, "Dormir, comer e amar, as delícias da vida" (167),<sup>290</sup> are really what Minolta expected when she was molding his new identity and encouraging him to 'develop his masculine side.' Yet, these judgements of their arrangement and her attraction to Gustavo's insatiability coincide with the discourse that she convincingly resists when she and Ivan first meet.

Minolta's role in their relationship is to be understood as her being in charge of Gustavo's life, and her decision to make Ivan/Gustavo a writer is important for two reasons. First, it starkly contrasts with the class-climbing (and maddening) career path chosen for him by his first girlfriend Zilda, who insists he quit teaching to go work at the insurance company Panamericana (69). Also, Gustavo's becoming a writer at Minolta's

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<sup>289</sup> "... nosotros acordamos que yo contaría mi vida sexual con las mujeres que tuve o tengo, pero no revelaría su identidad. Satisfaríamos así tu curiosidad libidinosa y mi lascivia verbal" (Losada 36).

<sup>290</sup> "Dormir, comer y amar, las tres delicias de la vida" (Losada 110).

behest is even more important for her, because writing was really her passion to begin with (92,104). In fact, Gustavo freely admits that he did not like writing before Minolta's transforming him (69).

Minolta shapes Gustavo into who he is professionally, and she has a role in molding his particular performance of masculinity, both of which are implied when he says, "se não fosse você Gustavo Flavio não existiria" (54).<sup>291</sup> Although her realizing a dream to write only vicariously through Gustavo denounces the exclusion of female writers in a male dominant literary context or may be read as a clever way around gender barriers that privilege male writers, it nevertheless normalizes those social processes.

Still, due to Minolta's influence, Gustavo has cultivated a discourse in his narration that is founded upon a resistance to conventional gender norms, that not only comes through in his writing (according to what he says), but also influences Delfina's gender relations. When Gustavo narrates in Part I to Minolta, he acknowledges and approves of Minolta's freedom from class-privileged conventions, and compares her to his 'conquests' from high society, who, "acabam sempre se tornando maçantes para aqueles que as amam .... devido a uma espécie de decência burguesa, aliada a um convencionalismo hipócrita, acabam sempre subordinando a paixão à etiqueta" (55).<sup>292</sup>

On the contrary, Delfina represents a process of becoming true to her own desires. She stops traveling with her husband, and in addition to her affair with Gustavo, she ignores her friend Denise's suggestion, represented in a letter that Guedes tracks down, to do what all women in her situation are doing and divorce Eugênio in order to become

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<sup>291</sup> "... si no fuera por ti, Gustavo Flavio no existiría" (Losada 36).

<sup>292</sup> "... acaban siempre volviéndose cargantes para aquellos que las aman... acaban subordinando siempre la pasión a la etiqueta" (Losada 36).

wealthy in the process. Denise's letter saying, "Todas elas ... aprenderam com Jacqueline Onassis a lidar com os homens, você deve fazer o mesmo" (49), indicates the economy of class-privileged gender relations, of which Delfina no longer wants any part. Finally, she defies Eugênio at the last hour with her decision to have Gustavo end her life instead of the slower, more painful death that awaits her from cancer. Delfina's independence indicates that Minolta's perspective on gender relations has reached her through Gustavo's writing, and Detective Guedes suspects Delfina's defiance of conventional, bourgeois gender norms is a result of her reading Gustavo's novel *Os amantes*, saying to him, "O senhor disse num dos seus livros que a fidelidade é um conceito burguês e que a honra de uma mulher nada tem a ver com o seu comportamento sexual" (47).<sup>293</sup>

The subversive intent, that Guedes astutely perceives, is in its condemnation of relating 'honor' with monogamy, and in its denouncing the 'honor'/monogamy relationship, by calling it a bourgeois concept. Gustavo's text takes aim at an ideology (Reproductive Futurism) that reproduces (neoliberal) conditions of production. Delfina's decision to die on her own terms, defying Eugênio's wishes, solidifies the multi-faceted subversion carried out through her, and paradoxically, Gustavo's heart wrenching final narration to Minolta about performing Delfina's euthanization, succeeds in provoking her anger or jealousy (as opposed to satisfying her libidinous curiosity), and casts more doubt on the overall subversiveness of Minolta.

Conversely, by having Gustavo euthanize her, Delfina defies criminal statutes, religious ideology, Reproductive Futurism (she dies childless and an adulterous), and

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<sup>293</sup> "Dijo usted en uno de sus libros que la fidelidad es un prejuicio burgués, y que la honra de una mujer no tiene nada que ver con su comportamiento sexual" (Losada 32).

confirms her character's indifference to Eugênio and his wealth. Similar to Delfina's unexpected paradoxical subversion, Rio de Janeiro Police Detective Guedes, serves *Bufo & Spallanzani's* critique of masculinities and attacks neoliberalism by way of his gender performance and through his focalization. As Gustavo narrates about Guedes, the text's changes in focalization indicate that it is Guedes who is seeing the descriptions that Gustavo makes.

By the text's providing access to his thoughts and descriptions of urban landscapes, his focalization offers important criticism of Rio de Janeiro in the early 1980's, like the following view of Rio's class disparity: "Na praça ... [Guedes] sentou-se num banco. Um velho curvado defecava ao lado de uma árvore. Guedes notou que da janela de um apartamento uma mulher observava com repugnância. Mais tarde ela vai trazer o seu cocker spaniel para cagar na praça, pensou o tira, e não quer misturar as duas merdas (29)."<sup>294</sup> Instead of the old man's public indecency, the crime that concerns Guedes is the woman's indifference to the man's precarious existence.

The description, then, becomes a representation of the bourgeois tendency to care more for domesticated dogs and cats than for ex-domesticated humans. Through Guedes's focalization, he criticizes the increase of crime and violence, depicted as a result of class disparity and increased poverty in the context of the 'transition':

Os tiras velhos diziam que antigamente os furtos eram comuns ... e os roubos eram raros, uma luz acesa assustava o ladrão. Agora o número de roubos superava

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<sup>294</sup> "En la plaza del General Osorio, se sentó en un banco. Un viejo jorobeta defecaba junto a un árbol. Guedes noto que desde la ventana de un piso una mujer observaba con expresión de asco. Más tarde bajara ella su *cocker spaniel* para que cague en la plaza, pensó el policía, y no quiere que se mezclen las dos mierdas" (21).

o de furtos, nada assustava um assaltante (30)... Ele via homicídios quase que diariamente, cometidos por pessoas de todos os tipos, pobres e ricos, fortes e fracos, analfabetos e doutores... (45).<sup>295</sup>

The fragment indicates that Guedes is cynical, which contradicts the more idealist aspects of his character. He is proud to have never killed anyone (16). In his work, he recoils from cynicism as if it were dangerously contaminating.

When he discovers Delfina's death was not suicide but murder, he is afraid what such a mistake could mean for him: "Que diabo estava acontecendo com ele? Negligencia? O policial negligente está a um passo do cinismo. O cínico a um passo da corrupção" (33).<sup>296</sup> This juxtapositioning of Guedes's honesty and sacrifice against cynicism and corruption indicates the ideals to be associated with him.

Gustavo's narration depicts Guedes as a humble man who is indefatigable about his police work. It portrays him as disgusted by social injustices and resistant to religious dogma, conventional gender norms and hegemonic versions of masculinity. Guedes's perspective on Catholic confession reveals his resistance to religious dogma and his opposition to authoritative force: "Ainda garoto ele deixara de confessar; achava

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<sup>295</sup> "Los veteranos decían que antes eran frecuentes los hurtos... y eran raros los robos. Bastaba una luz encendida para asustar al ladrón. Ahora el número de robos superaba al de hurtos, y no había nada que asustara a un asaltante" (Losada 21). "El veía homicídios casi a diario, cometidos por personas de todo tipo, pobres y ricos, fuertes y débiles, analfabetos o doctores, y creía que todo hombre fue siempre y sigue siendo un animal violento, matador, por placer, de su semejante y de otras criaturas vivas" (Losada 30).

<sup>296</sup> "¿Qué diablos le había pasado? ¿Negligencia? El policía inteligente está siempre a un paso del cinismo. El cínico, a un paso de la corrupción" (Losada 23).

humilhante e de certa absurda ajoelhar-se perante outro homem para relatar seus pecados, afirmar seu arrependimento e remir-se das suas culpas” (225).<sup>297</sup>

He sees the relationship between the repressive state apparatus, which functions according to fear, and the ideological one, which works the same way: “Também na polícia a confissão o repugnava pois era obtida através da violência, absoluta o psíquica - o que era a mesma coisa: para muitos o medo era a pior forma de tortura (225).<sup>298</sup> This thought, mentioned in passing, speaks to the prevalent use of torture by the State in the socio historical context of the ‘transition’ and the prior dictatorship. The jail conditions disgust Guedes: “Num xadrez onde caberiam, caso se deitassem lado a lado, quinze presos, estavam trinta” (229).<sup>299</sup> He observes how, as in ‘free’ society, there is a well defined hierarchy of masculinities in jail: “Os mais fracos tinham que dormir a pé,” and a systematically imposed necropolitics: “Alguns, entre os mais fracos, eram periodicamente mortos para aliviar a pressão e, através da repercussão pública, forçar as autoridades a melhorar as condições em que viviam os encarcerados” (229).<sup>300</sup>

Also clear from Guedes’s view of the jail is the sad depiction of humans behaving like lesser creatures (a parallel that the toad story established): “Se excluirmos o aspeto

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<sup>297</sup> Siendo aún niño había dejado de confesarse; encontraba humillante y en cierto modo absurdo arrodillarse ante otro hombre para contar sus pecados, insistir en su arrepentimiento y redimir su culpa” (Losada 147).

<sup>298</sup> “También en la policía le repugnaba la confesión, pues era obtenida por medio de la violencia, absoluta o psíquica, lo que en definitiva venía a ser lo mismo: para muchos, el miedo es peor que la tortura” (Losada 147).

<sup>299</sup> “En una celda en la que cabrían, caso de tumbarse de lado a lado, quince presos, había treinta” (Losada 149).

<sup>300</sup> “Los más flojos tenían que dormir a pie. Algunos de los débiles eran periódicamente asesinados para aliviar la presión y, a través de la repercusión pública, forzar las autoridades a mejorar las condiciones en que vivían los presos” (Losada 149).

reivindicatório, isto era algo parecido com o que fazem os ratos” (229).<sup>301</sup> Money buys protection and better conditions in jail, just like it does out of it, indicated here in his observations of the paid confessor Agenor: “estava sendo abanado com folhas de jornal pelo outro preso, como um califa” (230).<sup>302</sup> Ironically, it is this preferred treatment that tips off Guedes and gives Agenor away so easily, which speaks to his use of non-theoretical, non-scientific knowledge in his investigation.

As far as his gender performance goes, Guedes is a Fonsequian anomaly, because he is completely asexual; He is the antithesis of Gustavo. His gender performance could be described as absent, if this were possible. Unmarried with no offspring, at no point does he show any interest in women or men, except within the protocol of his investigations. The only appearance he is interested in maintaining is one of accountability, honesty, and dedication to his job as a detective, which, Gustavo indicates, “consistia na apuração das infrações penais e da sua autoria .... Não cabia ... nenhum julgamento de valor acerca da ilicitude do fato, mas apenas a colheita de provas de sua materialidade e autoria e todas as providências para acautelar os vestígios deixados pela infração” (19).<sup>303</sup>

Free from the struggles that accompany his performing a hegemonic version of masculinity, Guedes is incorruptible in the heart of corruption. He has no interest in being rich, and Gustavo’s description implies he has become a commoner by choice: “A

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<sup>301</sup> “Si excluimos el aspecto reivindicatorio, eso es algo parecido a lo que hacen las ratas” (Losada 149).

<sup>302</sup> “Agenor, abanicado con las hojas de un periódico por otro preso como un pacha” (Losada 150).

<sup>303</sup> “... consistía en apurar las infracciones penales y su autoría. ... no le correspondía hacer juicios de valor sobre la ilicitud del hecho, sino recoger pruebas de su materialidad y autoría, y tomar todas las providencias para preservar los vestigios de la infracción” (Losada 14).



primeira impressão era de ser um daqueles sujeitos que de tanto comer e beber em pé nos botequins ordinários, junto com trabalhadores, vagabundos, prostitutas e pilantras acaba se sentindo irmão dessa rale” (23).<sup>304</sup> Contrary to Gustavo’s first impression, Guedes’ identity is based on honesty and work ethic and has earned the respect of his co-workers, which allows him flexibility that is unavailable to other cops: “Os outros policiais viram Guedes sair com o preso, mas o tira sebento era respeitado demais para alguém impedi-lo ou mesmo criticá-lo por isso” (237).<sup>305</sup> The observation indicates his envious position in the hierarchy constructed within the Rio de Janeiro police department. However, his incorruptibility marginalizes him, and eventually leads to his being suspended (330). He shuns Eugênio Delemare’s blank check offer to end Delfina’s murder investigation (40). In obedience to his sense of justice, he defies orders from his boss Ferreira to quickly close the case as a suicide (32). Finally, he represents the antithesis of the masculinity of domination that Eugênio represents.

In stark contrast with Guedes’s masculinity that is innovatively indifferent to power, Eugênio Delamare poses an answer to the question, ‘What does neoliberal hegemonic masculinity look like?’ Eugênio embodies a combination of two extremes: first, he has class-privileged power, notable in his influence over the Rio Police department, and second, he constructs his masculinity upon the total dominance that his wealth avails him, shown through his obsession with castrating Gustavo (59, 326). By

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<sup>304</sup> La primera impresión es que se trataba de uno de esos sujetos que, de tanto comer y beber de pie en las barras vulgares, junto a obreros, vagabundos, prostitutas y chorizos, acaba sintiéndose hermano de esa ralea” (Losada 16).

<sup>305</sup> “Los otros policías vieron a Guedes salir con el detenido, pero Guedes era demasiado respetado para que alguien intentara impedirlo o hiciera el menor comentario” (Losada 154).

dominating and 'de-masculinizing' his foe, his own damaged masculinity will be restored.

The fact that Eugênio winds up doing the actual removal of Gustavo's reproductive organs, instead of one of his bodyguards doing it, as he originally promises, speaks to the immense pleasure that Eugênio expects draws from the intrusive, symbolic, explicitly violent act upon Gustavo's body. During the 'procedure,' he gives further indications of the value he sees in total domination through violence, lecturing Gustavo about how pit-bulls are trained (328), and about castrating bulls on his ranch (326). Eugênio's waning power manifests in the act of violence just as Arendt's theory suggests. His biggest fear is that, since his life is so publicly displayed in the high society pages, all of Rio will become aware of the cuckolding, which would result in his losing a favorable position in the hierarchy of masculinities.

He would lose the power granted unto him by those who participate in that social construction. This fear motivates him to go to great lengths to keep it from being discovered. He pressures the chief of police to prevent any further investigation (32). He attempts to bribe detective Guedes (40). He makes arrangements for a fake confession to Delfina's murder (65). His fear speaks to his need for society's validation, in order to practice the hegemonic version of masculinity to which he aspires, and that society expects from a man of his wealth and power.

The medical status of Gustavo after castration completes the novel's parody of heteronormative gender performance, because, despite the loss of his testicles, his ability to perform sexually will not be affected, and for psychological reasons, the doctor recommends the use of a prosthetic (329). His greatest fear is realized, and because it is,

he learns that they were not behind his exaggerated heterosexual prowess. Through Gustavo, *Bufo & Spallanzani* says what society does not say about the artificiality of gender performance.

To conclude, in Gustavo's diatribe about the role of a writer, discussed earlier in the chapter, he denies the writer's intention of restoring order to a chaotic society, which suggests the impossibility of such an analysis for *Bufo & Spallanzani*. His implication coincides with how the story plays out: the news reports a completely distorted version of the truth, Eugênio castrates Gustavo, and order is not restored. In his denial of any intention to restore order, Gustavo precludes a Marxist critique, which, again, implies the same for *Bufo & Spallanzani*. Ernest Mandel's position is that murder investigations and the detective story's formula appeal to the bourgeois yearning for security, because the detective always restores safety to the bourgeois community, protecting it and its personal property from threatening (lower class) criminal elements (57-59).

Tony Hilfer points out the detective's functioning as a barrier that protects and absolves readers of detective fiction (presumably bourgeois) from any complicity in the criminal's guilt (2), but the text succeeds in denying readers such an acquittal, since Gustavo's narration coerces readers to empathize with his state of mind during both of the homicides for which he is responsible. In fact, Ivan's killing of the grave digger lacks the element of intent that murder requires, and one could certainly argue that (given the facts of Gustavo's narration) Delfina's homicide was more an act of euthanasia than a murder.

Some readers might even be sympathetic to Eugênio's criminal mind in his castrating the cuckolding Gustavo, but the same cannot be said for Eugênio's

disappearing Agenor, the lowlife whom he pays to confess to Delfina's murder, in order to avoid the humiliation Gustavo's cuckolding would bring him. Readers are not expected to be sympathetic to the impunity Eugênio enjoys, nor the corruption he fosters.

My argument assumes the symbiotic relationship between neoliberalism and 'The Child,' based on typically professed conservative values, listed as follows: human life beginning at the moment of conception, family defined as a heterosexual marriage resulting in children, an allegiance to Judeo-Christian religious dogma, and a brighter economic future for The Child as a result of freer markets, banning gay marriage, and prohibiting the extension of state subsidized birth control and health insurance benefits to same sex couples. However, this close reading of *Bufo & Spallanzani* has shown how the novel uses allegory, metafiction, stories within stories, and various levels of focalization to construct characters whose dialogue and descriptions parody the preeminence of the symbolic order in gender performance. This analysis has shown how Fonseca's novel exposes the artificiality in the reproduction of heteronormative narratives about masculinities, and ridicules Reproductive Futurism.

In its doing so, the novel indirectly attacks the essential foundations of the neoliberal conditions of production, which it portrays in the market that stifles Gustavo's creativity (188), and in the novel's backdrop of violence, poverty, and corruption in Rio de Janeiro. In regards to the power of signifiers and their alleged meanings, Gustavo cites an inspiring line from Kipling: "Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind" (162). The quotation speaks to the effectiveness of words in the reproduction of power but also to their usefulness as a means of resistance.

The novel takes into account Gustavo's point that readers want what they are accustomed to getting (170). *Bufo & Spallanzani* has familiar elements like a police investigation of a murder mystery, suspense, explicit violence, and, of course, gratuitous sex. However, it uses these hardboiled detective novel elements to say what those novels do not say, by indicating the 'reptilian' simplicity of conventional gender practices, denouncing their proclivity towards violence, and parodying their heteronormative self-policing.

## Chapter 4

### *Necroempoderamiento, Morality, and Survival Value in O seminarista*

The reading in Hélio Lopes's essay entitled, "Como se pode ler *O seminarista*" (1982), "How One Might Read *O seminarista*," that he suggests for that novel from 1872, by Bernardo Guimarães (1825-1884), is relevant for the argument to be made in this chapter about Rubem Fonseca's *O seminarista* (2009). In his essay, Lopes finds that the text critiques the Catholic Church's stagnating effect upon marginalized populations, whereby the priesthood, is one of the very few (if not, the only) career options for the intellectually promising male, if he is to ever become a "breadwinner" for his family (6). Among the terms of the "eternal" agreement, the subject must repress his naturally occurring, human urges, and continue his baptismal promise to "renounce Satan." In other words, he is bound to a life of frustration, self-delusion, and he must reject all other forms of knowledge beyond the confines of Christianity.

Lopes's reading applies to the present one, on Fonseca's *O seminarista*, in that the intellectually promising, young male subject, faced with a lack of opportunities, foregoes his own wishes, and is ushered into a well-known, yet rather obscure profession, in order that he may be a "breadwinner." However, the profession that provides his stable income is the career of the professional hitman. Similar to the priesthood, he must repress naturally occurring urges, but instead of sexual desire, he staves off feelings of empathy, pity, and morality, and instead of the dogma of Christianity dictating his thoughts, words,

and deeds, he is faithfully obedient to the current globally dominant doctrine of neoliberalism. His mission is to gain an enviable position of individual status, which his culture grants through the ostentatious participation in consumerism. As a means to those ends, the subject turns to necroempoderamiento, in what is still known as, “the world’s most Catholic country” (Allen 6).

The criticism regarding Fonseca’s *O seminarista* agrees on two points: that the novel does not figure among the author’s great works, and that Zé,<sup>306</sup> is the only Fonsequian narrator/protagonist to have fallen in love.<sup>307</sup> For Medeiros, the resolution to the story’s enigma is predictable (222), and Zé fits the romantic hero characterization because of his sincere commitment to Kirsten, the story’s femme fatale: “não só olha para Kirsten como um examinador de mulheres, mas a vê, percebe, examina a ponto de apaixonar-se e mudar de vida” (223).<sup>308</sup> He locates Zé in a category apart from the objectifying, womanizing narrators, such as Mandrake and Gustavo. Although I have argued on behalf of the irony in Fonseca’s previous work, Medeiros finds that *O seminarista* differs from Fonseca’s previous work, due to its abundance of humor, irony (222), and especially, “por apresentar... um esvaziamento temático no que tange à violência exacerbada” (221).<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> ‘Zé’ is how those close to the author (José Rubem Fonseca) address him (Costa e Silva), it is also how one pronounces the letter ‘Z’ in Portuguese, which corresponds to the novel’s many different references to *El Cártel de Los Zetas*.

<sup>307</sup>See Medeiros, Leonardo Barros. “O retorno do amor no romance: notas sobre *O seminarista* de Rubem Fonseca.” See also, *Linguagens-Revista de Letras, Artes e Comunicação* 3.2 (2010): 221-223., and Silva, Alvaro Costa e. “Rubem Fonseca: a arte de amar em latim.” *Jornal do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro. 7 de novembro de 2009, *Ideias & Livros*, p. 5.

<sup>308</sup> “He doesn’t just look at Kirsten, as a womanizer would; he sees, perceives, examines her, to the point of falling in love and changing his life.”

<sup>309</sup> “...because it presents... a complete saturation of an explicit violence thematic.”

Contrary to Madeiros and Costa e Silva, I propose that *O seminarista* deserves a place alongside the best of Fonseca's timeless works. What merits this consideration is that it condemns the neoliberal "War on Drugs" Industry, and draws attention to the evolutionary/biological aspect of human behavior. The contemporary subject's genetically inherent 'sense of morality' has lost its survival value in gore capitalism, in favor of *necroempoderamiento* and its accompanying violent version of hegemonic masculinity, which is a manifestation of the *biomercado* that dictates the subject's actions. The comical tone that Medeiros mentions about Zé's narration indicates an emotional crutch, which Zé uses to thwart his frustration from the conflicting biological and cultural urges within him.

Medeiros's disappointment over the story's enigma ignores the fact that, since 1969, the *novela negra* has been far less concerned with the mystery, and far more invested in making social critiques (Stavans 145). In fact, *O seminarista* is paradigmatic of Fonseca's defying formulae and making a hybrid of both genres. The narrator's being a paid assassin, would indicate its being a crime novel, but Zé assumes the role of a detective and conducts an investigation to solve a mysterious crime, which fits the detective novel formula. The story denounces a political enigma, that lies well beyond the mystery of which villain is trying to kill Zé and Kirsten, as Medeiros indicates (222). *O seminarista* identifies forces that reproduce a culture of violence, in which the subject must ignore his sense of morality, and kill or be killed. The villains represent a culture in which one gains status by his demonstrating enviable participation in consumerism, and the quickest route to that end, is through the "War on Drugs" industry, which exemplifies the symbiosis between neoliberalism's legal and illegal sectors (Valencia 112-119).



The neoliberal world powers enforce their zero tolerance drug policy, and their war industry has an enemy to fight. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency's annual budget was \$2.88 billion for Fiscal Year 2015, but that pales in comparison to the \$16 billion annual revenue of the U.S. weapons private sector industry.<sup>310</sup> Agencies like the DEA, fuel the profit margins of the weapons industry, as well as those of the drug cartels, who are also consumers and service providers in the war industry. In fact, many of their enforcers are former elite soldiers, originally trained to protect their respective countries, yet they have deserted their armies, for more acceptable wages in the illicit sector: "Un ejemplo de estos especialistas de la violencia lo representa el comando armado mexicano denominado (sic) Los Zetas, ex militares de los ejércitos mexicano y salvadoreño..." (Valencia 46-47).<sup>311</sup>

The text's representations of gore capitalism, which is characterized by, "la mala gestión de los Estados, las demandas publicitarias del hiperconsumo..., parecen naturalizar el mensaje de que la violencia es una condición necesaria en la era global" (Valencia 119), indicate the commonalities and symbiosis between legal and illegal sectors, as well as the increases in carnage, that the policy makers fully expect (Osorno 159). State-sponsored violence in Brazil is, perhaps, even more notorious than that of Mexico, which Glenny indicates in an example from 2006, when an organized crime

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<sup>310</sup> <http://www.dea.gov/docs/factsheet.pdf>

<sup>311</sup> According to statistics from the Mexican *Secretaría de Defensa Nacional*, in 2007, the Mexican army had 16, 641 deserters (Tirado). For examples of mexican cartels recruiting military personnel, see: "Con avisos, narcos mexicanos buscan reclutar a ex militares: Salarios en dólares y atractivas prestaciones como seguro de vida, vivienda y automóvil último modelo ofrece el cartel del Golfo a los ex militares mexicanos que decidan unírsele, según un anuncio callejero que apareció esta semana en las paredes de muchas calles de Tampico." Por: NULLVALUE, 19 de abril de 2008. Valencia cites another *narco* recruitment ad that specifically seeks, "ciudadanos que hayan prestado servicio y que hayan recibido el grado kaibil para prestar seguridad a vehículos que transportan mercancía a México..." (47).

spree targeted São Paulo police: “After the initial mayhem resulted in almost 100 deaths, the police responded... by killing almost five times as many” (276). Cultural productions from Rio de Janeiro’s favelas have reported on this intersection of poverty, hyperconsumerism marketing, and normalized violence. The lyrics from MV Bill’s hit entitled, “Traficando informação” (‘Trafficking Information’) (2004), from the album of the same name, indicate this culture of normalized violence: “Os heróis da playboyzada vivem na televisão; Os heróis da molecada, aqui ‘tão de fuzil na mão; Cocaína, maconha, revólver, cachaça,” which speaks to a masculinity like that of Valencia’s *sujeto endriago*.

Globally, and especially in underprivileged economies, where there are very few who can fulfill the requirements of hyper-consumerism through legal means, a new level of cultural tolerance for violence emerges, along with, “otro status: el de la respetabilidad que otorga el dinero sin importar de dónde provenga, adoptado por los menos favorecidos... se ha instaurado una nueva cultura nacionalista basada en la criminalidad” (71). *O seminarista*, then, depicts the pervasive ontological ramifications of gore capitalism, whereby the young male subject fears social emasculation, due to his inability to access capital through legal industries, turns to the illicit industries and uses violence, in order to become a provider. The decision requires that he practice a violent version of masculinity, which confirms the, “... paralelismo entre éste [el capitalismo gore] y la masculinidad hegemónica que ‘está compuesta por una constelación de valores, creencias, actitudes y conductas que persiguen el poder y autoridad sobre las personas que consideran más débiles’” (Valencia 182, Varela 322).<sup>312</sup> Most of all, the text reports

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<sup>312</sup> Varela’s emphasizing how the *gore capitalism*-masculinity incorporates a conduct that chases power and authority over the those it considers ‘weaker,’ mirrors current rhetoric repeated ad nauseum by the U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump, on the 2016 campaign trail: “All of ’em are weak, they’re just weak,” Mr. Trump said in New Hampshire on Tuesday of his fellow candidates. “I think they’re weak, generally,

on the contemporary Brazilian subject, who must ignore his inherent urges to be ‘good,’ and either kill or be killed, which is a scenario that some, mistakenly, associate with Darwin’s theory of natural selection.

According to Oxford zoologist Richard Dawkins, a common misunderstanding of Darwinism is that, “natural selection seems ill-suited to explain... feelings of morality, decency, empathy and pity” (215). In *The God Delusion* (2006) Dawkins follows the lead of evolutionary psychologists who argue that these feelings are the result of innate urges to practice various forms of altruism that characterize a human ‘sense of morality,’ which has evolved over thousands of years, when humans lived in conditions that would have favored its selection for replication (216).<sup>313</sup> Similar to the persistence of sexual desire, that still exists despite the use of birth control, altruism remains prevalent in human behavior, and is practiced between strangers who have no expectations of reciprocity, because, like sexual desire, these altruistic urges continue to manifest within Homo sapiens, as a genetic ‘rule of thumb’ (221). Conversely, theologians and religious people attribute the human ‘sense of morality,’ to world religions and the widespread belief in a supernatural, omniscient God (211-214).

The present reading of *O seminarista* takes Dawkins’s side, and it analyzes the characters according to his Darwinian explanations for human ‘morality,’ and human

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you want to know the truth. But I won’t say that, because I don’t want to get myself, I don’t want to have any controversies. So I refuse to say that they’re weak generally, O.K.? Some of them are fine people. But they are weak” (Healy and Haberman).

<sup>313</sup> He mentions four types of altruism: altruism for one’s own kin and reciprocal altruism, which are the, “twin pillars of altruism in a Darwinian world,” (218). Reputational altruism and altruism to express superiority or advertise are the other two, and one could argue that Zé’s betrayers, D.S., who offers Zé a spare apartment (109), and *Sangue de boi*, who offers Zé his gold Rolex (68), repress the “two pillars of altruism,” in favor of practicing an altruism that indicates social superiority. Zé is also guilty of ‘superiority-altruism’ when he uses Gralha (158-161).

self-deception, the latter of which he discusses in the context of humans' irrational belief in 'falling in love,' with a sexual partner. Therefore, the issue that Madeiros emphasizes, of whether Zé is the first Fonsequian protagonist/narrator to 'fall in love,' is not as relevant here, as Zé's representing the genetically advantageous, yet simultaneously irrational condition of humans' thinking that they are 'in love.'<sup>314</sup>

Zé was orphaned at age fifteen, when his dying mother deemed him 'a man,' and went to seminary, in order to fulfill her dream for him to be a Catholic priest (37). Since he was, "um sujeito libidinoso" (42),<sup>315</sup> he dropped out, and, shortly thereafter, became a hired gun. He introduces himself as O Especialista ('the specialist'), who receives his assignments from O Despachante ('the broker') (7). Zé offers many details about himself that do not correspond with the violent masculinity that he represents, or with the cold blooded killings he describes himself carrying out. Zé shows off his erudition, by citing ancient Greek and Roman poets in Latin (8). Most importantly, he portrays himself as one who takes pride in having a sense of 'right' and 'wrong,' and who loves all creatures, great and small:

Já disse que não gosto de matar mulher, nem criança, nem bicho. Uma noite entrou uma cigarra no meu quarto e quando peguei nela a coitada rosnou de medo. Então a deixei dormindo na minha cama, perto do meus pés... (33-34)

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<sup>314</sup> Dawkins follows Dennet's proposal that the tendency for *Homo sapiens* towards feelings of 'love,' is due to an advantageous irrational brain mechanism that often manifests in monogamous relationships. Because of that common result of monogamy, one may logically infer that an irrational 'love' mechanism reduces the overall number of human conceptions and therefore, obstructs gene replication, which would eventually result in humans' becoming extinct. However, according to the theory, a human couple's feeling that they are 'in love,' improves the odds of their co-parenting until the child is weaned, which would have been especially important before modern medicine significantly increased the chances of survival for *Homo sapiens*, past weaning.

<sup>315</sup> "Salí del seminario por ser un tipo libidinoso" (Mata y Crespo 41)

...odeio fazer os outros sofrerem, é por isso que sempre dei um tiro na cabeça dos meus fregueses, li em um livro de medicina que a morte é instantânea e sem dor” (94).<sup>316</sup>

His researching the most painless methods of murder, in a medical journal, indicates the text’s intention to portray his sense of morality and his erudition. He is especially opposed to the extravagance and opulence that he observes in his targets. His narration brims with pride when describing certain past assignments, like when he kills a pedophile (10), and in just that one job, he is able to represent himself, by contrast contrary to the pedophile, as heroic, humble, altruistic (yet still extremely violent), and as one whose sexual ideal is socially acceptable. Other times, however, he reflects the cold indifference that his profession requires, and he undermines his portrayed sense of morality: “para um matador professional a pior coisa do mundo é ter uma consciência, não existem coisas erradas e coisas certas, é tudo a mesma merda” (9).<sup>317</sup>

Juxtaposing altruism with violence, as if the two were mutually exclusive, is problematic, and, in fact, Dawkins, Lacan, and Fonseca, indicate scenarios where they overlap. Dawkins discusses conspicuous generosity, which is altruism that advertises superiority. He gives the example that anthropologists have studied, of rival chieftains in the Pacific Northwest, who, in demonstrations of their superiority, offer the opposing tribe lavish feasts. Surely, certain cases of foreign intervention under the guise of

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<sup>316</sup> “Ya dije que no me gusta matar mujeres, ni niños, ni animales. Una noche entró una cigarra en mi cuarto y cuando la agarré, la pobre gruñó de miedo. Entonces la dejé durmiendo en mi cama, cerca de mis pies... (Mata y Crespo 33)...odio hacer sufrir a los otros. Es por eso que a mis clientes siempre les disparé en la cabeza. Leí en un libro de medicina que la muerte es instantánea y sin dolor” (Mata y Crespo 91).

<sup>317</sup> “... lo peor que le puede suceder a un asesino profesional es tener conciencia. Lo malo y lo bueno no existen, todo es la misma mierda” (Mata y Crespo 8).

humanitarian aid, are examples of conspicuous generosity. For a Darwinian explanation of this form of altruism, Dawkins turns to Israeli zoologist Amotz Zahavi's observations of Arabian babblers (small brown birds) who, authenticate their superiority by conspicuously feeding their subordinates, and, if a subordinate attempts to return the favor, "the apparent generosity is violently rebuffed." In another advertisement of their superiority, the superior babbler acts as a sentinel and risks attack from birds of prey while it warns of danger. The high cost of their generosity, authenticates their superiority (217-9). Lee Edelman's chapter "Compassion's Compulsion," refers to Lacan's identifying the narcissistic ego-reinforcement, in compassion altruism: "What I want is the good of others provided that it remain in the image of my own." Edelman's emphasis on Lacan's disdain for neighborly love, which he distinguishes from philanthropy, resonates with what Dawkins calls (and the anthropologists he cites), 'conspicuous generosity' or "altruism to advertise superiority," because of the ulterior motives attached to these: "at the heart of neighborly love... Lacan perceives the function of malignant *jouissance*," (83). Fonseca's protagonist/narrator Mandrake in *A grande arte* comments on his girlfriend's mother's malignant altruism, "D. Lazineira era um tipo de mãe altruísta que se sacrifica pela família e, em troca, cobra de todos total submissão às regras e valores que estabelece arbitrariamente" (91) 'Dona Lazineira was the typical altruistic mother who sacrificed herself for her family and in exchange expected total submission to the rules and values she arbitrarily established,' which points to what Lacan means when he mentions the conservatism in the "convincing power of altruism."

Zé's problems begin when he announces his retirement from the profession and changes his identity, because a cocaine trafficker, named M.M.Ziff, believes that Zé has

knowledge of a missing computer disc containing offshore account information from ‘Zeta,’ which is Ziff’s narcotics/real estate business. Ziff ordered Zé (through O Despachante) to kill Zeta’s offshore account manager, named El Gordo, from whom Zé received nothing in the form of information, beyond confirmation of the description he had of his target:

“... era gordo e careca e usava uma porção de joias. Encontrei-o deitado numa espreguiçadeira na varanda da sua casa na praia, os dedos cheios de aneis, colar pulseira, relógio de brilhantes, até um brinco de diamantes ele usava numa das suas orelhas. Ao seu lado... um prato cheio de pequenos camarões... além de um copo grande com cerveja. Eu já havia colocado o silenciador na Glock...” (89).<sup>318</sup>

Zé’s description emphasizes El Gordo’s conspicuous consumption and his ostentatious narco-indumentary.<sup>319</sup> These aspects of his character serves Zé’s performed humility and his disapproval of the emerging ‘new school mafia,’<sup>320</sup> which is how his narration categorizes most of the thugs he encounters and kills. The image in the above citation, of a fat bald man wearing an excessive amount of jewelry, as he lounges in his beachside hammock, eating shrimp and guzzling beer, screams opulence. El Gordo’s representing hyper-consumerism’s conspicuous consumption, gains emphasis every time Zé mentions

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<sup>318</sup> “... era gordo y pelón y usaba un montón de joyas. Lo encontré acostado en una tumbona en la veranda de su casa en la playa, con los dedos llenos de anillos, con un collar, una pulsera y un reloj de brillantes. Incluso hasta traía en una de sus orejas, un arete con un diamante. A su lado... había un platón lleno de pequeños camarones fritos,..., además de un vaso grande con cerveza. Yo ya había colocado el silenciador en la Glock... (Mata y Crespo 87).

<sup>319</sup> “... narcocultura... cuenta con una indumentaria,... Unas prácticas de consumo y un estatus social característico (Valencia 71)

<sup>320</sup> “... esta nueva clase criminal producto del neoliberalismo adoptado en los espacios tercermundista, basada en la venta de violencia se acompaña por ‘una orgía de consumo y comportamientos decadentes’” (Valencia 132).

him, as he refers to him as the, “freguêus enfeitado de joias (92), or the, “sujeito cheio de joias” (94).<sup>321</sup>

Meanwhile, Zé falls ‘in love’ with Kirsten, and *O seminarista* makes a direct reference to *The God Delusion* when Zé brings a copy of the book to the cafe where he and Kirsten agree to meet (49). Zé was glad Kirsten did not notice the title of the book, because he would have had to explain himself, which follows Dawkins’s denouncement of a culturally accepted, double standard, in which religious tolerance is not extended to atheism or to atheists, in much of the Western world (20-27). Zé’s feelings of being ‘in love’ with her, express themselves as he starts referring to her affectionately as “a minha alemãzinha” (43),<sup>322</sup> and his descriptions of their time spent together, depict an ideal erudite romance, because they share a common interest in literature (55, 108). Kirsten is also an exact match for the strict physical/sexual criteria of his fantasy of a perfect woman (44, 126). The text emphasizes Zé’s role as her protector, and portrays Kirsten as having no ‘survival value’ in their environment of gore capitalism. In his infatuation with her, he further develops his capacity for the irrational self-deception that starts with his attempt at retirement,<sup>323</sup> and despite warnings of danger, he leaves home unarmed, at Kirsten’s behest (81), and he ends up left for dead in a favela trash pile (83-5). During the entire sequence of events, Zé is conscious of the fact that he is deceiving himself, but his ‘love’ for Kirsten has (temporarily) replaced his adaptation to gore capitalism.

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<sup>321</sup> “...cliente adornado de joyas..... tipo lleno de joyas” (Mata y Crespo 90, 92).

<sup>322</sup> “... a mi alemancita...” (Mata y Crespo 42).

<sup>323</sup> From the start, their ‘falling in love’ is based on artifice, which points to Dawkins’s points about the relationship between love, irrationality, and self deception, and also confirms Lacan’s stance on love being, essentially, deception.



Zé tries to locate the computer disc and/or Ziff. O Despachante, joins him in the quest, and he asks Zé to start calling him by his real name, Gunther (91), indicating that he too had been overcome by feelings of morality, and wants to leave the profession of violence. Gunther is killed, which indicates that his rekindled feelings of morality had no survival value in gore capitalism, and neither did his 'sense of morality' genes, that replicated and manifested in his daughter Kirsten.

Zé then seeks help from his former colleague from seminary, named D.S., who has become a wealthy publishing mogul. D.S. represents near ideal adaptation to his environment of gore capitalism. He leads Zé on a wild goose chase, because he is secretly the boss of Zeta. He has Kirsten killed and tries to arrange for Zé to be killed. Zé's revenge against D.S. turns into a spectacle of gore, and in the end, he returns to the profession of being a hitman, and calls himself *O seminarista*. He proves capable of re-adapting to gore capitalism, and given his libido, the text implies that his instinctively violent genes will likely replicate.

D.S. embodies the despotic, violent masculinity of gore capitalism, and is portrayed as better adapted to this environment than Zé, or anyone else. First, he strictly avoids being 'in-love,' as if the survival value that is normally attributed to the love irrationality mechanism, has, in gore capitalism been diverted to not 'falling in love,' so that the breadwinners, are not burdened with child rearing.<sup>324</sup> Once D.S. understands that his former colleague, Zé, has committed to Kirsten, the advice that he gives to his so-

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<sup>324</sup> If they are still a proponent of Reproductive Futurism, as is the typical neoliberal subject, there are always day care centers, nannies, etc, that can absorb the burden of child rearing, and allow him or her to continue the mission of obedience to the market, which, of course, dictates the epistemology of the child's formation.

called-friend, indicates his position on the matter: “Um conselho ... Você está apaixonado, muito bem, mas não caia na besteira de ter filhos. Faça uma vasectomia o mais rápido possível, eu já fiz” (105).<sup>325</sup> The gore capitalism masculinity aspires to womanizing as a method of avoiding the child rearing burden, and D.S. tries to convince Zé to join him at the widow Suzanne’s parties, where he can have sex with, “as melhores mulheres do mundo” (102),<sup>326</sup> who are, “grã-finas casadas que gostam de uma aventura” (104).<sup>327</sup> According to these assessment standards, these women are the best in the world, because the wealthiest men have chosen them for mates, which indicate the social value awarded, to one’s power as a consumer, and the value awarded to one’s relation to a powerful, conspicuous consumer, in gore capitalism.

Zé’s narration indicates that the relationship between him and D.S. has always been one in which Zé has been the inferior, which corresponds to their environment’s hegemonic masculinity based on domination. First, Zé expresses great admiration for D.S., who excels more than he, at every discipline that Zé values.: ... muito inteligente e culto, um verdadeiro exegeta, conhecia os textos biblicos melhor do que os padres, sabia vinte vezes mais latim do que eu e gostava de mulheres tanto quanto eu ... , mas D.S. vivia ocupado estudando letras na faculdade, queria ser professor de literatura (67).<sup>328</sup> Yet D.S. finds no value in humanism, unless it bears opportunity for advertising his

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<sup>325</sup> “Un consejo, antes de que te vayas. Estás enamorado, muy bien, pero no hagas la tarugada de tener hijos. Hazte la vasectomía lo más rápido posible, yo ya me la hice” (Mata y Crespo 100).

<sup>326</sup> “... las mejores mujeres del mundo” (98).

<sup>327</sup> “... amigas chics casadas, a las que les gustan las aventuras” (99),

<sup>328</sup> Muy inteligente y culto, un verdadero exégeta, que conocía los textos bíblicos mejor que los curas, sabía veinte veces más latín que yo y le gustaban las mujeres tanto como yo... Pero D.S. vivía ocupado estudiando letras en la facultad, quería ser profesor de literatura” (Mata y Crespo 67).

superiority. Instead, he gives his allegiance to hedonism, and golf, which is an example of what Valencia refers to as, “Desplazando el centro epistemológico moderno del humanismo al hedonismo consumista que oculta, dentro de su devenir en mercancía capaz de satisfacer el hedonismo, un proceso de violencia, sangre y muerte” (64). When Zé goes to D.S. for help, the text depicts Zé in a humiliating situation, chasing after D.S. and his caddy, as they make their way onto the green (100). Noticeably bitter, Zé’s inner monologue with respect to D.S.’s new passion refers to the performance aspect involved in social climbing, which requires one’s conspicuous consumption that includes expensive sports, country clubs, and a gastronomy of excess: “Todo pé-rapado que ascende socialmente acaba aprendendo a jogar golfe, andar a cavalo e a escolher vinhos finos (100).

Also, D.S. dis-respects Zé’s professed love for Kirsten, patronizes him, and tries to tempt him into having sex with other women: “Você é um cara magrelo e feio mas pode se dar bem lá...” (104),<sup>329</sup> and this condescending dynamic extends to the topic of believing in God: “Você continua ateu? .... Você se tornou um niilista, Zé” (100-01)<sup>330</sup>. D.S. indicates that he believes in God, and implies that Zé’s not believing in God made him a social pariah (100-101). Dawkins’s suggests that a possible explanation for the childish, persistently self-deceptive and pervasive belief in the supernatural, is that it is a misfiring of the same irrationality mechanism that convinces people that they are ‘in love,’ but contrary to the irrationality of love, religion adds no survival value. Dawkins concedes that a better selection theory for explaining the ubiquitous nature of religion (that permeates even the most violent humans, like D.S.), is his own meme theory (184-

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<sup>329</sup> You’re an ugly, skinny guy, but you might do well there.

<sup>330</sup> “You’re still an atheist? .... You’ve become a nihilist, Zé.

90).<sup>331</sup> The meme that Zé rejects, but that D.S. accepts, is that as a person gets older, he or she has nothing to lose by believing in God. Like Dawkins, Zé professes to be an atheist, and he associates all religion with delusion and hypocrisy (86). Here he insinuates how he manages to forgive himself without the mental processes of Catholic confession and redemption: “Fui lá no fundo e e pesquei uma racionalização.... Eu estava mais do que justificado por matar Sangue de boi. Ah, como funcionam bem esses mecanismos de compensação psíquica! Essa muleta lógica aliviou os meus remorsos” (124).<sup>332</sup>

*O seminarista*'s representations of explicit violence are exceptional, even for Fonseca, but they serve to implicate the global ‘Drug War Industry,’<sup>333</sup> as the key economic and technological force behind the violence in Latin America, that has steadily increased in frequency and brutality, since U.S. president Richard Nixon officially declared the “War on Drugs” in 1971. A recent ‘surge,’ on the part of all the participants in the ‘Drug War Industry,’ has resulted in a *novela negra* sub genre, called the *narconovela* which has reflected the horrorism,<sup>334</sup> experienced in Latin American cities.

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<sup>331</sup> Dawkins's emphasis on the irrationality of love, of which religion is a ‘by-product,’ coincides with Lacan's equating love with deception (Lacan in Evans 103), and with narcissism (Lacan in Edelman 83). Dawkins and Lacan also coincide in their calling religion mass-delusions (Lacan in Evans 163). Dawkins's attack on Christianity in America, implicates its active role in producing a global culture of violence.

<sup>332</sup> “Fui a fondo y di con una explicación.... Matar a Sangre de Toro estaba más que justificado. ¡Ah, qué bien funcionan esos mecanismos de compensación psíquica! Esa muleta lógica alivió mis remordimientos” (Mata y Crespo 120).

<sup>333</sup> “El beneficio [de la lucha antidroga] no es unilateral, sino que se reparte entre los países productores, los países de tránsito, y los compradores por medio del trazado de estrategias políticas basadas en la retórica de la guerra contra las drogas. No es casual que la lucha antidrogas defendida por los gobiernos, especialmente el estadounidense siga manteniéndose como prioridad nacional.... Los cárteles mexicanos se abastecen de todo tipo de armamento militar comprado en los estados del sur...” (Valencia 116).

<sup>334</sup> In an effort to bridge the gap between language and atrocity, and in defiance of the neoliberal war industry's vocabulary, Adriana Cavarero has introduced the term *horrorismo*, and she justifies using the root of ‘horror,’ the following way: “... hay crímenes que traspasan la condición humana misma.... toda la historia de los genocidios y de las masacres de gente inerme, así como los diversos teatros de la tortura y del suplicio.... pertenecen a la escena congelante del horror (Cavarero 11-12).

*O seminarista* is a Brazilian *narconovela*, that depicts this carnage resulting from the ‘zero tolerance’ drug policy,<sup>335</sup> which Mexican novelist/social theorist Cristina Rivera Garza, condemns as, “... la así llamada guerra contra el narcotráfico, que no es otra cosa sino una guerra contra la ciudadanía, ha catapultado ciertamente el espectáculo de los cuerpos desentrañados...” (55).<sup>336</sup>

Brazil’s participation in the global cocaine trade is second to none. Only the United States consumes more cocaine than Brazil, but if the sharp increase in Brazil’s domestic consumption continues, the size of its cocaine market will soon surpass that of the U.S.<sup>337</sup> The prevalence of cocaine use in Brazil has been reported at 1.75% of its adult population, which would be the world’s highest. However, Brazil supplies more markets overseas, most notably, the insatiable European market, through partnerships in the lusophone African countries. In fact, Brazil exports cocaine to so many different countries, that it is currently the number one distributor in the world. Aside from consumption and distribution, Brazil also plays a key role in production, as Misha Glenny, in *McMafia* (2008), explains: “The presence of Latin America’s largest chemical

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<sup>335</sup> In the context of the ‘guerra contra el narcotráfico,’ Mexico’s death toll from January 2007 to November 2011 was 50,000 (Osorno 152). As mentioned in the introduction, June 2015 statistics from SEADE (*Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados*) say urban violence in Brazil has killed over one million people in the last thirty years (Sergio 9). In 2012 alone, Brazil reported 56,000 homicides, which was 11.4 % of all those worldwide. Including the homicides that go unreported, the yearly estimate in Brazil is 60,000 per year (Sergio 5). The numbers show the problem is getting worse, as the number of deaths per 100,000 inhabitants has increased from 22.2 in 1990 to 26.9 in 2013 (Sergio 9).

<sup>336</sup> As she indicates in Dolerse (2011), ‘zero tolerance’ leads to a spectacle of gore, which became considerably worse in 2006, when Mexican president Felipe Calderón launched a highly criticized, military campaign against his own country’s drug cartels. For more information on Calderón’s effort to legitimize his controversial election to office, as well as a citizen’s perspective on his militarization of the *plazas*, see Rivera Garza’s *Dolerse: textos desde un país herido* (2011).

<sup>337</sup> According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), The number of cocaine users in Brazil jumped from 1.8 million, in 2010, to 3.3 million in 2012. All of the statistics, information, and generalizations in this paragraph are from the UNODC 2015 report.

industry in Brazil encouraged this growth, as Brazilian narcotics traffickers did not have to import precursor chemicals to turn the paste into powder...” (278). Finally, Brazil is a smugglers’ paradise: the product enters Brazil easily through its porous borders with Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia, which are the three countries that cultivate the coca plants and make the coca paste; the laws criminalize the product, which boosts profit margins domestically; the authorities, in charge of enforcing its criminalization, are among the most corrupt in the world; and the network for distribution abroad, is the world’s largest.

It is within this context of the Drug War/War Industry, that *O seminarista* addresses the issue of neoliberal global economics, whose legal and illegal industries, that have been intertwined since early capitalism (Valencia 95), depend on constant growth and new markets (Harvey 23). As the war industry forces its own growth and new markets, like it has with the War on Drugs, violence has been normalized. *O seminarista*’s representations of gore capitalism’s culture of violence appear in Zé’s nostalgic descriptions of the weapons that he threw away. He sadly parts with his nine millimeter caliber Glock: “Era de cortar o coração. Eu não ia vender aquela maravilha, seria como se vendesse a estatueta de um santo..., se eu fosse religioso... Com um aperto no coração joguei-a no mar...” (41).<sup>338</sup> He gives several detailed accounts about its capabilities, such as its firing thirty-three rounds in less than half a minute (71-72). Also, he passionately describes his, “... Ruger .480, Super Redhawk, pente carregado com balas Magnum xpt, hollow point,” with which he departed more easily, “jogando-a no lixo em Tampico” (41). His enthusiastic references to name brand pistols, with extra clips full of

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<sup>338</sup> “Me partía el corazón. No iba a dar ni a vender aquella maravilla, sería como si vendiera la estatuilla de un santo..., si yo fuera religioso... Con el corazón estrujado la arrojé al mar...” (Mata y Crespo 40-41).

armour piercing bullets, are examples of the popular appeal that the weapons industry enjoys in gore capitalism's culture of violence: they get free advertising in its cultural productions.<sup>339</sup>

Zé, and the enemies that later jeopardize his and Kristen's safety, represent the violent hegemonic masculinity of gore capitalism that is most prevalent among the 'Drug War' industry. While narrating about his work as an assassin, Zé mentions having killed a target in Tampico, Mexico (41), which is known (in real life) for its being a port city that has been controlled by Los Zetas, and therefore, it invokes the theme of drug cartel violence.<sup>340</sup> M.M.Ziff<sup>341</sup> and D.S. fit the mold of contemporary drug traffickers who also own 'legitimate businesses.' Zeta's legitimate operations have earned Ziff the reputation of Rio de Janeiro's largest real estate developer (88-9), but Ziff is also known to be Brazil's top cocaine importer (90). The company's name 'Zeta,' and its function as narcotics enterprise, references the infamous, real life, *Cártel de Los Zetas*, who are also in the business of contraband, but are mostly known for their posting images of

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<sup>339</sup> There are similar references to brands of weapons in popular Brazilian cultural productions like rapper/artist MV Bill's hit song from 2000 entitled, "Soldado do morro," (loosely translated as 'ghetto soldier'), whose lyrics refer to a nine millimeter caliber pistol and to the German defense manufacturing brand Heckler and Koch, or H & K: "*feio e esperto com uma cara de mal, a sociedade me criou mais um marginal, eu tenho uma nove e uma H K, com ódio na veia, pronto para atirar,*" ('ugly and sharp with a mean look on my face, society raised me, one more outcast, I gotta nine an' a H & K, with hate in my veins, ready to unload.')

<sup>340</sup> The port city of Tampico is an important plaza ('smuggling route') for exporting cocaine north to the U.S. One particular group of highly trained, ex special-forces militants, called Los Zetas, have controlled Tampico, off and on, since the 1990's when they were the security team of their former employer, *El Cartel del Golfo*. Within their ranks are ex-members of Mexico's GAFE, Guatemalan ex-kaibiles, and American ex-special forces. For more information, see "El origen de 'Los Zetas': brazo armado del cártel del Golfo." CNN México. 5 July 2011. By the time *O seminarista* was published in 2009, the U.S. government considered Los Zetas to be, "the most technologically advanced, sophisticated, powerful, ruthlessly violent and dangerous cartel operating in Mexico." For more information, see Ware, Michael (6 August 2009). "Los Zetas called Mexico's most dangerous drug cartel." *CNN News*. (August 7, 2009).

<sup>341</sup> There is no space in the text, after 'M.M.', which most likely stands for *Meritíssimo* ('The Honorable'), and normally the title applies to judges in the Brazilian judicial system.

themselves on the internet, torturing and decapitating rivals, including police (Valencia 102).<sup>342</sup> Not coincidentally, the name ‘Zeta’ reappears at the story’s apex, when the text more closely portrays the kind of violence that has given Los Zetas their horrific reputation.

Zé comes home after dinner with D.S., to find Kirsten murdered, and goes on a vengeful rampage that ends with an encounter between the ex-friends in D.S.’s mansion.

‘D.S., você fala demais. Vou começar arrancando a sua língua... O disco com a inscrição ZETA, estava lá.... ‘Você matou a muita gente por causa desse disco.’ ‘Summa necessitudo, necesidad imperioso,’ disse ele. ‘Foram suas últimas palavras,’ respondi. Arrancar a língua de um cara é mais difícil do que arrancar um olho. Tive que fazer o D.S. desmaiar, dando vários golpes na sua cabeça.... Com o alicate eu puxei a língua de D.S. para fora o máximo possível..., parecia-me ter uns trinta centímetros. Foi fácil decepá-la.... Senti um grande prazer ao notar o seu olhar aterrorizado.... Apanhei o espelho e coloquei em frente ao rosto dele.... Eu sabia que arrancar dois olhos de um sujeito não era fácil, por isso me contentei em furar repetidamente com a faca os dois olhos de D.S.... Encostei a Glock no nariz dele e abri um buraco de mina.... Finalmente com a faca de cozinha cortei as suas duas carótidas (173-4).<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Their performing decapitations and other acts of explicit violence, is available for public viewing on YouTube and elsewhere on the internet. For more information see: Stastna, Kazi (28 August 2011). “The cartels behind Mexico’s drug war.” *CBS News*. Retrieved 14 May 2012.

<sup>343</sup> “‘D.S. hablas demasiado. Voy a empezar arrancándote la lengua... El disco, con la inscripción ZETA, estaba ahí.... ‘Mataste a mucha gente por causa de este disco.’ ‘*Summa nesessitudo*, necesidad imperioso,’ dijo. ‘Ésas son tus últimas palabras,’ le respondí. Arrancarle la lengua a un hombre es más difícil que arrancarle un ojo. Tuve que hacer que D.S. se desmayara, golpeándole varias veces en la cabeza.... Con las pinzas jalé la lengua de D.S. hacia afuera al máximo.... Parecía tener unos treinta centímetros. Fue fácil rebanarla... Sentí un gran placer al ver su mirada aterrorizada.... Tomé el espejo y lo puse frente a su rostro.... Sabía que arrancar los ojos de un hombre no era fácil, por eso me contenté con agujerar



The satisfaction Zé gains from D.S.'s horrified look, can be attributed to the fact that, for the first time, D.S. sees up close and personally, the violence that has filled his coffers. However, Zé indicates that he has experience with ripping out tongues and gouging out eyes, which contradicts his earlier claims that he does not mutilate his victims, as does the new wave of assassins produced by gore capitalism. It is the story's climax, and serves to confirm that gore capitalism has denied Zé his wish to live according to his 'moral sense,' and that, in the end, his familiarity with *necroempoderamiento* was enough to outlive D.S., whose citation "Summa necessitudo," implies that murdering so many people was simply a necessary outcome of economics, which coincides with Valencia's point about a fissure in the episteme of violence that deems it a necessary inevitability in gore capitalism.

Although it is Zé who is carrying out the explicit violence, the text's intention with the scene is to mirror the new standard of industrialized violence in gore capitalism that drug cartels have been employing with increasing frequency, to improve profit margins, send specific messages, and to advertise that they are still winning The War on Drugs. While they secure their plazas and signify their control over local authorities, the cartels have become innovators in the technology of violence as a, "disciplina económica... [Y] las formas de ejercerla se han convertido en técnicas súper especializadas, fundadas en una racionalidad instrumental y economicista..." (Valencia 105). The text's scenes of explicit violence mirror the cartels' tendency to maximize the horror value, and the canvas, that each body avails their executioner for his sending

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repetidamente con el cuchillo los dos ojos de D.S..... Le puse la Glock en la nariz e le abrí un boquete tipo mina.... Finalmente, con el cuchillo de cocina le corté las dos carótidas (Mata y Crespo 165-66)

messages and signifying his power.<sup>344</sup> It portrays the increasing use, by the ‘new mafia’ of the lifeless human body for messaging. Zé’s cutting off D.S.’s tongue, signifies that D.S. was an *hocicón*, (‘a big-mouth’) and, Zé’s gouging out his eyes, signifies D.S.’s betrayal of their friendship. Valencia calls this calculated mutilating of a body to send a message the, “semiótica de la violencia”:

Ser envuelto en una manta después del asesinato denota afinidad con el muerto...  
Asesinar con una bolsa de plástico sobre la cabeza hasta conseguir la asfixia,  
representa el deseo de infringir dolor de forma lenta y larga... Ojos saltados de las  
órbitas denota traición al cártel... Dedos cercenados denotan fuga de  
información... Cuerpos disueltos en ácido denotan deudas económicas...

(Gonzales in Valencia 110-11).<sup>345</sup>

Zé identifies this epistemological rupture in the concept of death, in his descriptions of his killing Janota, who was a challenge, because he was of the same metier (‘profession’) as Zé.<sup>346</sup> Zé nonchalantly mentions how much he enjoyed the job, and again indicates that

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<sup>344</sup> The media plays a part in sending these messages by its publishing images of dead bodies hanging from bridges, decapitated heads thrown into nightclubs, scalped heads, tongues removed (por hocicón), testicles removed (for courting a rival’s girlfriend), and femicides (for cartel initiation rituals). For more information see: Segato, Rita Laura. “La Escritura En El Cuerpo De Las Mujeres Asesinadas En Ciudad Juárez: Territorio, Soberanía Y Crímenes De Segundo Estado.” *Debate Feminista* 37 (2008): 78-102. *JSTOR*. Web. 07 Mar. 2016.

<sup>345</sup> Gonzales, Luis Miguel. "Las Señales Del Narco." *El Economista* (2008): n. pag. Print.

<sup>346</sup> Aside from the noun *janota*’s meaning ‘dandy’ or ‘metrosexual,’ (according to WordReference.com), a more interesting possibility, that could explain Fonseca’s choice of the name ‘Janota,’ is that it also refers pejoratively to Rodrigo Janot, the current Brazilian Attorney General. This possibility comes after Da Silva’s proposal that the Fonsequian narrator speaks on behalf of the author’s alter-ego, which is an assumption that is especially available for Zé in *O seminarista* because the narrator’s name is also the author’s nickname, ‘Zé,’ and like Rodrigo Janot, Fonseca was a prosecuting attorney for the criminal justice system. In other words, the lawyer-turned author, Zé Fonseca, and Attorney General R. Janot are of the same ‘metier.’ Lately, Janot has been caught up in the finger pointing from the ‘Operação lava jato,’ which is the unprecedented investigation of Petrobras corruption, and indeed, Janot’s name was associated with the term ‘janota,’ in media commentary entitled, “Janot ou Janota,” by the columnist Ramiro Guedes of from *O Sollo*. Incidentally, the columnist’s first name is the name of the necrophiliac in *O seminarista*

he is on the ‘good’ side of bad, by his describing Janota’s identity based on consumption, and his brutality:

dizia que só comprava roupa feita sob medida na Armani. Suas gravatas eram francesas de seda pura. Usava um anel de formatura de advogado, com rubi e dois brilhantes laterais... Era o assassino de aluguel mais sanguinário... Eu dou apenas um tiro na cabeça do freguês.... O Janota gostava de desfígurar o freguês, até mesmo se fosse mulher. Acho que até gostava de matar mulher (13-14).

In this description, Zé strategically portrays himself as an assassin who is reasonable, humble, and ‘fair’ by comparison to the ruthless Janota. He implies that his having a ‘sense of morality,’ and being an assassin, are not mutually exclusive, and he is able to easily kill Janota, precisely because Janota lacks the qualities that distinguish Zé from him. Due to Janota’s vanity, Zé easily finds him at the gym, and due to Janota’s envious obsession with luxury goods, Zé is able to make plans for them to meet later, by pretending to have a new Ferrari to show Janota (15-16).

Zé’s disgust with Janota’s style of killing and his mutilating women, points to the changes that gore capitalism has effectuated upon the standards of violence: “ya en los últimos ocho años... ya no existen los codigos de honor o de respeto hacia las mujeres y l@s niñ@s; ahora los únicos códigos a seguir están dictados por la economía, que impone asesinar sin distinción alguna...” (Valencia 106). As Zé finds Janota’s killing so reprehensible, he indicates that he is also repressing a similar disgust that he feels towards himself, which is why Zé’s narration shortly thereafter, implies that he was not

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and his last name ‘Guedes,’ is the name the police detective in *Bufo & Spallanzani*, which may be coincidences worth investigating too.

always so proud of his work. After Janota, Zé's target is a paraplegic, and he regrets having to kill the man's nurse, who is unavoidable 'collateral damage,' given that she sees Zé's face (17).

If there is a more humane, 'Old School' torturing method, that indicates one's respect for the game and fellow criminal, then Zé represents it when he has to torture the bodyguard who was left in charge of watching El Gordo's house in Buzios, where Zé goes on his hunt for the elusive computer disc. What stands out in the scene is that, even when implementing torture, he expresses a sense of morality:

Saquei a Glock e apontei para ele. 'Abre essa merda.' Ele abriu, sempre calmo, o cara era primeiro time.... Enfiei com força o cano da Glock na sua boca.... Nos seus olhos não havia nenhum traço de medo. Quebrei outro dedo e ele sorriu para mim... Já tive um dedo quebrado, doeu para caralho, ... Mas eu também aguentei a barra. Igual que aquele cara. Ele nao ia abrir o bico nunca.... Eu estava me sentindo mal em torturar aquele cara, odeio fazer as pessoas sofrerem....

Confesso que lamentei ter que matar o cara, ele tinha caráter (94).<sup>347</sup>

Zé respects the man's integrity, and even shows him solidarity. He knows that this man has suffered the violence that is always ordered by those who never, or rarely, experience it. Zé certainly experiences it when Sangue de boi and his henchmen catch up to him and torture him:

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<sup>347</sup> I took out the Glock and pointed it at him. "Open that shit." He opened it calmly, the guy was a first team veteran.... I shoved the Glock in hi mouth.... Not a trace of fear in his eyes. I broke another of his fingers and he smiled at me... I've had a finger broken like that. Hurt like hell ... but I also took the pain, just like this guy. He wasn't ever gonna talk.... I felt bad torturing the guy, I hate making people suffer.... I admit I hated killing the guy, he had character.

Pouco depois senti um choque eléctrico forte nos meus testiculos, que causou uma dor insuportavel.... ‘Anda, sua merda, abre logo o bico.’ Outro choque, outra dor lacinante. ‘Está bem, está bem, digo tudo que vocês quiserem saber.’ ‘Então fala sua merda.’ ‘Vocês me dizem o que eu tenho que falar e eu falo. Eu falo tudo o que vocês quiserem que eu fale. Mas vocês têm que me dizer o que é’.... Achei que esse era um bom argumento, que convenceria..., mas logo senti um choque ainda mais forte nos meus colhões (84).<sup>348</sup>

The scene’s portrayal of the ineffectiveness of torture is so overt, that it seems intentionally didactic. Despite all of the text’s emphasis on torture, and its giving the name of ‘Zeta,’ to Ziff and D.S.’s cocaine enterprise, the individual roles of these two villains, are closer references to the head figures of El Cártel de Sinaloa, who are the arch rivals of Los Zetas in ‘real life.’<sup>349</sup> When Zé asks D.S. if he knows anything about Ziff, D.S. says, “... está na lista da Forbes, acho que isto basta.” His statement indicates the cultural importance allotted to the Forbes list of billionaires in gore capitalism, and serves as a reminder of the several times in which Joaquín Loera Guzmán, alias, ‘El Chapo,’ has appeared on the Forbes list of the world’s richest people, as the head of El Cártel de

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<sup>348</sup> “Poco después sentí una fuerte descarga eléctrica en los testiculos que me causó un dolor insoportable.... ‘Anda, pendejo, ya suelta la sopa.’ Otro toque, otro dolor punzante. Está bien, está bien, les digo todo lo que quieran.’.... ‘Entonces habla, pendejo.’ ‘Díganme qué es lo que les tengo que decir y se los digo. Digo todo lo que quieran que diga. Pero me tienen que decir qué.... Creí que ése era un buen argumento... pero de inmediato sentí una descarga aún más fuerte en los huevos” (Mata y Crespo 83).

<sup>349</sup> It is not a stretch to say that the text’s conflating the names and players of these two crime syndicates is dangerously defiant. In Mexico, numerous artists, such as Valentín Elizalde, and journalists (36 since 1991/motive confirmed, 44/motive unconfirmed) have been killed or disappeared for their references to organized crime. See: “36 Journalists Killed in Mexico since 1992/Motive Confirmed”

Sinaloa.<sup>350</sup> Ziff's role is to divert attention from the fact that D.S. is Zeta's owner,<sup>351</sup> and the text hints at this, because Ziff never enters Zé's focalization, nor is he a part of any dialogue, except for a brief moment near the end.

With Ziff appearing as the big fish, D.S.'s fortune is attributed not to trafficking, but to his success as a publisher. D.S. uses his magazine and Ziff's vanity to protect his secret: "Já fiz uma matéria de capa na minha revista ... É um homem vaidoso, gosta de aparecer" (102).<sup>352</sup> D.S. claims no association whatsoever with Zeta, and he alleges that Ziff is the owner. In fact, the name 'Ziff,' when considered in conjunction with D.S.'s fortune, made from his publishing "um monte de revistinhas infantis" (99),<sup>353</sup> references the late publishing billionaire, William B. Ziff (1930-2006), who, after studying philosophy, made a fortune from popular magazines, such as *Car and Driver*.<sup>354</sup> Likewise, D.S. studied literature and philosophy (67), before dedicating himself to selling

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<sup>350</sup> Guzmán appeared on Forbes magazine's list of the world's richest people, in 2009, when *O seminarista* was published. *El Chapo* has been considered the world's "most powerful drug kingpin" and boss of "the world's most powerful crime syndicate," 'El cartel de Sinaloa' (Caldwell and Stevenson).

<sup>351</sup> But, the letters in the name, 'M.M.Ziff,' resemble those of 'M-Z,' a.k.a. 'El Mayo Zambada' (Ismael Zambada), who, despite his claiming to be dedicated to cattle ranching and agriculture, he is the other head of *El Cártel de Sinaloa* and business partner of 'El Chapo.' Unlike Guzmán, Zambada has managed to avoid capture during his forty years of drug trafficking, despite bounties on his head, like the current five million dollars that the F.B.I is offering (Scherer García).

<sup>352</sup> "Su nombre está en la lista Forbes, creo que eso lo dice todo. Ya le dedicamos una portada en mi revista. Sé poco de él. Es un hombre vanidoso, le gusta exhibirse." (Mata y Crespo 97).

<sup>353</sup> "un montón de revistitas infantiles..." (Mata y Crespo 95).

<sup>354</sup> All the information in this paragraph that pertains to W.B. Ziff is from his obituary: de la Merced, Michael J. "William B. Ziff Jr., 76, Builder of Magazine Empire, Dies." *The New York Times*. N.p., 12 Sept. 2006. Web. 11 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/12/obituaries/12ziff.html>

popular publications, full of advertisements that govern the urges of the masses, and therefore influences their *biomercado*.<sup>355</sup>

D.S. is aware of the large scale promotion of ignorance that his media corporation carries out: “Sabe aquela programa infantil que eu patrocino? O Ziff me pediu para colocar como animadora do programa uma comidinha dele. Ela é uma analfabeta, mas eu a coloquei como animadora, sem problema, as crianças também são analfabetas, como todo mundo que vê televisão” (104).<sup>356</sup> The text dialogues with Valencia’s critique of gore capitalism’s mass media promotion of violence through D.S.’s media company: “la diferencia entre la realidad y lo que se especularía como modelo ideal, la brecha que separa la exhortación al consumo del coste real de este.... La televisión de la fase III [postfordista] es asimismo el medio que pone imagenes de felicidad consumista ante los más sensibles a la violencia” (Lipovetsky in Valencia 59). D.S.’s comments about the “comidinha analfabeta,” also indicate, a normalized misogyny in his social environment, and a cultural acceptance of women remaining uneducated, in favor of their matching certain determined guidelines for an emphasized femininity. Some of those guidelines and misogyny stand out in the following dialogue between D.S and Zé:

olha para o salão e localiza uma loura magra, alta de cabelos curtos. É a comidinha do Ziff, aquela que coloquei como animadora do programa infantil que patrocino na TV.’ Olhei. ‘D.S., só tem loura zanzada por lá.’ ‘Ela está com um

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<sup>355</sup> Zé never shares which names the initials ‘D’ and ‘S’ represent. Some possibilities for the meaning of the symbol ‘D.S.’ are, ‘devil Satan,’ the ‘Department of State,’ or ‘*de Sinaloa*,’ since D.S. turns out to be a ruler of a major cocaine business.

<sup>356</sup> “¿Te acuerdas de aquel programa infantil que patrocino? Ziff me pidió que pusiera como animadora del programa a una de sus noviecitas. Es una analfabeta, pero la puse de animadora, sin problema, los niños también lo son, como todos los ven televisión (Mata e Crespo 99).

longo preto.’ ‘Tem dez louras de longo preto. Ou vinte.’ .... ‘Charlize, esse é o meu amigo Zé. Seu fá número um.... ‘Charlize que nome interessante.’ ‘É um... um... e um alias. Isso, é um alias, ela disse.’ ‘Ah, um pseudónimo?’ ‘Sim, sim, essa coisa. Eu gostei desse nome....’ Ela confessou que achava as crianças ... muito chatinhas. ‘Vou ver se o Ziff me arranja um programa nocturno. Pode ser de moda... sei tudo sobre moda’ (113-114).<sup>357</sup>

What stands out in D.S.’s discourse is his role as, he who controls and patronizes of all subordinates: “aquela que coloquei.... no programa infantil que patrocino.” Charlize, by contrast, is perhaps the most subordinated subject in gore capitalism, because she is bound to the whims of the men with the money, especially in the television business. The text portrays her as helpless, which is also how Kirsten is depicted in her role as Zé’s damsel in distress, but the difference is that Charlize is Brazilian, and purposefully uneducated, and Kirsten is German, and a professional translator of literature. However, the text does not have Charlize murdered, which indicates that her willing subordination to the *biomercado* has survival value, whereas Kirsten’s erudition does not.

The text depicts the widow Suzane as among the same social circles as Charlize, Ziff and D.S., and therefore, she too represents a society obsessed with individual status, in which one aspires to invoke the envy of others. She lives by a book, entitled, Tudo o

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<sup>357</sup> “... mira hacia el salón y localiza a una rubia delgada, alta de pelo corto. Es la amiguita de Ziff aquella que puse de animadora del programa infantil que patrocino en la TV.’ Miré hacia donde me indicaba. ‘D.S., hay puras rubias rodando por allá.’ ‘Trae un vestido largo negro.’ ‘Hay diez rubias con vestido largo negro. O veinte.’ ... ‘Charlize, te presento a mi amigo Zé. Es tu fan número uno.... ‘Charlize, que nombre interesante.’ ‘Es un... un... es un alias. Sí, Es un aliás.’ ‘Ah, un seudónimo...’ ‘Sí, sí, eso. Me gustó ese nombre... Confesó que los ninos que iban a su programa le parecían muy latosos. ‘Voy a ver si Ziff me consigue un programa por la noche. Puede ser de moda... Conozco todo acerca de la moda”



que você precisa saber para viver melhor e impressionar as pessoas (156),<sup>358</sup> speaks with a fake french accent, and, in her description of the French wine that she offers Zé, she indicates her desperate quest for approval. She uses notes from her book scribbled on a piece of paper (157), which is an intertextual reference to ‘Suzy,’ from *Bufo & Spallanzani* (1985), who, by contrast, is not at all interested in impressing others, but she also suddenly reads from a random piece of paper that contains a description that pertains to the woman she loves. This is not the only reference to *Bufo & Spallanzani*, by which the text implies a declined state of feminism, thirty years later: in the apartment that D.S. loans to Zé and Kirsten for ‘hiding,’ “Fazia um calor filho da puta... ‘A gente fica nu,’ disse Kirsten. ‘De jeito nenhum. Não vou banalizar a sua nudez. Põe um camisolão’” (111).<sup>359</sup>

Her being uncomfortably hot, is less important to Zé than the novelty of her nudity remaining in tact. Zé’s ordering Kirsten to wear clothes, and not getting any resistance from her about it, is exactly the opposite of what happens in *Bufo & Spallanzani*, when Ivan questions Minolta’s walking around nude in his apartment (106-7). *O seminarista*’s females imply that an emphasized, weaker femininity aids in constructing the hegemonic masculinity practiced in gore capitalism.

In order to distinguish Zé from the misogynists, the text works hard to build a case for his natural, caring, attraction to women. True to the ‘masculine’ (or anxiously heterosexual) novela negra genre, he emphasizes his own heterosexuality, saying he must always be with a woman (41), yet he emphasizes his masculinity’s uniqueness, by

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<sup>358</sup> “Todo lo que necesita saber para vivir mejor e impresionar a la gente” (Mata y Crespo 150).

<sup>359</sup> “Hacia un calor hijo de puta... ‘Nos quitamos la ropa,’ dijo Kirsten. ‘De ninguna manera. No voy a banalizar tu desnudez. Ponte un camisón’” (Mata e Crespo 107).

accentuating his preferences that are not necessarily stereotypical of someone in his profession:

gosto de ver as mulheres se expressando corporalmente, sentadas com os pés separados e os joelhos juntos; pegando nos cabelos quando são compridos e enrolando e dando um nó, fazendo uma espécie de coque; ou quando levantam os dois braços revelando a axila ... ou quando atravessam a rua correndo, ou quando estão dormindo; ou quando contam suas historias. Gosto de foder com elas. Gosto de mulheres magras com peitos pequenos que nem necessitam de sutiã (41).<sup>360</sup>

He then goes on to show us his unique preferences are more than just physical, they are also performative: “só sinto tesão por mulher que trabalha, pode ser qualquer trabalho, médica, balconista de loja, secretária, bancária, advogada, garçonete, até lixeira” (41).<sup>361</sup>

Still, just when his masculinity seems almost too unique to be convincing, he says something that seems to place it back within that of dominant discourse, maintaining the plausibility of his character, and fitting in with the despotic masculinity of gore capitalism: “Sou legal com as minhas mulheres, trato-as com carinho e respeito, digo que adoro as comidas que cozinham, vou com elas ver os filmes que querem ver, não faço comentarios desairosos sobre os livros que leem, podem até ser porcarias” (42-3).<sup>362</sup> That

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<sup>360</sup> “... Me gusta ver a las mujeres expresándose corporalmente, sentadas con los pies separados y las rodillas juntas; tomándose los cabellos cuando son largos y enrollados y haciendo con ellos un nudo, en una especie de chongo; o cuando levantan los dos brazos revelando las axilas... o cuando cruzan la calle corriendo, o cuando están durmiendo, o cuando cuentan sus historias. Me gusta coger con ellas. Me gustan las mujeres delgadas con pechos pequeños que no necesitan brasier” (Mata y Crespo 41).

<sup>361</sup> “... Sólo siento atracción por las mujeres que trabajan, puede ser cualquier trabajo, doctora, encargada de tienda, secretaria, cajera, abogada, mesera, incluso afanadora” (Mata y Crespo 41).

<sup>362</sup> “Soy buena persona con mis mujeres, las trato con carino y respeto, les digo que adoro lo que cocinan, voy con ellas a ver las peliculas que quieren ver, no les hago desaires sobre los libros que leen, aunque sean porquerias” (Mata y Crespo 42).

he specifically mentions these characteristics about his role in gender relations indicates his belief in their uniqueness, which works to prove the contrary.

Zé's practice of a patriarchal gender performance is consistently inconsistent throughout the text. His reason for choosing his new name, 'José Joaquim Kibir,' corresponds to the thematic of this masculinity that accesses status through war, and gains honor through multiple heterosexual encounters. 'Kibir' comes from a family legend about Zé's ancestor who was a Portuguese navy captain that escaped the battle of Alcácer-Quibir in 1538. According to the legend, while his ancestor fled the carnage of the lost battle, he also had sex with the wife of the Moroccan sheik (35-6). Zé's fascination with the virility of his military ancestor, who lived during the beginning stages of capitalism, parallels the honor bestowed to a bellicose, womanizing masculinity in today's global capitalism,<sup>363</sup> which popular cultural productions often portray in the context of the global cocaine industry.<sup>364</sup> Finally, with respect to his delusion, Zé makes a reference to the supernatural, saying his new name will please his male ancestors, "os homens lá em cima, é claro, vão gostar" (37),<sup>365</sup> which associates the naval captain's

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<sup>363</sup> As in the U.S., popular Brazilian cultural productions, regularly reproduce this bellicose womanizing masculinity. The opening lines from the track "Batalha" ('Battle'), by the artist Obando, are as follows: "Papel e caneta pra começar um império, um legado, Grana, buceta e inimigos no cemitério," ('paper and pen to start an empire, a legacy, cash, pussy, and enemies in the cemetery'), and the refrain, "Mais um dia de batalha, Sobrevive o guerreiro, Cada dia uma conquista, defendendo nossa família no Iraque brasileiro" 'Another day of battle, the warrior survives, everyday a victory, defending our family in the Brazilian Iraq.'

<sup>364</sup> For information about popular representations of gender in the context of the global cocaine industry, see: Giraldo, Isis. "Machos y mujeres de armas tomar. Patriarcado y subjetividad femenina en la narco-telenovela colombiana contemporánea." *La manzana de la discordia*, Enero - junio, 2015 Vol. 10, No. 1: 67-81

<sup>365</sup> "... y a los hombres de allá arriba, claro, les va a gustar" (Mata y Crespo 36).

masculinity, with Catholicism's promises of heaven, and also contradicts Zé's claims to be an atheist.

Also, shortly before changing his name, Zé discusses his sexual encounter with "Norminha," in a scene that draws attention to the womanizing masculinity that Zé practices before meeting Kirsten. Zé tells Norminha that he went to Tampico, Mexico, and she asks, "Onde fica? No Japão? Na Tailândia?" 'Japão.' 'É verdade que a xoxotinha das japonesas tem uma abertura assim, ao contrário da nossa, que é assim?' ... 'É a pura verdade.' 'É um pau grande como o teu entra todo na xoxotinha delas?'"

(28).<sup>366</sup> The text's intention for Zé's embodying the male heterosexual ideal, is overt. The name 'Norminha' ('little Norma,' or 'little norm'), signals the little (gender) norms that construct gore capitalism's hegemonic masculinity. The maintenance of the performance is a two way street, however, and Norminha's insatiable libido, does not make it easy for Zé to play his part: "Norminha era um vulcão, ígea, magmática, insaciável ... Depois não aguentava mais. Essa é a diferença entre nós, homens, e as mulheres" (29),<sup>367</sup> as if Zé is saying that Norminha, contrary to what she might think, would be better off with a woman, which is Zé's breaking away from what one might expect, given the pattern of the hegemonic masculinity in gore capitalism. However, Zé claims his promiscuity is not a matter of demonstrating status; it's a matter of principle, as he explains here to D.S.: "No meu tempo eu comi todas as mulheres que eu quis comer, e comi algumas que não

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<sup>366</sup> "¿Dónde está? ¿En Japón? ¿En Tailandia?" 'En Japón.' '¿Es verdad que las panochitas de las japonesas tienen la abertura así, al contrario de las de nosotras, que es así? ... Sí, es la mera verdad.' '¿Y un palo grande como el tuyo entra completa en sus panochitas?'" (Mata y Crespo 28).

<sup>367</sup> "Norminha era un volcán: ígea, magmática, insaciable... Después ya no aguantaba. Ésa es la diferencia entre nosotros, los hombres, y las mujeres" (Mata y Crespo 28).

queria comer,' 'Por quê?' 'Consciência zorbesca. O Zorba, do Kazantzakis, dizia que um homem de caráter tem que comer a mulher que quer dar para ele'" (103).<sup>368</sup>

In addition to implicating neoliberal masculinities for gender violence, *O seminarista* also denounces banks for their part in perpetuating gore capitalism's culture of violence. For example, major banks have enjoyed near impunity for their participation, like many sectors from the neoliberal economies that help the drug war industry to maintain steady growth. Recently, Europe's biggest bank, HSBC, pled guilty to having allowed El Cartel de Sinaloa and their Colombian partners, to wash \$881 million.<sup>369</sup> What distinguishes the banks from the other players in The Drug War Industry is the improbability of the individual bankers ever going to prison for their part in the industry, and, accordingly, those responsible for the oversight at HSBC were spared the mandatory minimum sentences served by the industry's labor force. In social situations, Zé opts for the titles of *doleiro* ('black market currency exchanger') and financial consultant, in order to hide the true source of his retirement savings, which reflects the acquiescence and approval that gore capitalism bestows upon both of these banking professions (legal and illegal), despite their proven culpability in recent global financial crises.<sup>370</sup> Shortly before

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<sup>368</sup> "“En mis buenos tiempos me cogí a todas las mujeres que quise, y cogí con algunas que no me quería coger.’ ‘¿Por qué?’ ‘Conciencia zorbesca. Zorba, de Kazantzakis, decía que un hombre con personalidad tiene que cogerse a las mujeres que quieren con él” (Mata y Crespo 98).

<sup>369</sup> After a whistleblower in Europe's largest bank, HSBC, had alerted authorities in 2008, the United States Attorney General accused HSBC of enabling the operations of Latin American drug cartels by “failing to monitor more than \$670 billion in wire transfers and more than \$9.4 billion in purchases of U.S. currency from HSBC Mexico, allowing for money laundering... Lack of proper controls allowed the Sinaloa drug cartel in Mexico and the Norte del Valle cartel in Colombia to move more than \$881 million through HSBC's U.S. unit from 2006 to 2010...” In exchange for pleading guilty, a judge approved their paying a 1.9 billion dollar fine in 2013, which, to many seems grossly inadequate. For more information, see Smythe, Christie. "HSBC Judge Approves \$1.9B Drug-Money Laundering Accord." *Bloomberg Business*. Bloomberg, 3 July 2013. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

<sup>370</sup> The global financial crisis of 2008 is blamed, at least in part, on improper financial speculation concerning real estate values and securities that depended on the interest and repayment of debt from mortgages that banks underwrote with increasingly lower standards, for homes whose value plummeted

Fonseca's *O seminarista* was published, speculators (the profession Zé claims for social purposes) caused economies all over the planet to collapse, but they have a reputation for their disposable income, so they are socially accepted in gore capitalism.

Likewise, Zeta's offshore accounts speak to how tax havens have always been crucial for criminals' hiding ill-begotten cash (Valencia 43, Glenny 181), and the following description of Ziff's role in Zeta, points to banks' heavy involvement in the global 'Drug War' industry: "Dizem também que possui depósitos vultosos offshore, secretos, que não declara ao I.R..... ele financia a importação maciça de droga de Colombia, mas é apenas o banqueiro, nao se envolve nas operações (102).<sup>371</sup> D.S. reports this information with a tone of respect for the business professionalism of Ziff's operations, but what he is really talking about is the multi-headed hydra that the 'zero tolerance' criminalization has created, and the banks are a vital head to the monster. By D.S. and Ziff's having their legitimate businesses of a media corporation and a real estate/development firm, respectively, their characters stand for the symbiotic relationship between legal and illegal sectors in gore capitalism.

Mainstream media corporations, like D.S.'s, portray drug cartels and law enforcement in a good versus evil conflict that, on its surface, justifies criminalization and generous enforcement budgets.<sup>372</sup> Then, the cartels buy weapons in the U.S. and

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when the real estate market's bubble popped. Despite the foreseeability of the real estate market's crashing, many of these securities were sold, and many bad mortgages were issued, long after the market peaked in 2004. For more information, see Simkovic, Michael, "Competition and Crisis in Mortgage Securitization" (October 8, 2011). *Indiana Law Journal*, Vol. 88, p.213, (2013).

<sup>371</sup> "... También dicen que tiene grandes depositos offshore, secretos, que no declara al fisco. ... financia la importación massiva de droga de Colombia, pero solo es banquero, no se involucra en las operaciones" (Mata y Crespo 98).

<sup>372</sup> For more information, see "Media constructions of illegal drugs, users, and sellers: a closer look at *Traffic*." *International Journal of Drug Policy* Volume 13, Issue 5, November 2002, Pages 397–407.

stash the profits made off of the criminalization, by investing in real estate bought through ‘shell companies,’<sup>373</sup> which boosts local economies, whose real estate companies benefit considerably from the cash purchases.

The text depicts the issue of increasingly ruthless and hyper consumerist masculinity through the Zé’s former protégé, Manoel Goveia, nicknamed *Sangue de boi* (‘bull blood’) (70), who has grown into a flashy assassin. *Sangue de boi*’s interaction with Zé, indicates a ‘masculine protest,’ against Zé and against his father, whose failure at life, has forever marked *Sangue de boi*, by way of the nickname. Zé describes a memory he has of the father: “Um dia eu o vi puxando o carrinho sobre o qual havia uma latrina, e ver aquele homen magro, de barba grisalha,...., arrastrando tristemente uma latrina asquerosamente conspícua, deixou-me um travo amargo na boca...” (66).<sup>374</sup>

Psychoanalysts understand constructions of masculinities as lifelong projects, especially in resistance to gendered power relations,<sup>375</sup> and *Sangue de boi* represents how consumerism constructs identity in gore capitalism (Valencia 91): he drives a new imported car, takes Zé to the best restaurant in the city, and flaunts his gold Rolex.

His offering the watch to Zé, is an example of the form of altruism that advertises superiority: “Era um Rolex de ouro, desses que novo-rico gosta de ostentar. ‘Bacana’, eu

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<sup>373</sup> Nehamus discusses recent examples of multi-million dollar properties bought in cash purchases from suspected shell companies in the following article: “Feds Crack down on Secret Real Estate Deals in Miami-Dade and New York.” Online Posting. *The Miami Herald*. N.p., 16 Jan. 2016. Web. 1 Mar. 2016.

<sup>374</sup> Un dia lo vi empujando el carrito sobre el cual había un excusado, y ver a aquel hombre flaco, de barba gris... arrastrando de la manera más triste un excusado asquerosamente conspicuo, me dejó un amargo sabor en la boca (66).

<sup>375</sup> “Approaches such as Sartre’s existential psychoanalysis are helpful for understanding masculinities as projects and a masculine identity as always being a provisional accomplishment within a life course. Adlerian psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the emotional consequences of gendered power relations in childhood, gave rise to the idea of the “masculine protest,” which still resonates with contemporary discussions of marginalized youth” (Connell 843).

disse. Ele tirou o relógio do pulso e disse ‘é teu, pode levar’. Mas não aceitei,..., não uso um Rolex de ouro nem que a vasa tussa” (68).<sup>376</sup> The text’s emphasis on Sangue de boi’s formation into an ostentatious thug resonates with the characteristics of Valencia’s sujeto *endriago*: anómalo y transgresor, combina lógica de la carencia (pobreza, fracaso, insatisfacción) y la lógica de la frustración y lógica de la heroificación... (Valencia 92). Sangue de boi’s life history indicates his functioning to represent the new generation produced by gore capitalism.

His past offers convincing reasons for his believing humility is too much like humiliation, and that crime really does pay, if you work really hard to become the best: ele era adolescente e trabalhava de faxineiro num prédio da zona sul., mas nós gostavamos de jogar sinuca... Tinha esse apelido porque o pai dele só tomava vinho dessa marca... Sangue de Boi furtava de uma livraria. Tornou-se um mestre nessa coisa de mão leve. Acho que também batia carteiras, pois passou a andar com dinheiro, roupas novas, relógios, alimentos, acho que furtava tudo (66-7).<sup>377</sup>

In Zé’s success as an assassin, Sangue de boi saw a more socially acceptable way than his cleaning rich family’s condominiums or stealing to gain access to status. The mafioso and the assassin gain enviable positions of status, “ya que se les inscribe como triunfadores dentro de las lógicas del capitalismo...” (Valencia 71): “Zé você era um matador

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<sup>376</sup> “Era un Rolex de oro, de ésos que a los nuevos ricos les gusta ostentar. ‘Chido,’ le dije. Se quitó el reloj y me dijo, ‘Es tuyo, lo puedes llevar.’ No lo acepté, puse un pretexto cualquiera, ni loco me pongo un Rolex de oro” (Mata y Crespo 68).

<sup>377</sup> “... era un adolescente que trabajaba como afanador en un edificio de la zona sur, pero a los dos nos gustaba jugar billar...Tenía ese apodo porque su padre solo bebía vino de esa marca, Se volvió maestro en ese asunto de la mano larga. Creo que también era carterista, pues empezó a traer dinero, ropa nueva, relojes, alimentos, creo que todo se lo robaba (Mata y crespo 66-67).



profissional. Dizem que era o melhor da praça. O Especialista.’ Disse isso com uma ponta de inveja que não conseguia esconder.” (66-7).<sup>378</sup>

Despite Zé’s disapproval of the younger thugs’ ostentatious style, Zé proves that he is just as capable as the younger assassins, at exploiting another human’s body, and reducing it to its lowest form, for his own interests. Zé’s last victim before his attempt at retirement is a psychoanalyst, ironically named Eugênio,<sup>379</sup> and Zé can find no fault that would justify his killing him (31), but he does so anyway, because he is ordered and paid to do so. Also, this necroempoderamiento side of Zé, allows for his disposing of Gralha, who is the text’s representation of the subject that is incapable of practicing gore capitalism’s violent masculinity. Zé’s descriptions of Gralha, who he has known since childhood, indicate Zé’s assumed superiority over the weaker acquaintance, who has dark teeth, is broke, smelly, always picking his nose, and is failing at life in gore capitalism. Gralha’s weakness manifests in what Zé calls his, “‘choraminguela.’ ‘Zé eu estou fodido.... eu abri um negocio e fui á falencia. Não tenho casa, não tenho carro, nem mesmo uma bicicleta. E agora para me foder mais ainda o proprietário... diz que vai me despejar...’” (159).<sup>380</sup>

Although the two have known one another since childhood, Zé uses and disposes the weaker subject, in order to gain powerful information concerning the possessor of the

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<sup>378</sup> “‘Zé, tú eras asesino profesional. Dicen que eras el mejor de la región. El Especialista.’ Dijo eso con un poco de envidia que no lograba ocultar” (Mata y Crespo 69).

<sup>379</sup> The name is an intertextual reference to the protagonist in Guimarães’s *O seminarista* and to a villain in Fonseca’s novel *Bufo & Spallanzani* (1985), who castrates the cuckolding protagonist/narrator Gustavo.

<sup>380</sup> “... sus lloriqueos. ‘Zé, abrí un negocio y se fue a la quiebra. No tengo casa, no tengo auto, ni siquiera una bicicleta. Y ahora el propietario del departamento donde vivo, para joderme aún más me dice que me va a echar...’” (Mata e Crespo 153).

elusive computer disc that contains Zeta's offshore account information. In exchange for Zé's giving Gralha the money, he extracts the maximum value available from Gralha's body while the latter remains ignorant to the hazardous condition attached to Zé's superiority-altruism: "É só isso? Ganhei a grana que me deu só para fazer isso?" (161).<sup>381</sup> Gralha's surprise indicates his inexperience with black market negotiations, and it points to the common assumption that money is made easily on the black market.

However, Gralha's naive ignorance of the imminent danger that awaits him indicates that Zé's disposal of him was not completely malignant, since, Gralha had no clue that he should fear for his life, before he is shot to death. Zé's indifference to Gralha's bullet ridden corpse in the morgue indicates the disposability of Gralha's non-violent, weak subjectivity, in gore capitalism (164-5). Zé's extracting value from Gralha's otherwise useless existence, is the text's representation of the, "ruptura epistemológica en la concepción de la muerte... estamos al punto de olvidar 'el paso entre el estar vivo y ser un cadáver...' El capitalismo gore... otorga justificaciones económicas para cuestiones ontológicas (Valencia 111). These justifications extend to the legal industries that are complicit in the drug industry.

A monster, with no inherent sense of morality, has been created by the neoliberal, zero tolerance drug policy, and *O seminarista* points this out allegorically. Early in the story, O Despachante sends Zé to find and kill 'Frankenstein' (18), which is the name that O Despachante gives to whomever is robbing the corpses of young women from the rich folks cemetery, "como o monstro," he says (18).<sup>382</sup> Repeatedly, Zé corrects his

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<sup>381</sup> "¿Eso es todo? ¿Me gané toda la lana que me diste sólo por hacer eso?" (Mata e Crespo 154).

<sup>382</sup> "... como el monstro" (Mata e Crespo 17).

employer, “Frankenstein não é o monstro. É o nome do médico que criou o monstro” (18);<sup>383</sup> “O monstro era um bom sujeito, gostava de crianças. O dr. Frankenstein, que o criou, é quem merecia ser punido. O livro termina com o monstro desaparecendo na neve” (23).<sup>384</sup> Zé’s specifically mentioning that it was Dr. Frankenstein who created the monster, and deserved to be punished, points to the United States having created the monster that is the globalized drug war industry, which benefits industries and government agencies, who, perhaps, deserve to be punished. The monster’s running off in the snow (where else would he go?) is a fantastic allegory for how the drug cartels, have managed to run away from authorities and run businesses off of a white powdery substance, sometimes referred to as snow. O Despachante’s erroneously giving the scientist’s name to the monster, mirrors how public opinion has been led to blame the drug cartels for the spectacle of gore, while ignoring the glaring fact, that the zero tolerance policy creates it.<sup>385</sup>

Zé plays the role of detective and determines that the grave robber is Ramiro, an employee of the cemetery and a necrophiliac who lost his mother when he was a boy (24-6). That detail does little to create sympathy for Ramiro, “Levantei a saia do cadaver. Ela

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<sup>383</sup> “Frankenstein no es el monstro. Es el nombre del médico que creó al monstro” (Mata y Crespo 18).

<sup>384</sup> “El monstro era un buen tipo, le encantaban los niños. El doctor Frankenstein, su creador, era quien merecía ser castigado. El libro termina cuando el monstro desaparece en la nieve” (Mata y Crespo 22).

<sup>385</sup> Valencia also cites scholars who claim that after communism in Latin America was no longer a real threat to the U.S.’s interests, the ‘War on drugs’ has been a pretext for the U.S. to maintain and expand its hegemony (117). This accusation is reasonable, based on the pattern of the U.S.’s protecting its interests, at the expense of civilian lives, in the region, which became especially clear once declassified documents confirmed the U.S.’s active role in military coups and their subsequent dictatorships, especially in the southern cone, and especially in Brazil. For more information, see Blum, William. *Killing hope: US military and CIA interventions since World War II*. Zed Books, 2003.

estava sem calcinha e notei a sua vagina úmida de esperma,” (25)<sup>386</sup> but it sheds light on Zé’s capacity for empathy, even while he is on these messy jobs. While filming Ramiro confessing, Zé eerily resembles a priest performing the catholic ritual: “Anda, Ramiro Barroso, diga a verdade para que Deus possa perdoá-lo” (25).<sup>387</sup> Also, not having a mother is a commonality between Ramiro, Zé (37), and Sangue de boi (67), yet the text gives this no attention, which reflects the new attitude towards death that is prevalent in gore capitalism.

The novel ends with Zé calling himself, “*O seminarista*,” and receiving a phone call for an assignment. The scene confirms his inability to survive in the world of gore capitalism, and still be true to his ‘sense of morality.’ He must live in delusion if he is to live at all. Earlier moments in his narration dropped hints of his giving in to this inevitability. For example, when he first mentions D.S. retrospectively, because he has already killed him, he says, “Quando eu o encontrar um dia vou lhe perguntar por que entrou para o seminário...” (42),<sup>388</sup> which indicates Zé would be seeing D.S. in some form of an afterlife. The ending maintains his delusion of being ‘in-love’ with Kirsten, and indicates that their relationship, which was originally based on artifice, will go on ‘forever’ artificially: “Toda semana eu ia ao cemitério onde Kirsten estava enterrada...

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<sup>386</sup> Levanté la falda del cadáver. La muchacha no traía calzones y observé su vagina húmeda de esperma” (Mata y Crespo 24).

<sup>387</sup> ““Anda Ramiro Barroso, di la verdad para que Dios te pueda perdonar” (Mata y Crespo 25)

<sup>388</sup> “Si lo encuentro un día, le voy a preguntar por qué entró al seminario” (Mata y Crespo 42).

Na parede da sala do meu apartamento eu olhava um quadro com uma foto ampliada de Kirsten. Eu a amaria para sempre. ‘Amor aeternus’” (177).<sup>389</sup>

He believes irrationally in their eternal love, and understands rationally, that the reality of gore capitalism in which they lived, would not permit them to continue experiencing the fantasy of being ‘in love,’ nor would it have allowed them to honestly live according to their ‘sense of morality.’ For this reason, in a declaration of surrender, Zé quotes Petronio, “‘a capillis usque ad unguis’” (178), to say that, from head to toe, no matter what name he gives himself, he will always be what he always was: an assassin. It was and continues to be his specialty in the economy of gore capitalism. For Zé, the profession is a safe bet, because it adheres to the laws of *necroempoderamiento*, and offers a steady income, which obeys the urges of his *biomercado*.

As history continues to unfold in the context of gore capitalism, literary critics will increasingly regard Fonseca’s *O seminarista* as a work that is paramount for understanding contemporary violence.

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<sup>389</sup> “Cada semana iba al panteón a donde Kirsten estaba enterrada... En la pared de la sala de mi departamento contemplaba un cuadro con la ampliación de una foto de Kirsten. La amaría para siempre. *Amor aeternus*” (Mata e Crespo 169).

## Conclusion

This dissertation has demonstrated the overall social value of Fonseca's novels in their designating gender performance as the subject's micropolitical opportunity for his or her attenuating or promulgating violence, which coincides with the conclusion that the Australian masculinologist Raewyn Connell offers on the usefulness of fiction to evaluate the human condition: "Imaginative work does not directly report social experience. But it builds on social experience, it documents cultural problems, and in some circumstances may be the most forceful way to present a troubled reality" (5).<sup>390</sup> "Forceful" describes what has been shown of Rubem Fonseca's narrative.

This study has found no simple way to discuss the complicated relationships between discourse, gender practice and neoliberalism's dominant ideology that maintains the current violent conditions of production, but it has shown the power of language in these processes more visible. While alluding to the censorship of *Feliz ano novo* narrator Gustavo Flávio in *Bufo & Spallanzani* emphasizes that it is the duty of the writer to profess ideas outside of the confines of ideological or repressive state apparatuses, and he forewarns of the inevitable complexity involved in such a task (147-8).

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<sup>390</sup>The citation is from her article "Margin becoming centre: for a world-centred rethinking of masculinities" (2006), and of course I am considering these novels from Fonseca to be "imaginative work."

This dissertation has indicated that the four selected novels do not simply blame the privileged classes or the state for society's increasing proclivity towards inequality and violence, and it has shown that the texts imply that such a denouncement would inevitably lack meaning, acquit readers, and allow them to ignore their roles as conduits of power. Instead, as this study showed, Fonseca's narrative exposes the performativity of all gender practices; it opens a discursive fissure for questioning one's own gender performance and his or her contribution to discourse. This dissertation has indicated where Fonseca's work finds neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinity complicit in their endless dependence upon the reproduction of consumerism, conflict, economic growth in legal and illicit industries, and, therefore, their dependence on violence.

It has analyzed characters that represent patterns of thinking that correspond to determined subjectivities and inter-subjectivities among Brazil's collectively imagined social orders. Fonseca's foresight in the three earlier novels was noticeable in their addressing (with an accuracy that is still pertinent in the first two decades of 21st century) topics like AIDS, the harsh effects of neoliberal economics on the poor, explicit violence, femicide, corruption, and the money laundering of the international cocaine industry. Bestselling author Patricia Melo points out how prophetic Fonseca's narrative has proven to be in its representation of a new urban culture characterized by a new unspeakable violence.<sup>391</sup> Ginway also mentions how advanced the denouncements in *A grande arte*

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<sup>391</sup>... se nota acentuadamente o surgimento de uma cultura urbana tal como a conhecemos hoje: metrópoles com suas patologias típicas. Rubem foi o escritor que transpôs essa nova realidade para a literatura ... *O Cobrador* (1979) e *Feliz Ano Novo* (1975) são proféticos no que diz respeito, por exemplo, à nossa violência. Quando eles foram publicados, as pessoas acreditavam que aquele brutalismo era inverossímil, impossível. Hoje vemos que ele é a nossa realidade. ... 'one especially notices the uprising of an urban culture just like the one we see today: metropolises with their typical pathologies. Rubem was the writer who brought that new reality to literature....*O Cobrador* (1979) and *Feliz Ano Novo* (1975) are prophetic

are for their time: “Even as late as the year 2000, little systematic research had been carried out on the topic of the ties between illegal activity and legitimate business, which constitutes the main plot of Fonseca’s novel” (711). *O seminarista* preceded more recent manifestations of that symbiotic relationship, such as the HSBC cartel money laundering scandal and their shell companies for expensive real estate purchases, which were addressed in chapter four.

With respect to Rubem Fonseca the citizen, it is not a stretch to say that he realized the bourgeois dream, and as indicated in the introduction, there are those, such as Pacheco and Assiss, who attribute his success to his having brushed elbows with some of the dictatorship’s most notorious figures and promoted their agenda, but for which, according to their positions, I would not be writing about his novels today. That point, first of all, gives Fonseca even more reason for his making a parody of the self-made man myth, because it points to the double standard in one’s condemning the self-made man myth and Fonseca’s (assumed to have been) path-made-easier.

Secondly, if his association with the political right was as close as some claim, then that would add validity to what this dissertation has demonstrated, with respect to his literary work’s serving a personal quest to correct that mistake and/or redeem his having disseminated an ideology of domination that still persists. The four chapters indicated where the texts parody, ridicule, and weaken all the major tenets of that ideology.

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in what they say with respect to, for example, our violence. When they were published, people did not think that kind of ruthlessness was believable or possible. Now we see that it is our reality.’



Third, there is also the issue of his being human and therefore also susceptible to the human condition, which, as Fonseca's novels have indicated, in times of fear and uncertainty, obligates one to make decisions that, in retrospect, he or she is not proud of having made (like Fuentes's thinking that killing was a shameful profession to be in), and if this decision from the early 1960's was to promote neoliberal ideology in order to keep his enviable position at Light, then one can understand his having done so, especially if the alternative was torture and disappearance.

Those who condemn his refusing to give interviews, as a sin of omission and part of a pact of silence, add validity to the assumption that he has said all that he has to say in his work. This dissertation has shown how the characters that juxtapose hegemonic gender discourse with gender realities offer an understanding as to how both are in a state of flux. These characters are examples of Fonseca's subverting the idea that Brazil is already a racial democracy or one of "gender equality." They indicate that such narratives serve a discourse that has little in common with much of what happens in reality. Fonseca's bringing the incongruence between the reality and those narratives, strips them of their validity and forces people to either disqualify them or continue to represent a false state of reality. (Of course, as Lacan's theory indicates, once this signification occurs, the reality that is newly considered to be "valid" becomes the bastard child of what it was, when it was in its "not yet hegemonically validated," state.

In regards to Brazilian social conditions following the transition, the analyses made in this dissertation indicate that the four texts make the same connections between neoliberalism, poverty and violence that Sayek Valencia makes in *Capitalismo Gore*. For Valencia, the roots of these socio-economic problems (and their solution) are planted

firmly in gender performance and in dominant discourse: “no es posible fraguar una resistencia ante el sistema económica en el que vivimos, que basa su poder en la violencia exacerbada, sin cuestionar la masculinidad,” and just as she calls for male subjects to base their masculinities on different conditions from those currently dictating discourse (182), the previous chapters have pointed out representations of masculinities, that challenge hegemonic versions, which is what makes the four novels so important.

This study has shown how the protagonist/narrators Madrake, Gustavo and Zé, along with the humble, honest detectives Raul, Guedes and Mattos, and transformed villains like Camilo Fuentes (and their female counterparts), serve the implied intention of the overall coherence of Fonseca’s work: they demonstrate their society’s need for more innovative conditions for constructing masculinities.

Neither Fonseca nor Valencia proposes to eliminate capitalism, and she specifies the impossibility of such an effort (196). However both Fonseca (in his novels) and Valencia in her work have denounced the correlation between conventional gender performance and a global acquiescence to a horrifically violent reality. This dissertation has proven that Fonseca’s contribution to literature is not only an accurate report of social experience, but also an invaluable escape from discourse about race, class, and gender, that is predetermined by neoliberal ideological, authoritative and economic factors that manipulate what a subject thinks and says, be it mythical, rhetorical, or ‘scientifically verifiable.’

Valencia’s naming of the *sujeto endriago*, enabled my having designated the “neoliberal masculinity” as the target critique in my analyses of the four novels, because this subjectivity, like Fonseca’s representations of marginalized assassins like Fuentes,

Zakkai, Chicão and Sangue de boi, even further exposes the point of juncture between masculinities, explicit violence, necropolitics, and the Global North's economic policies.

In short, this study has indicated how Fonseca's novels depict explicit violence as the subject's only option if he aspires to perform a masculinity that is accepted in his society. What has not been relevant for this dissertation is the literary debate over what elements determine detective or crime fiction, which is replaced with a more relevant comparison of the texts to the recent history of crime in Latin America. My claim that the overall intention of these novels is to disrupt the symbiosis between Brazilian hegemonic masculinity, neoliberalism and violence, has been supported by Paulo Pinheiro's reports on the social conditions leading to crime in Brazil and Carlos Fico's *O Grande Irmão: Da Operação Brother Sam Aos Anos De Chumbo: O Governo Dos Estados Unidos E a Ditadura Militar Brasileira* (2008), whose historical account of US Brazilian relations, especially those leading up to the coup of 1964, the U.S. imposition of Cold War rhetoric, and the military alliance between the two countries since WWII, brought together the texts' critique of neoliberalism, its representations of hegemonic and alternative/innovative forms of masculinity, gore capitalism, its sujeto *endriago* masculinity, Cowan's report on the deliberate construction of the counter insurgent masculinity, and Valencia's suggesting new conditions for masculinity in order to disrupt perpetual violence and poverty.

Another study could look to analyze more of Fonseca's representations of poverty in the texts, as opposed to so much repetition around gender. The increased levels of poverty in Brazil's larger cities, due in part to the unrelenting neoliberal economy, stand

out in the following fragment in *A grande arte* from the protagonist Mandrake's observations from when he goes behind a restaurant in Rio:

O lixo eram restos de comida, em dois latões grandes como barris de petróleo de onde exalava um olor nauseabundo... Vários miseráveis estavam esperando. Os homens empurraram as mulheres com truculência, enfiaram os braços dentro dos latões e tiraram as melhores partes, os restos do galeto, as sobras de bife e outras carnes semidevoradas.... Então as mulheres e as crianças retiraram o que ficou, legumes esmigalhados, arroz, massas pastosas. Dois latões, depois de revirados pelas mãos ávidas dos rapinadores, tresandava um fedor ainda mais repugnante. Àquela hora, nos fundos dos outros restaurantes da cidade, outras matilhas de destituídos colhiam os restos dos repastos servidos aos que podem pagar (28).<sup>392</sup>

As Mandrake indicates, this horrific image of destitution is commonplace. The nauseating smell permeates the scene's social critique. Other issues this image presents are those of gender and gender violence. For the starving masses in this (not so unique) socio historical context, masculine dominance prevails. Instead of order, progress, and freedom, the scene represents inhumane, basic instincts; it depicts a space where there is survival value in gender violence, as the men push the women aside to get the best of the discarded scraps, so that they can live another day.

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<sup>392</sup>"The trash consisted of leftover food in two big cans, like oil drums, and it smelled nauseating.... Several beggars were waiting. The men in the bunch shoved the women aside savagely, plunged in their arms up to their elbows and began digging out the best stuff, chicken bones, a scrap of beef, any kind of half devoured meat.... Then the women and children attacked what remained, bits of vegetables, rice, gummy pasta. Think of it. At that hour, at backdoors of restaurants all over the city, other bands of the down-and-out were gathering leftovers of meals served to those who can pay" (Watson 20).

The image poignantly illustrates bell hooks' preoccupation with a feminism that defines itself as simply a movement in which women seek equality to men.<sup>393</sup> The starving women would likely prefer equality with the white middle class male, who is observing and narrating,<sup>394</sup> as opposed to the men with whom they are competing for sustenance from the garbage can. The description also speaks to Cynthia Andersen Sarti's point that most women in Brazil have not seen more opportunities as a result of any feminist movement, simply because the majority of women do not belong to the privileged classes (39).<sup>395</sup>

Also, one could further develop *A grande arte*'s critique of neoliberalism via its representations of hegemonic discourse with respect to race. Here, folks from the interior who, before free trade made television accessible to more Brazilians, could still get by in as circus entertainers, but now must hustle in the street:

Esse tipo de artista de rua era mais comum de se ver aos sábados e domingos. Nos dias em que os ingênuos saíam para passear. Além de engolidor de fogo, o artista, um negro forte e sem a maioria dos dentes, era também contorsionista ...

Esperava, ... , fazer os brancos miseráveis que o olhavam sentirem-se

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<sup>393</sup>“Since men are not equals in white supremacist, patriarchal class structure, which men do women want to be equal to?” (hooks 23).

<sup>394</sup>In Brazil, slavery lasted until 1888, longer than any former European colony, and “imported eleven times as many Africans as their North American counterparts” (Telles 1). With respect to how race is understood in Brazil, Telles emphasizes social exclusion: “Social exclusion is thought to be particularly appropriate for describing Brazilian society because one-third of all Brazilians live in poverty, and most are not white” (4-5). The narrator Mandrake's race is never specifically mentioned. My reading takes for granted that he is white, because he does not say otherwise, which, although certainly not intended to be, could be interpreted as racist.

<sup>395</sup>Women who have been able to get an education, cross boundaries in the workplace, and obtain better paying jobs, have done so in part because they come from households in which servants are able to assume the domestic labors that otherwise are typically carried out by women in the home. For more information see “Feminismo no Brasil: uma trajetória particular” (1988) by Cynthia Andersen Sarti and her more recent, “O feminismo brasileiro desde os anos 1970: Revisitando uma Trajetória” (2004).

importantes: afinal, havia no mundo inferior a eles – um negro sem dentes que parecia um macaco estúpido (31).<sup>396</sup>

In this bit of description in the form of an internal monologue, Mandrake's slightly superior tone indicts connections between race and class in hegemonic discourse (and therefore in his society's discourse). By criticizing the poor white observers for their supposed genetically inherent superiority over the impoverished black man, the monologue, indirectly denounces the ignorance underneath a belief in a genetic superiority tied to race or class. It is also directly attacking the popular myth that in Brazil racism does not exist, that it is a racial democracy.

By simultaneously appropriating the race perspective of his society's hegemonic discourse, as well as the black street performer's thoughts, Mandrake's flow of consciousness mocks the repetition of racist, hegemonic discourse: "afinal, havia no mundo inferior a eles," 'eles' being the white observers of the black street performer who "esperava fazer os brancos ... sentirem-se importantes." In narrating the black street performer's thoughts about what the performer hoped he would make the white observers feel, Mandrake assumes the street performer's focalization and uncovers some intricacies of Brazil's racist, elitist society: the street performer knows the white observers need to find him genetically inferior in order to be absolved of their indifference to his precarious existence, as he is forced to shame himself in the streets for money. This way, the white

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<sup>396</sup> "... street acts like this ... we're more common on weekends, when the suckers came out to stroll. In addition to eating fire, this performer, a husky black missing most of his teeth, was a contortionist, juggler, and clown. He was wearing a pair of baggy pants and suspenders; his thick muscular chest was bare. In between acts he told jokes and imitated a gorilla scratching himself and bounding through the jungle. The idea was to joke the ragtag white spectators into feeling important: There was, after all, someone in the world beneath them- even if it was a toothless black guy imitating a half-wit monkey (24).

observers do not have to love the black street performer as themselves, because he is genetically inferior (and therefore not their neighbor). Fonseca uses black minstrelsy to then, to criticize race hierarchies.

Up to this point, Mandrake never mentions his own racial background, and perhaps for this very reason (or because he is a lawyer in Rio during the dictatorship) the reader is likely to assume he is white and that Mandrake, too, is indifferently watching the poor, black, toothless street performer. His reaction at first resembles indifference or ambivalence but, his actions represent one's approaching an understanding of how both the performer and the observers come to their perspectives by his considering the circumstances to which they are subjected. In this sense, Mandrake represents a break from the perception of an unmalleable racial hierarchy when he invites the street performer and his wife to his table for a beer, revealing greater social consciousness:

Chamava-se Almir e ela Doralice. Eram de circo e estavam desempregados. Doralice trabalhava com cães ensinados, e os animais haviam morrido de cinomose. O circo Gran Maravilha havia fechado. "As pessoas ficam em casa vendo televisão" Beberam dois chopes cada um, comeram batata frita e pediram licença para irem em bora, pois moravam longe e tinham duas crianças em casa esperando (34).<sup>397</sup>

The narration shows enough through his eyes to draw some conclusions about their late capitalist society: the television is now king; less value is placed on more traditional forms of entertainment, and as a consequence of these changes, those already

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<sup>397</sup> "His name was Almir and she was Doralice. They were unemployed circus performers. Doralice has done an act with trained dogs, but the animals died of distemper. The Gran Maravilha Circus had closed. 'People just stay home and watch television.' They each drank two beers, ate some french fries, and excused themselves, explaining that they lived some distance away and had two children at home waiting for them" (Watson 27).

marginalized (often black, like Almir) are left with even fewer legitimate niches for survival. One wonders what kind of future is there for Almir, Doralice and their two kids waiting at home. Of course, one could also cynically interpret Mandrake's invitation for Almir and Doralice to sit with him and Raul as a condescending and patronizing act. Along similar lines, one might consider the reasons offered for their precarious situation as all poor excuses made by or for people who, due to their unfortunate genetic coding, are simply destined to be poor. However, the text's overall intention appears to point to the contrary, as does Gould's research and that of many others. Mandrake's observations of the social injustices before him represent his caution before hasty, simple conclusions with respect to race and poverty.

More emphasis in this dissertation could have been put on the novel's representations of female gender performance and the masculine performance that it counters. When the prostitute Gisela visits the law offices of Mandrake and Wexler, Mandrake depicts her demeanor in a way that indicates her lack of intelligence and overall weakness: "não deixava de olhar para as unhas.... Pela primeira vez, ela levantou o rosto e olhou para nós. Estava com medo, sim. Não tinha inteligência suficiente para fingir tão bem" (17).<sup>398</sup> However, his recognizing her fear reveals his subconscious concern for her, which, he indicates, is inconvenient as it is for Wexler, whom Mandrake represents as indifferent to the 'masseuse' and her self-inflicted problems. Mandrake's descriptions of the waiter/suspect Gilberto, reveal his somewhat narcissistic desire to contrast with Gilberto's lack of education, "desenhou os ganchos do seu nome na

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<sup>398</sup>For the first time she raised her head and looked at us. She was frightened, all right. Clearly she wasn't intelligent enough to put on an act this good (Watson 7).



procuração” (45),<sup>399</sup> lack of manners, “Enchia a boca com grandes garfadas,” lack of hygiene, “Limçou a boca nas costas da mão.... esfregou os olhos com as costas da mão...” and lack of teeth “e mastigava com os dentes da frente... Os molares se perdem primeiro... Os sem dentes acreditam em todas as mentiras...” (27-8). These descriptions also take aim at Brazil’s education and health care systems.

The prostitute Danusa disproves Mandrake’s preconceived notions about her intelligence, and contrary to Chiappani’s claim, that every female fonssequian character is a sex object (58-59), even this minor character transcends that generalization. When she informs him that she left his office’s address with the guard of her own building: “Não era boba” (22), the tables completely turn on Mandrake, and Danusa uses him for more than what he bargained (23), establishing Mandrake’s weakness: women. Also, Mandrake’s description of Danusa depicts a reality that does not coincide with conventional male sexual fantasy: “Danusa aparentava pouco mais de vinte anos. Corpulenta, cabelos castanhos escuros curtos, um dente, na frente, lascado” (21).<sup>400</sup> After the obligatory Fonssequian comment about her teeth, which reflects the inadequate access to dental care in Brazil,<sup>401</sup> Mandrake assumes her thoughts about him: “Que tipo de cliente era aquele? ... Danusa me olhou, pensativa. Seria um bobo? ... Era a primeira vez

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<sup>399</sup>“...scrawled his name” Watson (40). “He stuffed huge forkfuls into his mouth and chewed with his front teeth. The molars are always first to go.” “Wiped his mouth with the backs of his hands.” He wiped his eyes with the backs of his hands...” “Toothless people believe anything you tell them.” (Watson 19)

<sup>400</sup>“Danusa looked slightly over twenty. Chunky, with short brown hair and a chipped front tooth” (Watson 13).

<sup>401</sup> “Dental health [in Brazil] is also related to social class whether measured by occupational status; income; parent's level of education; family income; housing tenure; car ownership and a combination of both education and income.” (Pascoal Pattussi et al. 916).

que um cliente queria mesmo uma massagem em lugar de coisa mais substancial” (21),<sup>402</sup> which indicates Mandrake’s fancying himself as a mystery for Danusa.

The numerous descriptions of the characters’ teeth (or lack of teeth) in Fonseca’s narrative, and the social conditions that these representations indicate, could have been a chapter of its own. Collectively, the descriptions force readers to see their complicity in blatant social injustices: why should some get to keep the nice smile that their privilege affords them, but not others? Mandrake’s comment about his maid associates teeth and social class: “Eu tinha vontade de mandar a empregada colocar uma dentadura às minhas custas ...” (48), and the same is true for the evangelical on the train: “o pregador não tinha dois dentes na frente e isso, para mim, lhe dava alguma credibilidade. As pessoas sem dentes me comoviam” (107). Zakkai predicts his revolution will mean the bloody end for the privileged class: “Principalmente para os que têm todos os dentes” (278) (‘especially those who have all of their teeth’), and Zé, overwhelmed by self consciousness from his having lost a front tooth that is knocked out by Sangue de boi’s thugs, gets tremendous relief from an implant procedure that is described in detail. He even applauds the dentist whose research led to the use of implants, but fails to mention that his name, in ‘real life,’ is Dr. Michael Rabkin D.D.S.

More discussion of representations of Brazil’s numerous street kids would also be effective in one’s evaluating the relationship between masculinities and violence. These kids, if they survive the state/private sponsored death squads, can look forward to living under unreasonable pressures to take part in hyper-consumerism and hetero-patriarchal

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<sup>402</sup>Danusa studied me thoughtfully. Was I just a jerk? ... It was the first time a client had actually wanted a massage instead of something more substantial (Watson 13).

gender expectations. The same poor subject who is taught via dominant discourse in the street or (if he is lucky) at school to believe neoliberalism's narrative of the 'self-made man' that 'provides for his family' is the same one who becomes the low wage laborer, the dead drug dealer, the sex worker, the entry level assassin, or the mutilated body, like the one in the opening scene of *A grande arte* (14).

In conclusion, this study has yielded some trying redundancy, in its effort to diagnose the power of gender performance, and distinguish it from Da Silva's thesis about sexuality, as Fonseca's modus operandi for attacking power. However, this study has also shed light on the political and historical insight that lies within these texts, which have proven to be a treasure trove of information and social criticism, tightly packed into each novel. Indeed, there is much social critique through each character's gender performance, which merits taking notice, as this study has done, but for the entire study's focus to be on masculinities, is to miss out on important historical commentary.

For this reason, each chapter took on more topics than gender performance, and in the historical research, which Fonseca's characters have inevitably provoked, this study has uncovered some valuable, contemporary, relevant information that I did not foresee as having as much influence as they do in Fonseca's critique of neoliberalism. The drug trade came up repeatedly in Fonseca's narrative, and in Brazil it is an issue for the entire race, class, and gender spectrum.<sup>403</sup> I knew drug trafficking (specifically cocaine), was a recurring theme in Fonseca's work, but I was still surprised to learn, first of all, that the

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<sup>403</sup> Illustrating this violence and women's involvement in the drug trade, Celso Athayde and MV Bill published real life chronicles from the favelas of Rio in *Falcão, mulheres e o tráfico* (2007). Among these is the (perhaps not so unusual) story of an upper class family in Rio de Janeiro who loses a son to drug violence after his sister, fascinated by the drugs/party scene, became the *mina* (short for *menina*) of the *patrão* (the leader of a gang whose principal source of income is the sale of narcotics), and while he is in prison, has her operate his affairs (27-33).

industry is just as big in Brazil, as anywhere else in the world. When organized crime in the U.S. adapted to the State's shift in the substances it criminalized (from alcohol to narcotics),<sup>404</sup> a global industry was created that continues to not only grow, but also to produce increasingly more explicit violence, especially in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and other major Brazilian cities where thousands (usually black males) die each year in drug related violence, creating a pattern that resembles genocide.

Despite the imminent violence it entails, as the text indicates, the drug industry remains particularly attractive to youths in marginalized communities who see it as a route to hegemonic masculinity and participation in hyperconsumerism. However, I also kept seeing the theme of the soldier who deserts his nation for the more lucrative illicit market, so that, instead of fighting on behalf of his nation's military, he works against it, and instead of protecting Brazilian citizens, he attacks them.

Another thematic that recurred more than expected was the genetic/memetic evolution of human behavior, from the subject's tendency to yield to urges of 'morality,' to his obeying urges that the *biomercado* produces from within him. With respect to these themes, in *A grande arte* Thales Lima Prado wanted to be a literature professor, which falls within the academic discipline of the Humanities, but instead of becoming a humanist, he builds Aquiles, kills women, and has many other humans killed.

That Mandrake's interpretations of Lima Prado's diaries are questionable and therefore not evidence of Lima Prado's culpability in the murders, as Raul maintains

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<sup>404</sup>Da Silva also observes that once Prohibition ended in 1938, the sudden void in illegal revenue spurred the beginning of the global industry of illegal narcotics, replacing the income that liquor bootlegging had provided (114). Despite cocaine's chemical makeup excluding it from the class of opiates known as scientifically as narcotics (like heroin), I am also referring to cocaine when I say 'narcotics', as do most law enforcement institutions.

(295), points to how one would probably have been labeled a conspiracy theorist if, at the time of *A grande arte*'s publication in 1983 or *Bufo & Spallanzani*'s in 1985, he implicated organizations such as IPÊS and the USIS for their essential roles in the implementation of neoliberal military dictatorships, coups of democratically elected socialist leaders, several dirty wars, disappearances of tens of thousands of people, and torturing of tens of thousands more.

Yet, for a while now, declassified CIA and U.S. State Department documents have indicated that this intervention on the part of the privileged North, is an absolute truth, and historians like Fico continue to reveal more as more becomes available to the public, but as slow as the process is, and as doctored up as these declassified documents are, their readings too, are always up for interpretation.

If the story that Fonseca's first publisher, Gumercindo Rocha Dorea (GDR), tells is true, then the author's similarities with the life of the protagonist in *Bufo & Spallanzani* confirm Silva's position, that the Fonsequian narrator represents Fonseca, "travestido numa especie de alter-ego" 'crossed dressed in a sort of alter-ego' (51). GRD tells Pacheco in a 2005 interview, about how Fonseca's career as an author began:

Lá, exatamente no gabinete do General Goubery (sic.) do Couto e Silva (...). Eu não tinha nenhum relacionamento com ele. Ele trabalhava também na Light. Agora, a secretária dele... um dia chegou... não me recordo bem como foi, como cheguei à secretária dele, a Fernanda, não me recordo (...). Ela virou e disse: 'o Rubem tem aí uns contos muito interessantes na gaveta.' ... 'Tempos depois, dias depois me entregou os originais... Quando eu li... (...) pelo primeiro conto... (...) nem vou ler até o final porque isso aqui eu sei que é uma obra séria e de grande

repercussão... (...) mandei compor o livro, cheguei a ele, entreguei... pronto, daí o livro foi embora... Relacionamento maior nunca tive com o Rubem”<sup>405</sup>

His texts indicate that he preferred his not having further relationship with those with ties to the dictatorship and AIB, which are two ways Pacheco refers to GDR.

My proposing an alternative to neoliberal economic policy is beyond the scope of this dissertation, however In its own defense, The U.S. Department of State claims that, “U.S. government policy seeks to reduce the debt burden for the most heavily indebted poor countries,” and offers as examples of that policy the forgiven debts of eighteen countries, including \$17 billion to Nigeria. That statement from a State Department article entitled, “Confessions -- or Fantasies -- of an Economic Hit Man?” (2006), is in response to John Perkins’s claims in Confessions of an Economic Hitman of his having been an agent for the NSA while employed as an economist for a major engineering firm, which Harvey cites in A Brief Introduction to neoliberalism (28). Also challenging Perkins is the article by Sebastian Mallaby “The Facts Behind the 'Confessions'” in the Washington Post (February 27, 2006). For another widely respected perspective on the ideological role of neoliberalism and the empirical and qualitative aspects of globalism, see Dicken’s Global shift: Mapping the changing contours of the world economy (2015).

Finally, Silva, Ginway, Vieira, and this dissertation’s readings indicate its counteracting what Dreifuss and Assis accuse Fonseca of having done at IPÊS and as the

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<sup>405</sup> ‘Right there in General Golbery do Couto e Silva’s office.... I had no previous relationship with him. He worked at Light. Now, his secretary... one day shows up... I can’t remember exactly how it happened, how I got to his secretary, Fernanda, I can’t remember.... She turns and says: ‘Rubem has some very interesting stories in his drawer.’ ... Some time later, days later, she hands me the originals... When I read... .. by the first story.... I’m not even gonna read till the end, because this here I know is a real work of art with great potential.... I ordered to put the book together, met him, handed him... and just like that, the book took off... I had no further relationship with Rubem” (Gumerindo Rocha Dorea. São Paulo, July 28, 2005, in Pacheco 20).

author of the IPÊS film scripts, which, according to them, produced “um bombardeio ideológico” ‘an ideological bombardment’, that, with the help of marketing agencies such as Promotion S.A., Denisson Propaganda, Gallas Propaganda, Norton Propaganda, and Multi Propaganda, contributed to the dissemination of IPÊS’s version of “common sense” (Assis 301).

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## Apendix A:

### Dona Jacira's Interval in "Crisântemo"

In Emicida's autobiographical track entitled, "Crisântemo" (2013), his mother, Dona Jacira, narrates about the day Emicida's father was killed: "Era dia de Cosme, madrugada, chovia lá fora; de repente alguém chama, 'Jacira, sou eu, Luiz;' pressenti; Miguel morreu; O que mais poderia ser? Além do mais, meu coração já estava apertado; prevendo desgraça, na festa do terreiro, a certa hora, o Erê subiu; e quem desceu foi Seu Sultão da Mata; me chamou, disse, 'Pegue os meninos; vá pra casa;' disse, 'prepare o coração e seja forte, vá?' Levante, abri a porta e a desgraça se confirmou; uma briga, o tombo, o Seu Zé do Doce socorreu; Seu Zé é a representação do Estado no Jardim Fontáles, talvez ainda até hoje; notícia pra dar, vaquinha pra enterrar; domingo, justo eu, que me criei sem pai; perder o pai já é uma tragédia; perdê-lo na infância é sentir saudade, não do que viveu, mas do que poderia ter vivido; o enterro, a volta, o olhar do menino marejando, pensando longe, sem entender; e o meu coração apertado, sem conseguir explicar; o tempo foi encaixando tudo; os pertences dele sempre no mesmo lugar; o velho chinelo abandonado respondem 'ele não vai voltar;' os dias são escuros mesmo com sol quente; o silêncio de Miguelzinho cala, cada vez mais fundo no peito da gente; quando o pai morre, a gente perde a mãe também; eu já sabia o que era isso; como pode alguém morrer no mesmo dia que nasceu?"



‘It was early morning, Saint Cosmas’s Day,<sup>406</sup> raining outside; all of the sudden someone yells, ‘Jacira, it’s me, Luiz;’ I could feel it; Miguel died; what else could it be? Besides that, my heart was already heavy; feeling the tragedy coming, at the *terreiro* party,<sup>407</sup> at one point, Erê went up,<sup>408</sup> and it was the Sultan of the Jungle who came down. He hollered and said, ‘Get the kids; go home;’ he said, ‘get your heart ready for something tough, ok?’ I got up, opened the door and the tragedy was confirmed; a fight; the shot; Mr. Zé from the twelfth came to help; Mr. Zé represents the state in Jardim Fontális, maybe even to this day; let everyone know, funeral funds are low; Sunday, had to be me, who grew up without a dad; losing your dad is already a tragedy; losing him when you’re a kid is to feel longing, not for what you lived, but for what you could’ve lived; the burial, on the way back, boy’s eyes glassy, a long way off in thought, not understanding; and my heart heavy, unable to explain; time took care of that; his things still in the same place; that old lonely pair of sandals, saying, ‘he is not coming back;’ the days are dark even under the hot sun; Miguel’s silence digs deeper and deeper into our heart; when a dad dies, we lose our mom too; I knew all about that. How can people die, on the same day they’re born?

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<sup>406</sup> Catholics celebrate the day of Saints Cosmas and Damian on September 26<sup>th</sup>, but Brazilians who identify with the African religion of Candomble, celebrate on the 27<sup>th</sup>. <http://www.calendarr.com/brasil/dia-de-cosme-e-damiao/>

<sup>407</sup> A *terreiro* is a Candomble spiritual house (Cornwall 117).

<sup>408</sup> *Erê* means ‘boy’ in Yoruba. <http://www.dicionarioinformal.com.br/er%C3%AA%20/> In the Candomble religion, *Erê* is represented as a boy and acts as the intermediary between a person and the ‘supreme god,’ *Orixá*. <https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Er%C3%AA>