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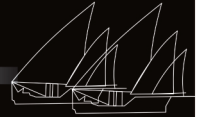
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TEXTOS EM PORTUGUÊS/INGLÊS



REALISM IN *ELA E OUTRAS MULHERES* (SHE AND
 OTHER WOMEN)

O REALISMO EM *ELA E OUTRAS MULHERES*

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ABSTRACT: Currently, realism in Brazilian literature seems to focus primarily on everyday issues. It seems to have lost much of the strength that characterized it in the 1970s and 1980s. This text discusses the current realism, based on the book *Ela e outras mulheres*, by Rubem Fonseca. It examines how the issue of ‘circularity’ - the book always seems to refer to itself and the other works of Rubem Fonseca - is present in the work and how it seems to be a characteristic of realism in contemporary Brazilian literature, whose writers, as considered by Schollhammer (2012), intend to create ‘reality effects’ much more than portraying reality itself.

KEYWORDS: realism; Brazilian Literature; Rubem Fonseca; reality effects; circularity.

RESUMO: O realismo na literatura brasileira, nos dias de hoje, parece concentrar-se basicamente nas questões do cotidiano. Parece ter perdido muito da força que o caracterizou nos anos 1970 e 1980. Este texto trata sobre o realismo atualmente, tomando como base o livro *Ela e outras mulheres* de Rubem Fonseca. Analisa como a questão da ‘circularidade’ - o livro parece sempre se remeter a si mesmo e às demais obras de Rubem Fonseca - está presente na obra e como esta parece ser uma característica do realismo na literatura brasileira contemporânea, cujos escritores, como considera Schollhammer (2012), pretendem criar ‘efeitos de realidade’ muito mais do que retratá-la.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: realismo; literatura brasileira; Rubem Fonseca; efeitos de realidade; circularidade

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Introduction

Currently, realism in Brazilian literature seems to focus primarily on everyday issues. It seems to have lost much of the strength that characterized it in the 1970s and 1980s. This text discusses the current realism, based on the book *Ela e outras mulheres*, by Rubem Fonseca.

This discussion is based on the doctoral thesis *From dirty realism to empty realism: a comparative study between Rubem Fonseca's and Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's fiction*, defended by the first author in 2007.

***Ela e outras mulheres*: realism today**

The works of Fonseca have always followed a realistic tendency, but, nowadays, they seem less socially committed than they were in the beginning of his career. Actually, Rubem Fonseca has taken a less political and socially committed narrative form, but also much more ironic and skeptical, leaning almost completely over everyday situations and self-referred.

It is interesting to notice that there is a 'circularity' in *Ela (She)*, in other words, the books is always referring to itself — and also to the other works of Fonseca —, as if everything is staged only within the text without a direct reference to reality, i. e., without a dialogue with the reality surrounding the writer. Although this circularity seems to have become a mark in the works of Fonseca, it is also now presented in a more extreme way.

According to Karl Erik Schollhammer (2009, p. 53), "currently, discussing realism does not mean accepting the representative premise regarding the identity of reality shown in literature." To the theorist, at present writers intend to create 'reality effects', much more than portraying it:

[...] the realism we aim to define here is not concerned with the hermeneutic and phenomenological experience of reality, the identification between a narrative voice and an existential receptive position. On the contrary, we find in this prose, we hypothesize, effects of reality that occur by performative aspects of literary writing neither limited to rational communication nor to the effects on a receptive consciousness; however, to act affectively managed by textual expression at a level that can only be called non-hermeneutic.

Therefore, we need to highlight we are discussing about some kind of realism that conjugates the ambitions to be a "benchmark", without necessarily being representative and to be, simultaneously, "engaged",

without necessarily endorsing any critical programs. (SCHOLLHAMMER, 2012)⁵.

Karl Erik Schollhammer (2012) names this realism ‘performative’, in which the “representation” would only be “an element in the affective agency of complex textual machinery”. Therefore, the notion of affects and percepts, developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1997, p. 213), matters to this realism. According to these philosophers, “what is preserved, the thing or the work of art, is *a block of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects.*”

Deleuze and Guattari explain that:

The percepts are no longer perceptions, they are independent of the state of those who experience them; the affects are no longer feelings or sensations, overflow with the strength of those who go through them. The sensations, percepts and affects, are beings that are worth for themselves and exceed any lived experience. (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1997, p. 213)⁶.

In a text, percepts and affects exist independently from a spacial or temporal origin, in other words, they do not need to have a connection with reality. They change the work of art into “a being of sensation”, in which “it exists in itself” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1997, p. 213), making it — to quote Deleuze e Guattari — stand all by itself. According to Karl Erik Schollhammer (2012):

[...] for Deleuze and Guattari, the affects function within a dynamic of desires inside the agency of the work or of the text, as an expressive force that intervenes performatively, manipulating meanings and

5 [...] o realismo que tentamos definir aqui não parece preocupado com a experiência hermenêutica e fenomenológica da realidade, na identificação entre uma voz narrativa e uma posição existencial receptiva. Pelo contrário, encontramos nessa prosa, eis a nossa hipótese, efeitos de realidade que se dão por aspectos performativos da escrita literária não exclusivos à comunicação racional nem aos efeitos sobre uma consciência receptiva, senão que atuam afetivamente agenciados pela expressão textual num nível que só pode ser denominado de não hermenêutico.

Precisamos acentuar então que estamos falando de um tipo de realismo que conjuga as ambições de ser “referencial”, sem necessariamente ser representativo e de ser, simultaneamente, “engajado”, sem necessariamente subscrever nenhum programa crítico.

6 Os percepts não mais são percepções, são independentes do estado daqueles que os experimentam; os afectos não são mais sentimentos ou afecções, transbordam a força daqueles que são atravessados por eles. As sensações, percepts e afectos, são seres que valem por si mesmo e excedem qualquer vivido.

relations, informing and creating desires, generating intensities and producing other affects. The affects describe the forces in general, and in the works of art and literature in particular, which work in social production and its physiological ontological and ethical powers. The percepts, in turn, accentuate the impersonal aspect of literature capable of creating visions and hearings independent of a perceptive subject and independent of visible and audible perceptions represented. (SCHOLLHAMMER, 2012)⁷

That way, all this dynamic involving percepts and affects happens within the text itself. This movement can also be verified in *Ela e outras mulheres*, by Rubem Fonseca, in which the author seems to build a text with an inner force, remembering his other works.

The construction of the work itself differs from other books published by Fonseca before 2006, when *Ela* was released. The narratives are always about a female character. They are women who, mostly, totally escape the stereotype of what society approves: they are cruel, manipulative, murderers, nymphomaniac, cold, scathing, unconscionable.

In this book, the writer seems to put a magnifying glass in everyday situations, amplifying them. In his text, Fonseca takes back themes that he had dealt with before in an indirect way, as a counterpoint between cruelty and pity. In the short story “The Collector”, first published in 1979, in a book with the same title, the protagonist has a flash of pity for his landlady:

I am going to the room where Ms. Clotilde has been lying for three years. Ms. Clotilde is the owner of the loft.

- Do you want me to mop the living room for you? - I ask.

- No, thanks. I just want you to give me the trinevral injection before leaving.

- I boil the syringe, prepare the injection. Ms. Clotilde's butt is as dry as an old and wrinkled sheet of rice paper.

- You came at a good time. God has sent you here, she says.

Ms. Clotilde has nothing. She could get up and go shopping at the supermarket. Her illness is in her head. And after three years in bed,

7 [...] para Deleuze e Guattari, os afectos operam numa dinâmica de desejos dentro do agenciamento da obra ou do texto, como uma força expressiva que intervém performativamente, manipulando sentidos e relações, informando e fabricando desejos, gerando intensidades e produzindo outros afectos. Os afectos descrevem as forças em geral, e nas obras de arte e na literatura em particular, que atuam na produção social e seus poderes fisiológicos ontológicos e éticos. Os percepts, por sua vez, acentuam o aspecto impessoal da literatura capaz de criar visões e audições independentes de um sujeito perceptivo e independentes das percepções visíveis e audíveis representadas.

just getting up to pee and poo, she can't even have any strength. (FONSECA, 2000, p. 499-500)⁸

However it is only a flash, because after applying the injection, the narrator claims: "One of these days I will shoot her in the back of the head" (FONSECA, 2000, p. 500). He does not murder Ms. Clotilde, but he ends the lives of a number of people, because he believes he is a vigilante, whose mission is to end the rich and to do justice with his own hands.

In *Ela e outras mulheres*, the character of a hit man appears in four short stories: "Belinha", "Olívia", "Teresa" e "Xânia". Different from the collector, who would kill for cathartic pleasure before finding a way for his crimes, this character murders for money, but the pitiful theme is approached more profoundly. If, on one hand, he is cold enough to plan crimes, on the other hand, he is capable of feeling compassion.

In "Belinha", for example, his girlfriend asks him to kill her millionaire father, but, after knowing him a little better, he decides to kill the daughter instead. In the beginning of the narrative, the climate of eroticism between them is strong:

Her nickname was Belinha, she was eighteen years old, and she liked me because I was a bad guy and I knew that my hard-on was true, she looked down on these guys that took pills to make the cock hard, she said she couldn't love men that lied this way. And she sucked my cock and I made her get on her knees in bed and licked her pussy, she liked being licked, I'd eat her pussy and sometimes she'd ask me to shove my nose in it, her pussy smelled good and I'd shove the nose in it. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 15-16).⁹

8 Vou no quarto onde dona Clotilde está deitada há três anos. Dona Clotilde é a dona do sobrado.

Quer que eu passe o escovão na sala? - pergunto.

Não meu filho, só queria que você me desse a injeção de trinevral antes de sair.

Fervo a seringa, preparo a injeção. A bunda de dona Clotilde é seca como uma folha velha e amassada de papel de arroz.

Você caiu do céu, meu filho, foi Deus que te mandou, ela diz.

Dona Clotilde não tem nada, podia levantar e ir comprar coisas no supermercado. A doença dela está na cabeça. E depois de três anos deitada, só se levanta para fazer pipi e cocô, ela não deve ter mesmo forças. (FONSECA, 2000, p. 499-500).

9 O nome dela era Belinha, tinha dezoito anos, gostava de mim porque eu era bandido e sabia que o meu tesão era verdadeiro, ela desprezava esses caras que tomavam pílulas pro pau ficar duro, dizia que não podia amar homens desse tipo fingidor. E ela chupou o meu pau e eu fiz ela ficar ajoelhada na cama e chupei a boceta dela, ela gostava de ser chupada assim, eu enfiava a língua lá dentro e às vezes ela pedia para eu enfiar o nariz, a boceta dela era cheirosa e eu enfiava o nariz. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 15-16).

Sex is approached in a very direct way, as direct as in the books from the early years of Fonseca's career as a writer. The character also shows coldness through the way he speaks of his job: "She also asked what it felt like when I iced a guy and I replied that I didn't think about anything, like a soldier in the war, the difference is that I didn't win a medal when I killed the opponent." (FONSECA, 2006, p. 16). The narrator kept this indifferent posture, until his girlfriend asked him to kill her father, because he threatened not only to suspend her allowance, but also to disinherit her:

She got up from the armchair and sat down beside me on the bed. I want you to kill my father.

I remained silent. Killing the father, I thought, damn it, we can kill everyone, except for our mom and dad. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 21)¹⁰

From that moment on, the narrator gets disappointed with his girlfriend, losing desire for her — "Another chick like her did not exist in the world. But Belinha wanted to murder her father and it made her ugly and my cock goes limp." (FONSECA, 2006, p. 21-22) —, but, even so, he starts to stalk her father, to check his behavior. One day, he gets close to his possible victim, pretending to ask for help:

One day, before he took the car, I approached him and said, sorry, I'm not from here, how do I get to the city center? He replied, I'm on my way there, I can give you a ride, get in the car, please.

We were talking in the car, I said I was from Minas Gerais State and was looking for a job, it could be a cleaner, anything, I needed to work, and he handed me a business card and wrote a name on it. Ms. Stella is my secretary, I will give her instructions to find a position for you. Go to this address in the morning and talk to her. I thought it was time to get out of the car, I'd better stop here, thank you very much, I will be there tomorrow. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 22)¹¹

10 Ela levantou-se da poltrona e sentou-se ao meu lado, na cama. Quero que você mate o meu pai.

Fiquei calado. Matar o pai, pensei, porra, a gente pode matar todo mundo, menos o pai e a mãe da gente. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 21)

11 Um dia, antes de ele pegar o carro, eu me aproximei e disse, desculpe, não sou daqui, como é que vou para o centro da cidade? Ele respondeu, estou indo para lá, lhe dou uma carona, entre no carro, por favor.

Ficamos conversando dentro do carro, eu disse que era de Minas e estava procurando emprego, podia ser de servente, qualquer coisa, eu precisava trabalhar, e ele me deu um cartão e escreveu nas costas um nome. É a dona Estela, a minha secretária, vou dar instruções a ela para procurar uma colocação para o senhor, passe nesse endereço pela manhã e fale com ela. Achei que era hora de saltar e disse, vou ficar por aqui, muito obrigado, amanhã passo lá.

The short story finishes with the death of Belinha. She and her boyfriend set to meet at midnight, in her house, so that the protagonist will kill Belinha's father. As she always does, she tries to seduce her lover as soon as he arrives, but he is no longer physically attracted to her and kills her with a shot in her head. The day after, the character throws the gun in a lagoon. He feels like crying, but he does not: "[...] I felt that something was happening to me, I felt like crying, but crying is a gay thing so I didn't cry. I got the Walther and threw it as far as I could.." (FONSECA, 2006, p. 24-25).

Throughout the narrative, it is noticed that the killer shows empathy for his supposed victim. It is also noticed that, although he is a professional killer, paradoxically, he has certain moral values, as respecting his parents. Ironically, in this short story, it is always the woman who takes the initiative to seduce. She brings the coldness and the cruelty, which the assassin is only used to showing when he does his job. For considering Belinha's behavior damnable, her boyfriend decides to kill her, grounding her for having wanted to kill her father who, in his turn, shows generosity when the character makes believe he is a John Doe going through hard moments.

The theme of pity repeats itself over again in "Teresa". In the beginning of the short story, the killer character enters the elevator and hears two guys keeping the following conversation: "An apartment this big and just the old man and that con man live there, said one of them. That motherfucker just wants the money from the old man, replied the other guy, but he hasn't died, he's 90 years old and hasn't died yet, she must be really disappointed, she's put up with him for five years." (FONSECA, 2006, p. 151). Gumercindo and Teresa lived in the apartment above the killer's. The couple and the assassin used to exchange pleasantries with each other, and he believed that Ms. Teresa was not married out of personal interests.

Sometime later, Gumercindo dies and his two sons occupy the apartment, alongside with their wives. The narrator tries to hear of Teresa, but a maid says that she cannot receive visitors. On the maid's day off, the killer invades the apartment to find out that the lady had been kept in false imprisonment, tied to a bed. The killer frees her and ends up murdering both Gumercindo's sons:

I took the two big guys to the restroom, I put them in the bathtub and shot them in the head. I always shoot in the head. I took the wallets with the credit cards out of their pockets. I went back to the room.

I killed those two bastards, nobody should know it was me, say it was a thief. Yes, she replied. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 155)¹²

Following this, the killer chooses some jewels, leaves the building and gets rid of the credit cards and everything he had gotten from the apartment to simulate a robbery. When he returns, he pretends he knows nothing and gets the news from the doorman. He goes upstairs to Ms. Teresa's apartment and finds the two widows there:

You can pack up and go somewhere else, I said, the apartment belongs to Ms. Teresa.

When the two bitches left, Ms. Teresa kissed my hand, you are a good man, Mr. José, I will take our secret to the grave.

I went back to my apartment. A good man. A hell of a good man. I'm a professional murderer, I murder for money.

But not always. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 156)¹³

One more time, the killer shows pity, by killing to free a victim from her executioners.

In "Luíza", the main themes are art and sex. In relation to the art, one can establish a comparison with the short story "Intestino grosso" (Large Intestine), first published in 1975, in the book *Feliz ano novo (Happy New Year)*. In this short story, Fonseca criticizes dictatorship, while the narrator, who seems to act as an alter ego of the author, explains what human nature is and how the artist should deal with it:

'In my book Large Intestine, I say that in order to understand human nature, all artists have to disexcommunicate the body, investigate, as we just know how to do, as opposed to scientists, the secret and still obscure relations between the body and the mind, deepen the understanding of the animal in all its interactions.'

'Does pornography like, for example, space travels and measles, have future?'

12 Levei os dois grandões para o banheiro, mandei entrarem na banheira e dei um tiro na cabeça de cada um. Sempre atiro na cabeça. Tirei as carteiras com cartões de crédito dos bolsos deles. Voltei para a sala.

Matei aqueles dois canalhas, ninguém pode saber que fui eu, diga que foi um ladrão. Sim, ela respondeu.

13 Vocês podem fazer as malas e ir baixar noutra terreiro, eu disse, o apartamento pertence à dona Teresa.

Quando as duas putas saíram, dona Teresa deu um beijo na minha mão, o senhor é um santo, seu José, vou guardar até morrer o nosso segredo. Voltei para o meu apartamento. Um santo. Um santo porra nenhuma. Sou assassino profissional, mato por dinheiro. Nem sempre.

‘Pornography is linked to the organs of excretion and reproduction, to life, to functions that characterize the resistance to death — food and love, and their exercises and results: excrement, copulation, sperm, pregnancy, labor, growth. This is our old friend, the pornography of life.’ (FONSECA, 2000, p. 466-467)¹⁴

The writer, yet, claims that, in general, pornography is accepted everywhere, except in art: “In attributing to art a moralizing function, or at least an entertaining one, these people end up justifying the coercive power of censorship, exercised under allegations of security or public welfare” (FONSECA, 2000, p. 466).

In the short story “Luíza”, from the book *Ela e outras mulheres*, the main character is an artist who returns to Brazil for a short time, after spending ten years in Europe. The narrator of the short story is an ex-lover, who reveals that, before leaving for Europe, Luíza was “an academic artist”, who “painted still life and sculpted perfect figures” (FONSECA, 2006, p. 102). According to the narrator, she used to earn a lot of money, but she decided to drop everything (including her husband and her lover) to start a new life.

The first letter she sent her ex-lover held a photograph of a picture Luíza had painted, named *Mãe Est*, inspired by Salvador Dalí: “[...] the painting named Mom Est - a kind of a play on words with Luíza’s mother’s name, which was Estella, and with Mae West, an actor famous for her maliciousness — showed a red mask from which dripped blood. Luíza loathed her mother.” (FONSECA, 2006, p. 102-103).

Luíza became an important and well-known artist, but, according to the narrator, her art was “a brutal exhibitionism to scare out small-bourgeois” (FONSECA, 2006, p. 103). However, the character believed that artists do not have a monopoly on creativity. In a long letter (which is worth to be partially quoted) to her ex-lover, Luíza claims:

[...] I believe everyone is an artist capable of determining the content and the meaning of life in its particular sphere, either in painting, music, caring for the sick ones, cleaning up the garbage, or whatever.

14 ‘No meu livro *Intestino grosso* eu digo que, para entender a natureza humana, é preciso que todos os artistas desexcomunguem o corpo, investiguem, da maneira que só nós sabemos fazer, ao contrário dos cientistas, as ainda secretas e obscuras relações entre o corpo e a mente, esmiúcem o funcionamento do animal em todas as suas interações.’

‘A pornografia, como, por exemplo, as viagens espaciais e o sarampo, tem futuro?’

‘A pornografia está ligada aos órgãos de excreção e de reprodução, à vida, às funções que caracterizam a resistência à morte — alimentação e amor, e seus exercícios e resultados: excremento, cópula, esperma, gravidez, parto, crescimento. Esta é nossa velha amiga, a pornografia da vida.’

When my mother got sick, she had a fecal impaction, a hardened accumulation of feces in the colon that didn't allow her to defecate, not even with suppositories or laxatives. The fecal impaction had to be broken up by hand, and I did it, I pulled out with my fingers that hardened feces block from my mother's anus, sticking my fingers and almost the entire hand through her sphincter, and when I finished, I felt that what I had done was a work of art and I saved the fecal impaction in a can, then I had it sealed and carry it with me everywhere I go as a source of inspiration. The real art is anarchic and random. My watchword is Zeitgeist. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 103-104)¹⁵

From that episode on, Luíza started to produce without stopping, being invited to the greatest exhibitions, all over the world, and getting a variety of awards. According to the narrator, Luíza used varied materials, such as “a fat goose, surrounded by cans of foie gras dip and by two guys dressed as thieves that push the food down the animal's throat with a funnel” and “a close up video of lipstick painted anus in various colors”. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 104).

That way, Rubem Fonseca not only takes back the approach of art not having to have the need of being a moralizing and entertaining function and of the artists having to deal with the human beings' excrescences, but also takes this 'notion' to the extreme, being completely ironic. “The real masterpiece is anarchical and random”. If art is fortuitous, if it happens 'by chance', everything is art. Fonseca makes this statement ironic this statement, changing his book into a group of narratives that all the time seems not only to refer to, but also to make fun of everything that the author himself has done before. In such an ingenious way, Rubem Fonseca seems to put his own work under suspicion.

In relation to sex, the short story is also very direct. Luíza believes that the only virtue her ex-lover has is a sexual organ she thinks is beautiful: “You're so vain and proud of this cock, I know. But you're right.

15 [...] acredito que todo mundo é um artista em condições de determinar o conteúdo e o significado da vida em sua particular esfera, seja na pintura, seja música, seja o cuidar de enfermos, seja a faxina de lixo, seja lá o que for. Quando minha mãe ficou doente ela teve um fecaloma, uma acumulação endurecida das fezes no cólon que não permitia que ela defecasse, nem com supositórios ou purgantes. O fecaloma tinha que ser extraído à mão, e eu fiz isso, arranquei com os meus dedos aquele bloco de fezes endurecidas do ânus da minha mãe, enfiando os meus dedos e quase a mão inteira pelo seu esfíncter, e quando terminei senti que aquilo que eu fizera era uma obra de arte e guardei o fecaloma numa lata que mandei lacrar e carrego comigo para todo lugar, como uma fonte de inspiração. A verdadeira arte é anárquica e randômica. Minha palavra de ordem é Zeitgeist. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 103-104)

It is your only asset, your only virtue, you are an ugly man and a terrible writer.” (FONSECA, 2006, p. 105-106)

Both of them spend hours having sexual relations and, by the end of the fourth day together, one day before Luíza leaves for Europe, she decides to go to a drugstore: “On the fourth day she said her pussy was raw. ‘You know that thing that’s inside? You broke it’. I’m going to the drugstore.” (FONSECA, 2006, p. 106). The character returns with a lot of packages and her lover had fallen asleep. When he wakes up, he realizes that his underbelly is bandaged and that there is a letter from Luíza, addressed to him, on the bedside table. In the letter, she said:

My dear, forgive me, I drugged you, I couldn’t resist the temptation and cut off your dick and I’m taking it with me. It will be part of my best work, which I will exhibit in New York. Wish me luck. I will send you photos. There’s another thing: you know that before working with art I used to be a licensed nurse. The penile ablation I performed in you was conducted with all hygiene required. You don’t run the slightest risk. Love you. Luíza. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 106)¹⁶

He gets completely wild by the Reading and, right after that, goes to the doctor’s. In the doctor’s office, he learns that it is all a prank: Luíza had only painted his penis yellow. Back home, he gets an e-mail from the artist, which reveals that it was only an April Fools’ joke.

The sexual question comes back with total strength in this work of Fonseca, who is always ironic when writing about this topic. In “Selma”, for example, the character is distressed that he is 23 years old and still a virgin, because he is ashamed of his penis. For that reason, he cannot have sexual relations:

I haven’t had sexual experience either with a whore or with any other women. Not that I didn’t feel like it. Courage was all I needed. I had a phimosis that prevented the indentation of the foreskin covering the

16 Querido, me perdoe, eu droguei você, não resisti à tentação e cortei o seu pau e estou levando ele comigo. Ele vai fazer parte do meu melhor trabalho, que exporei em Nova York. Deseje-me boa sorte. Mandarei fotos para você. Outra coisa: você sabe que antes de me dedicar à arte eu fui enfermeira diplomada. A ablação peniana que realizem em você foi feita com todos os cuidados de higiene. Você não corre o menor risco de saúde. Te amo. Luíza. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 106)

glans and the head of my cock was covered with a skin that looked like a small elephant trunk. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 146-147).¹⁷

Because of this problem, the narrator decides to run away from all women, until the moment he meets Selma, who insists on stalking him. She gets to kiss him and even asks him on a date, but, terrified, he runs away again:

I didn't say anything. I was very confused with that kiss. I couldn't get it out of my head. Normally, I'd enjoy staying home and reading. Actually, I didn't like to leave home except to work, but because I had to, and I'd get home as soon as I could, I had this sensation that people would look at me and see my cock covered by that small elephant trunk. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 147)¹⁸

Selma keeps on following him and, by pressing, the character decides to go for professional help. He eventually decides to undergo surgery and, after the procedure, he discovers that Selma had taken part in the operation as a nurse. By the end of the text, she tells him: "You're going home in a few minutes. Later I'll be there to make sure it's okay. Now you're not going to run away from me, are you?" (FONSECA, 2006, p. 150)

In either "Selma" or "Luíza", Fonseca seems to wish to play with the importance the penis has in male minds. In a totally ironic way, the author reveals how his characters distress about the possible loss of the penis or with the fact that it does not correspond to the patterns they consider desirable. It is as if everything in these characters' lives had minor importance compared to the fact that, sexually, they could not work as they should.

Final considerations

Currently, the work of Rubem Fonseca reports on the fraying of ideologies and the disbelief that grows each day towards utopia. Fonseca

17 Eu não tive experiência sexual com puta nem com nenhuma outra mulher. Não que me faltasse vontade. Era coragem, o que me faltava. Eu tinha uma fimose que impedia o recuo do prepúcio que cobria a glândula e a cabeça do meu pau era coberta por uma pele que parecia uma pequena tromba de elefante. (FONSECA, 2006, p. 146-147)

18 Eu não disse nada. Estava muito perturbado com aquele beijo. Aquilo não saía da minha cabeça. Normalmente eu gostava de ficar em casa lendo, na verdade eu não gostava de sair de casa a não ser para trabalhar, porque era obrigado, e voltava correndo, tinha a impressão de que as pessoas olhavam para mim e viam o meu pau coberto pela trombinha de elefante.

and his fiction have influenced (and still influence) new generations of writers who seem to have in realism a north for their works.

Reality frays, escapes like sand through our fingers in these times when copy and simulacrum, reality and virtuality, are no longer different. Literature tries to appropriate this frayed reality, even though it continues to escape, becoming as slippery, excessive and, consequently, as false as the latter. And, even when it does not have this intention, reality, somehow, always ends up by contaminating it. It is like a shadow on the wall, whose spectrum one can see, even if one does not know where the original image is.

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