

An Amazing Song: The Composition of the Miniseries *The Stone of the Kingdom* and its Relationship With the Public*

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The adaptation of the novel *A Pedra do Reino e o príncipe do sangue do vai-e-volta*, (1971)¹, by Ariano Suassuna, for the miniseries *A Pedra do Reino2* (2007) directed by Luiz Fernando Carvalho, in the microseries format, has caused surprise and bewilderment to reviewers and audience alike. The extensive and originally hermetic literary work, when re-created for television, became difficult to understand, resulting in poor reception by the public – though highly praised by reviewers – compared to works in the same format and time of exhibition. In this study, the author proposes a reflection, in the light of semiotic and communication theories, in order to understand the relationship between the work and the viewer. The analysis takes into account especially the options of the expression plan as well as the closeness that the audiovisual narrative maintains with the literary work. The conclusion reached is that the introduction of the elements of the enunciation – person, time and place – inherited from the novel, as well as expressive options like camera movements, light, prosody and gesture, impart an excessively accelerated rhythm, which interferes in the understanding of the work and in its consequent reception.

Keywords: *The Stone of the Kingdom*, Literature, TV, Reception

With those words: “Enigmatic novel of crime and blood”, Ariano Suassuna introduces the narrative of the *Romance of the Stone of the Kingdom and the Prince of the Blood of Going and Coming Back* (1971), that has given origin to the miniseries *The Stone of the Kingdom*, directed by Luiz Fernando Carvalho and exhibited by the Globe Network of Television in 2007. This is just one of many attempts to define the genre of the work whose title extension lives up to the 742-page text of the novel. The narrator himself, character and fictional author, Pedro Dinis Ferreira-Quaderna, seems not to be quite sure as to the genre of the work he is writing: “narrative compendium of the pilgrim of Brazil”, “novel of criminal instruction”, “Brazilian heroic novel, Ibero-adventurous, criminological-dialectic and tapuio-enigmatic of jest and shamelessness, legendary love and epic-yokel cavalry” are some of the definitions that we find throughout the narrative.

The writer Rachel de Queiroz, who signs the foreword of the first edition of the work (1971), confesses her difficulty in defining the genre:

The first time Ariano Suassuna told me about the *Stone of the Kingdom* he said he was writing “a picaresque novel”. (...) But the Paraíba has deceived me. Picaresque the book is – or rather, the picaresque element exists greatly in the novel, or treatise, or work, or simply book - I do not know how it should be called! Because after it has become ready *The*

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¹ *The Stone of the Kingdom and the Prince of the Blood of the Going and Coming Back* (1971).

² *The Stone of the Kingdom*.

Stone of the Kingdom transcends all that, and it is a novel, it is an odyssey, it is a poem, it is an epic, it is a satire; it is an apocalypse. (Queiroz, 1971, in Suassuna, 2007, p. 15)

From that little information it is already possible to imagine that Ariano Suassuna's text is not exactly a work of easy reading. But difficult to read literary works do not necessarily have to give rise to audiovisual works that are also difficult to read; it all depends on the options of the re-creator.

The term fidelity is constantly questioned by reviewers who are concerned with analyzing adaptations of literary works for the movies and TV and, little by little, it has been abolished. The most widely held belief, possibly inherited from the Russian formalist Roman Jakobson (1969), is that any adaptation – or intersemiotic transposition, as the theoretician prefers – implies a new work and consequently a new authorship, thus dispensing with a so polemic fidelity. Evaldo Coutinho (1989), who also defends the autonomy of audiovisual language in relation to literature, recalls that the faculty of direct revelation, inherent to the image, is already a factor of transgression to the fidelity principle.

The particularities that a work acquires when it has been subjected to the constraints of a language other than the one in which it was originally conceived are unquestionable. However, if it is not possible to speak about fidelity in the strict sense of this term, it is possible, on the other hand, to identify a greater or lesser proximity between a re-creation and the original work. And in the production of Luiz Fernando Carvalho, despite the fact that it is predominantly made up of literature adaptations, it is noticeable that an attempt has been made to the utmost to approximate it, at least with regard to the narrative structure and the verbal language, to the source text. In this regard, Carvalho says:

I do not believe in adapting, in the orthodox sense of the term, as if injecting into a novel new characters, words, explanatory and parallel plots or even endings that do not exist. I am completely against this kind of murder. I try to enter the book as a reader and to draw a creative response to that reading. (Carvalho et al., 2009, w/p)

Thus, it is possible that the difficulty of understanding and accepting TSK³ may have its origin in the proximity that it maintains with the work of Suassuna, a risk that the director knew and nonetheless assumed, as he has stated in an interview: “I was fully aware that it was a hermetic novel, but instigating in its human and aesthetic universe. Therefore ... it was fundamental to present to the country its poetic universe without disfiguring it” (Carvalho et al., 2009, p/n).

Rhythm and Reception

According to José Luiz Fiorin (2008, p. 41), “There are different degrees of identification of the subject with its artistic object: There are those who identify themselves with the substance of the contents, that is, the reality portrayed in the literary work. On the other hand, there are those who seek in the object its construction, its architecture, its form, whether of the expression or of the contents”. Identification with the contents substance or the form of expression, of course, is conditioned to each individual's capacity of connecting himself to the object in a sensitive way and somehow be able to understand it.

Tensive semiotics has arisen because of Greimas' structural semantics. Although it may encompass all kinds of discourses, it becomes an important tool in the analysis of aesthetic language, since it highlights the importance of affection in the analysis of discourses. For Claude Zilberberg (2010), the main theoretician of that branch of semiotics, the constitution of meaning is situated at the junction of an intense, sensitive

³ Hereafter the acronym TSK will stand for the minisseries title *The Stone of the Kingdom*.

dimension with an extensive, intelligible dimension. Tensivity studies, on the other hand, do not ignore the inheritance of the general model of semiotics, which understands the production of meaning as a generative path, starting from the fundamental to the discursive level, with the narrative level as an intermediary.

According to that general model, meaning is constructed in the articulation between a plane of expression and a plane of contents, and in a merely informative, communicative enunciation, the plane of expression approaches rather a stable sense that is, the more objective is the communication, the greater is its success. In the work of art, on the contrary, the plane of expression becomes the differentiator, the bearer of the aesthetic effect. Thus, the desautomatization, the subjectivity and the exploration of the potentialities of the materials used in that language are subject to the filter of individual sensations and experiences, hence, the importance of affection, of personal, subjective experience, for the construction of meaning.

Still according to Fiorin (2008), languages oscillate between stability (rigid models and fixed forms) and instability (freedom and dynamism). Instability depends on how the three basic categories of enunciation – person, time, and space – are installed in the discourse, more specifically when a person, a time or a spatial location is employed instead of another. In syncretic works, such as the case of audiovisual, the installation of a person, space and time and the study of those become more complex, since we do not deal with one, but with two or more languages belonging to two different semiotic systems, a visual and an audible.

Syncretic semiotics, according to Greimas and Courtés, are those that “like the opera and the movies - trigger various languages of manifestation” (Greimas & Courtes, 2008, p. 467). Improving on such concept, which, indeed, has its origin in the postulates of Hjelmslev, Fiorin (2009) elucidates that syncretism is a mechanism of enunciation that overlaps the same contents in several forms of expression, that is, “we have a single syncretic enunciation, carried out by the same enunciator, who resorts to a plurality of languages of manifestation to constitute a syncretic text” (Fiorin, 2009, p. 38).

Yvana Fechine (2009), in proposing a methodology for the analysis of audiovisual texts, concludes that “In audiovisual production, the concern with a syncretic enunciation is confounded with the assembly processes” (Fechine, 2009, p. 326), which often correspond to the exploitation of the technical-expressive potential of the audiovisual medium itself, based on the articulation between verbal, visual, gestural and musical languages. Assembly is thus the process by which auditive and visual languages are intertwined in rhythmic suspensions (Leone & Mourão, 1987), determining the work overall rhythm. And it is from the synchronic or asynchronic correspondences between the sonorous rhythm and the visual movement that the result that the work will provoke in the spectator will depend. It is Renata Mancini who explains the effect of rhythm at the reception: “The faster the tempo of any contents, the greater the fright, the rapture that it promotes and, consequently, the less its intellection” (Mancini, Trotta, & Souza, 2007).

Referring to the television language, Fechine says that if, on the one hand, rhythm is the “perceptive ‘key’ of the ‘audiovisual effect’” (Fechine, 2009, p. 348), on the other hand, it is a common property to both languages, sonorous and visual as well. Thus, to analyze the rhythm resulting from the syncretization of those languages is to identify the ways in which it – the rhythm – manifests itself in the two forms of expression.

The Adventures of a Back-country Quixote Between Fiction and Reality

The Stone of the Kingdom relates the adventures, delusions and misadventures of Pedro Dinis Ferreira-Quaderna, a hinterland’s storyteller – who calls himself a lord-chronicler, an academician-rhapsode and a scribe-poet – who avails himself of his ancestors and his memories to deal with his existential

restlessness and for being inspired in the writing of a great literary work that would express the true national identity. In his “regal style” of seeing and telling the world, he uses his imagination to give reality a new color. This is how fiction and facts of Brazilian history are blended into the narrative.

Narrator / character of the plot, Quaderna is the great-grandson of the “Execrable”, a character inspired by the real history of the Sebastianist leader João Ferreira, who proclaimed himself the legitimate king of Brazil and caused the death of many followers in the name of the resurrection of Dom Sebastian, the Portuguese king who disappeared in 1578, at the battle of Alcacer-Quibir, in Morocco. The bloodshed referred to in the work would actually have occurred in 1838, at the foot of two long and parallel rocks known as Beautiful Stones – the primitive name of the Stone of the Kingdom, in the work – in the region of São José do Belmonte, in the state of Pernambuco. The sect commanded by João Ferreira and made up of religious fanatics maintained that Dom Sebastian would only be resurrected if the Beautiful Stones were bathed with blood, of men and animals. After many deaths, the fanatics were arrested or killed by the police.

Quaderna connects to the story of his supposed great-grandfather, another tragic event – the mysterious death of his uncle-godfather, to whom he also refers as a king. After researching his family tree, he has concluded that his family, on both parents side, dated back to the Portuguese king Dom Sebastian. Influenced by the stories of royalty and by the back-country culture in which he had been raised, besides living amidst singers, folk poets, the hinterlands playfulness and cavalhadas⁴, Quaderna begins to dream of a new kingdom, of which he will be the titular.

Willing to write a great work and win the title of Race Genius, Quaderna forges a complaint against himself in order to be summoned to testify. His attitude is justified: due to a bone prominence at his spine’s end, the “stub”⁵, Quaderna cannot sit for a long time, which prevented him from writing his epic. Once he has been summoned to testify, he could then narrate the whole saga of his family while standing. Afterwards he could take a copy of the proceedings and work on them only the literary adjustments.

This is how the character-narrator goes on to tell the story that has as a background a horseman riding on a white horse. The rider, a young and enigmatic lad named Sinésio, who would have been kidnapped, is the youngest son of the mysteriously murdered uncle-godfather. The long plot involves dozens of characters and fictional events which share space with historical facts, such as the Princess War of 1930, the Communist Revolution of 1935, or the New State coup d’état in 1937. Stitching all that together is the lively imagination and the Quixotic entanglements of Pedro Dinis Quaderna, spiced with elements of the popular Brazilian northeastern culture: cavalhadas⁶, viola players, cordelistas⁷, absurd beliefs and superstitions, besides a supposed buried treasure and demands for an inheritance.

Quaderna is brought into court and, at the end of a confused deposition, the exasperated judge concludes that the deponent is crazy and releases him to return home. However, Quaderna made a plea to be left in prison in order that he could finish his book and so he might be seen as if he were wronged, which, he thought, fits every hero well. At the end, already aged, as if immersed in a dream, Quaderna is invested as the king of the

⁴ A folklore entertainment in Brazilian hinterlands, in which horsemen play a kind of joust.

⁵ It refers to the protuberance, possible, although rare, at the end of the coccyx, and known as false tail in biology. Available information on diariodebiologia.com/2008/11/rabo-humano-ou-rabo-vestigial/.

⁶ *Vide supra* n. 2.

⁷ “Cordelistas” are the authors/reciters/salesmen of “cordel”, a sort of folkloric poetry written and recited in the Brazilian hinterlands. “Cordel”, actually, means a string and refers to the strings where the *cordel* salesmen hang their poetry booklets.

Round Table of Literature of Brazil, in a ceremony led by the poet Olavo Bilac⁸, to the applause of the entire population of Taperoá⁹.

If the literary work, where all those developments are described in detail, is even so difficult to read – because of the very accumulation of information and characters, the non-linear flow of events and, especially, for the metaphorical character of discourse – the translation into audiovisual in a five-episodes version, which is relatively short in relation to other minisseriess¹⁰ adapted from the literature, ends up accentuating the hermetism of the literary narrative, since in addition to maintaining the characteristics that structure the novel, to them are added the cuts that audiovisual time requires and the options of the expression plan that sometimes also contributes to an efficient – or deficient – interaction between the work and the public. Silvana Mascagna, a columnist from the Minas Gerais newspaper *O tempo*, has translated well the impression that the first episode left on the viewer:

It was definitely a unique experience. On Tuesday, at an almost noble time on Brazilian TV, viewers found themselves faced with an enigmatic tangle of scenes, which now seemed experimental theater now avant-garde cinema. It was the first chapter of “The Stone of the Kingdom” [...]. It was weird. (Mascagna, 2007, s/p)

In fact, the director’s choice for the first episode, one that is usually thought to catch the viewer and persuade him to continue watching the show in the days to come, was a high and risky bet. Those who were not acquainted with Suassuna’s work – most of the audience, probably – certainly felt lost amidst the short and successive narrative fragments, mixing times, spaces, and voices. Considering the two works, the literary and the audiovisual, it is perceived that the argument of the first was maintained in the second, so the narrative in question brings together events that span a century – from 1838 to 1938 – besides incorporating the imagination of a hinterland dweller that has been affected by popular culture, all of which results in a tangle of information.

Translated into images, Quaderna’s story, especially in the first and second episodes of the microserials, in fact, seemed strange, especially to the viewer of a vehicle that usually emphasizes its fictional productions on the narrative contents. Back to the reference to Fiorin (2008), on the degrees of identification of the subject with the object, it seems pertinent to affirm that in TSK the bewilderment caused by the first contact of the viewer with the work stems from the director’s (bold) option of highlighting the setting – nothing conventional – of the elements of enunciation and of the plane of expression, therefore compromising the understanding of the contents.

A Clown in Command

The opening sequence of the miniseries begins with a landscape made up of a desert soil and a blue sky, partly cloudy. The ground’s image, with irregular and rounded contours, refers to the lunar landscape, an impression that is reinforced by the aerial movement of the camera and by the sonorous plane, made up of a subtle motor sound, as if something was flying over the landscape. Soon a metallic sound is heard, while the camera goes towards the ground. The next image is of a man falling to the ground. Putting together all the

⁸ Famous Brazilian poet of the Romantic Movement.

⁹ The novel’s town, located in the Brazilian Northeastern region.

¹⁰ From the debut of the format, in the decade of 1980, until the beginning of the present century, the minisseriess adapted from literary works were much more extensive, as is the case of *Os Maias* (2001), the work of Eça de Queiroz, also directed by Luiz Fernando Carvalho, with 44 chapters. From that decade, however, the format has decreased considerably, reaching the current model, which usually has no more than ten chapters.

elements, we have an individual that came from the space, but does not present the physical characteristics with which the likeness of extraterrestrials is usually constructed, in the fictions.

It is a clown, whom the children follow close dancing and laughing, to the sound of instrumental music in gypsy style, showing at the background buildings that indicate a village of medieval architecture. From a large portico that opens up, couples come out and join the dance, forming a joyful square dance around the clown. At the end of the song, the movement of the dancers' arms put an end to the dance while announcing the following entertainment: a theater stage is installed in the middle of the square. At this point, it is possible to predict an eager spectator, affected by the beauty of the scene and the magnetism of the music and dance, waiting for what will come.

Then the epic *The Stone of the Kingdom* begins. And it begins with the narration by the clown who, from the top of the stage, announces the work, citing some of the unfoldings that will make it up, such as an ambush, a murder, a kidnapping and the existence of a kingdom. A king and his sons are presented as characters in the story, as well as the themes that will lead it: intrigues, farces, enigma, hatred, slander, love, battles, sensuality and death. Such information, intercalated with flashes of the characters and some of the situations above mentioned, are closed with an invitation: "Noble lords and beautiful ladies with soft breasts, listen to my amazing song!". That utterance and the arms gesture pointing to the right of the stage, besides the sound of drums announcing a new attraction lead the viewer's gaze. The image that follows, however, framed by a slow movement in traveling, is so blurred that only affords a glimpse of the buildings contours. What is in evidence is the voice in off, which narrates in the first person. The imprecision of the image and the dramatic tone of the voice, inconsistent with the frolic tone that has commanded the narrative thus far, suggest another time. Soon the impression is confirmed: the image crosses a screen and reveals the new narrator, who has the same traits as the clown, but is younger and wears other costumes, confirming that it is indeed another time, another space and another situation: he is in jail.¹¹

A new cut and we return to the square, where a parade comes along with a man who stands before the stage, addressing the narrator with authoritarianism and mockery: "Pedro Dinis-Quaderna, are you really a king? Have you really been a king?". The image of the clown listening intently to the question cuts to the prisoner who begins to respond, affirmatively, while scribbling a manuscript. If there were any doubts about the identity of the two, now there is no longer: there is a single name for two narrators, or rather, a same narrator unfolded in different times: A young lad who writes about his family dramatic life story and an old clown who announces the staging of his own story. In this somewhat unusual way, the narrative's fellow presents himself.

Thereafter the narration alternates between one and the other, and sometimes materializes itself in other voices. Also alternate the small fragments of the events announced in the initial text of the first narrator, always led by one or more narrator voices, in a temporal order made up of advances and retreats, and in alternating spaces.

The contents of the work thus far have proved to be dense and excessively fragmented for a program of approximately 45 minutes. Regardless of the many criticisms that have highlighted the episode's hermetic character, such as the one we mentioned earlier, it is easy to imagine an astonished, maybe even disappointed,

¹¹ Throughout this analysis, we will use the designation of Old Quaderna or Clown, to refer to the first narrator and Quaderna young or imprisoned, to refer to the second, remembering that we will also deal with a Quaderna boy.

viewer¹². What that beginning of narrative offers are imprecise indications distributed into minimal narratives of which only flashes are shown. Moreover, those alternate themselves with different voices, times and spaces: sometimes at the square / the serial stage, sometimes in the backlands and at other times in the jail. It is impossible, so far, to construct a sense that unites all the narrative fragments.

Nevertheless, it is already possible to lay stress upon the two main narrative paths that will compose the work: that of Sinésio, who is the character in the narrative written and staged by Quaderna, and that of the narrator himself, who revealed himself as the character/protagonist of the main narrative since his confrontation with someone who questioned him, whose identity has not yet been revealed. However, in despite of his single and brief appearance so far, he seems to fit in the antagonist's role. The object of desire, which hitherto seemed to be to arrogate the king's crown to himself, soon becomes clear: What Quaderna is really seeking is to be acclaimed as the "genius of the race" for writing a great literary work, by which he would also be able to reassume the throne without risking his life:

Yes. I prefer literature, where nobody is harmed. We write: "There were coming twelve horsemen, with flags at the front, mounted on fiery steeds, when twelve shots sounded, and twelve bodies rolled over the horses, soaking in red blood the dust of the road!" ... See? When it is over, no one has died, and there is left a beautiful scene, worthy of Jose de Alencar!¹³

That passage, if it still does not explain why Quaderna appears imprisoned at the beginning of the narrative, justifies his writing, always and only, in the jail. At any rate, the reading of that and other narrative constructions as well requires much more of the viewer than he is accustomed to do: "Since Tuesday, when 'The Stone of the Kingdom' began, there are people breaking their heads to decipher the narrative structure" (Fonseca, 2007, s/p). That critic note was published on the very day of the transmission of the last episode, which makes it clear that the challenge of understanding the minisseries was not only in its first chapter.

From the third episode, however, it is already possible to gather some excerpts from the initial chapters and to join them to the new and decisive information that will be provided by the beginning of the prisoner's testimony, which, from that moment, starts giving some linearity to the events. The testimony, therefore, insofar as it fulfills its role within the narrative course, which is to clarify the murder of the deponent's uncle, ends up being also the element that establishes the communication with the viewer, as it gradually completes the minimal narratives, once suspended, and fits them into the main narrative.

At the end, Quaderna receives a marvelous reward: "I had finished my epic, my work of stone and lime, building, in the center of the Kingdom, the Castle and back-country landmark that has been the dream of my whole life".¹⁴ The literary speech keeps being uttered in the prisoner's voice until the moment the scene cuts to the prison. Then, placed in the middle of the cell, the camera frames the young Quaderna, at the foreground, reading his manuscripts and, through the bars, in the background, the stage.¹⁵

While the prisoner makes the last adjustments in the text, we see, in the background, the clown on the stage. In the next section, it is he that, opening the curtains, makes the final announcement: "The work is

¹² Teresa Albuquerque, of the newspaper *Correio Brasiliense* (2007), mentions the good numbers of the TV Record's audience, during the minisseries, which suggests a possible running away from the Globo network by its viewers.

¹³ Pedro Dinis Quaderna's speech, 2nd episode. Jose de Alencar is the most famous novel writer of Brazilian Romantic Movement.

¹⁴ Old Quaderna's speech, episode 5.

¹⁵ A similar scene, of interaction between the jail's space and the stage's space, happens for the first time in the second episode.

finished!”. As someone who heard the exclamation, the prisoner repeats, interrogatively, the same words: “Is the work finished?”. The combination of those two planes, the visual and the sonorous, reveals the two narrators interaction, which might indicate that the spaces and times in which the events unfold would belong to the same and great theatrical staging, were it not for the impossibility of a same actor to play two roles¹⁶ in two different spaces at the same time. This is not the only time that the setup of the scenic space subverts the conventional or “stable” narratives, according to Fiorin.

In the midst of such a labyrinth of information, there are two ways of understanding the miniseries: The first one would be to attribute to past memories – therefore, flashbacks – the facts presented in natural space, and to a projection of a future staging of the work – flashforward – those unfolding on the street / stage. The second, and a more secure one, would be to take into account that the work is a hybrid of the languages of theater, whose space par excellence is the stage, and the audiovisual, whose dynamism of techniques allows filming in different spaces, of sequences that can be merged on an editing room. It is by the mixture of languages, incidentally, that it is also explained the duplication of roles by the same actor in scene.

The Fragmented Time

In an analysis of the TSK narrative plan it is essential to refer to the way the time has been established in the work. As it should be clear, the time of the story told follows a psychological flow, that is, “it is the time of the characters subjective experience ... how they experience sensations and emotions in contact with the objective facts and, also, with their memories, fantasies, expectations” (Franco Junior, 2009, p. 46).

As for the narrative temporal order, it consists of anachronisms, which are the divergences between the order of events and their presentation in the discourse. Flashbacks and flash forwards are used interchangeably, especially in the first two episodes: “The past invades the present all the time in the microseries ... It is not easy to keep up with the swing”, said Teresa Albuquerque (2007), in the newspaper O Globo, at the time of the program’s projection.

But what is the present time? The author does not say it, perhaps because it seems obvious: If there are both an old Quaderna and a young Quaderna, reasoning from the chronology, the oldest is, of course, more recent and, thus, corresponds to the present. However, it is not so simple: A doubt is established by the clown’s farcical staging – whose old age is the result of a poorly disguised makeup – and accentuated from the beginning of the testimony of the young Quaderna, when he takes on the narrative course.

From this point on, the temporal unfolding is reduced to two: the inquiry time and the flashbacks that enact the defendant’s saying, at which point the narrative is settled down. That, besides the idea that all the staging is just images created by the imagination of the narrator / author who tells of his exploits, led to the reading that the present time is that of Quaderna’s writing while the other time is the projection of what he dreams for the future. Or, perhaps, there is a third possibility, which would be one of simultaneity: The one who writes creates, simultaneously, in the imagination, the image of his alter ego, making the two narrators coexistent at the same time.

The Baroque Revisited

According to Heinrich Wölfflin, in *Basic Concepts of Art History* (1989), the change from the classical to

¹⁶ In that case, the terms actor and roles refer to both the profession and the characters represented, that is, the Quaderna who is in jail and the other one who is on stage, both interpreted by the same actor, Irandhir Santos.

the baroque style was marked by the passage from the linear to the pictorial, from the view of the surface to the view of the depth, from a closed form to an open form, from multiplicity to unity, from the absolute clarity of objects to its relative clarity. Bosi (2006), in turn, explains: “Pictorial includes ‘picturesque’, deep implies unfolding of plans and masses; open denotes multiple perspectives of the observer; unique subordinates, in turn, the various aspects to a sense; relative clarity suggests the possibility of blurred, ambiguous, non-finite forms of expression” (Bosi, 2006, pp. 32-33).

Relating such concepts to what has been said so far about the contents of TSK, there is no doubt that we are facing a contemporary work, of essentially baroque design. That characteristic, which is inherent in the writing of Ariano Suassuna and in the narrative (and pseudo-writing) of Pedro Dinis Quaderna, authentic *bricoleurs*¹⁷, gains special distinction in the expressive options with which Luiz Fernando Carvalho has transformed the words of Suassuna and Quaderna into images and sounds.¹⁸

As he immersed himself in the tangle of thematic and linguistic elements with which he composed the world of his muddleheaded protagonist, Ariano Suassuna drew with him the director Luiz Fernando Carvalho, whose tendency to baroque had already been manifesting since his experience with soap-operas, with evident progress from the miniseries *Today is Mary's Day*. The contemporary baroque style of Suassuna and Carvalho fulfills and expands the tendency to accumulation, peculiar to the post-Renaissance movement, through the procedure of *bricolage*, inasmuch as, in addition to the classical works influences, it has in its course amalgamated themes and languages of the Romanticism and which were perpetuated by the Modernism and the Postmodernism, reaching contemporaneity with full force.

Translated into telecast, the metaphorical spectacle of Suassuna's literature leads to the extreme the baroque vocation, insofar as it can objectively enjoy – not only through words, as literature does – of visual and sound elements borrowed from architecture, painting, theater and music. All that, explored under the dynamism that the audiovisual techniques enable, led to a dramatic and exuberant result. The accumulations and contrasts, keywords of the baroque style, are present in almost the entire extension of the TSK. There is an accumulation of sounds, objects, attires and ornaments in the costumes, movements and words. And whenever there is no accumulation, there is precisely the contrast by the drastic reduction of those elements, such as a silent scene, clean and slow coming after another one loaded with sounds, movements and bulks. It is so with the cavalcade's arrival and whatever comes after it.

Everything begins with Quaderna's words in prison for, as he writes, he sets about with the narration of the fact. Thereon Quaderna gives the clown the voice: “Listen! Listen!”. When the narrator utters those words, it is possible to hear, at the back, a whinny of horses and unintelligible voice sounds. Then a crash announces the opening of the porticos, and simultaneously beats of a percussion instrument are heard, which gives suspense to the scene. Seemly, as one can gather from the image's aspect, the sequence begins with a smokescreen from where appears a horse, whose nostrils blow flames. Therewith appears the first knight, who

¹⁷ By borrowing the concept of bricoleur, due to Levi-Strauss, in whose definition it is one who produces a new object from other objects pieces and fragments, without concerning about following a rigid composition plan, it is safe to say that the work of Ariano Suassuna is, by itself, a perfect bricolage, in that it gathers fragments of the country's history, myths, tales, songs and superstitions of the popular culture (Levi-Strauss, 1989).

¹⁸ Concerning the concepts of bricolage and baroque, we have two observations: The first is that the term baroque today is linked much more to the personal style adopted by some artists rather than to an epoch style; and the second is that the bricolage procedure serves well such a baroque conception, insofar as it allows mixtures, contrasts and excesses. These concepts, in turn, are due to the eighteenth-century style, the source from which contemporary artists adopt such a procedure.

carries a flag and a spear from which birds are hanging, followed by other knights. Thereupon animals and some human figures hidden behind masks and costumes and performing African dance movements, in the manner of *caretadas*¹⁹, compose the procession on the ground, all of them also under the mantle of smoke.

A handsome young man on a white horse stands out from the rest. From the porticos to the costumes, everything is overly ornamented. The animals are handcrafted, while the gleam of the horses, apparently made of tin and copper, is highlighted. In the background, the details of a medieval architecture²⁰ blend with the procession in motion. In its chromatic aspect, the black color predominates, but one or another color, faded by the incidence of yellow light, is sometimes insinuated, as it is a recurring characteristic in the photography of the works signed by the same director. At that point, the sound plane is equally heavy, thanks to the superposition of sound elements such as music, neighings, chirpings, grunts and screams. It is a rather dense scene.

The cavalcade passes by the sides of the stage, enveloping it and being accompanied by the look of an attentive, but melancholic, Quaderna. It is at that moment that the intense rhythm of the past undergoes a deceleration either by the aspect of the image or by the sonorous aspect, be it verbal or musical. The camera movement is in slow motion and notes that resemble a sacred song while the intonation and the words of the narrator are of almost reverence compose the soundtrack: "Synesio ... pure gentleman from above, fine wind of heavens, unsuspecting pilgrim in the world, surrounds him such an aura which only the fire of poetry can describe".²¹

As the words are heard in off, the image, at first dark, indivisible, reveals, in very closed planes, a long hair, the profile of a face, at first still in shadows and then illuminated. The music, formerly classical, is replaced by drumbeats and the strident voice of women who, in *cordel* verses, continue describing Sinésio. Here the picture is cleaner, mainly by the reintroduction of light, by the slow movement of the camera and by the humdrum intonation of the women, which allow seeing the visual and sonorous elements that compose it.

In the sequence, by means of the sonorous plane, the narrative becomes even slower: the music is again instrumental, maybe of oriental style or new age. Within that framework, there is Sinésio, who disconnects himself from the group and whose image, in the very first plane, alternates with that of a woman, in planes of details which alternate her feet, her arm wrapped in a long scarf that waves in the wind, her mouth, face, eyes, hair, hands, and the sensual movement she makes with the scarf. Between one and another cut, the focus on the looks of both characters denounces seduction. The rhythm in the picture, despite the camera's slow motion, is balanced by the fast course that the short and successive cuts as well as the intense light impress. This is a scene totally contrasting with the previous one.

Up to that moment, little is known about the events that involve the cavalcade, and nothing was said about the origin of that woman and her relationship with Sinésio. However, as seen by the language with which the scene was constructed, it is easy to conclude that she is one of the figures that will compose the sensuality theme, foreseen at the narrative's beginning. Hereby, it is one of the few examples, in the minisseries, in which the plane of expression contributes to the contents understanding.

Thus, slow moving constructions, marked by an economic soundtrack, appear here and there, breaking the

¹⁹ A popular entertainment in Brazilian hinterlands.

²⁰ According to the director's interview, the little town of Taperoá building facades scenery have been inspired in old oratories and gravestones.

²¹ Quaderna's speech, episode 1.

rhythm of an excessive work both in images and sounds, for which verbal gushing and marked intonation do much to contribute. The stress on the verb and the voice, in *The Stone of the Kingdom*, finds justification in the reverence that Carvalho always demonstrates towards literature, besides the passion for the word that moves the protagonist and, of course, the choice for theatrical staging. In this regard, Alexandre Werneck (2007), of the *Jornal do Brasil*, has written: “The Suassuna of Carvalho is clamorous. And he screams because the director’s work core is the word. Indeed, it is more than that; it is the religious worship to the word. Thus, everything in the program is put forward for framing the speech” (werneck, 2007, s/p).

When the narrator is the young Quaderna, the interpretation is sometimes so frenetic that it is possible to see the actor’s mouth discreetly dribbling. At other times, the pronunciation accelerated rhythm coupled with an almost whispering tone virtually precludes from understanding whatsoever is said. That is what happens, for example, during a dialogue between the judge and the protagonist at the beginning of the fourth chapter: The ups and downs in the voice tones of one and the other as well as the accelerations and brakes in the pronunciation of the actors who interpret the characters end up becoming an obstacle to the apprehension of the contents which, by now, would be intelligible, were not interferences due to the plane of expression like that one.

Considering that the theatricality, the excessive body language, is the option that sets the tone for the minisseriess composition, gestures are also widely explored by the actors interpretation, and appears fulfilling different functions. In the case of the character Ms. Margarida, who has no speech during the whole work, her body expression is concentrated in her face, in movements that sometimes almost come to a grimace. Quaderna, on the other hand, in any of the four versions in which he appears – whether as a boy, a teenager, a youth, or an elder – exceeds in his gestures as much as he does with the words. On the stage, he crouches on his back and shakes his ass to the audience, as if mocking himself; in the middle of the scrub savanna, when still a boy, he simulates his own coronation, after hearing the stories of royalty involving his great-grandfather; as a teenager, when in a seminary, he exceeds in his face, tongue and hands movements, giving an exaggerated emphasis to the story of fight and sex he tells to the priest, in the confessional; and, in front of the judge, he simulates the trot of a horseback knight, before beginning to narrate Sinésio’s arrival. Such examples serve to illustrate the importance of gestures in the formation of meaning, in the miniseriess, either by contradicting, illustrating or emphasizing what is said, or by substituting that which is unspoken.

Before concluding this approximation between the TSK expression plane and the baroque style, it is necessary to mention the presence of the grotesque within the work. And for that the best example seems to be the narrative sequence in which the Execrable King promotes a bloodbath in the name of Dom Sebastian resurrection. In the constitution of the scene images, everything is in excess: the character’s figure, whose costumes and position of the camera in *contre-plogée* increase his proportions, making him almost a giant of rude features, glazed eyes and long beards. The predominant colors are black and gold, a contrast that accentuates the accumulation of masses within the scene, made up of multiple people and objects. The illumination of the scene, sometimes excessive, sometimes reduced, is made up of a play of light and shadows that, together with the agitating movement of the camera, which alternates in different angles and movements, impress a hallucinating rhythm that catches the viewer by surprise. The surprise turns into fright and bewilderment, at the moment the king’s face is struck by a spurt of blood, denouncing the first execution.

According to Zilberberg (2013), the subject’s relationship to baroque art happens under the sign of a “kind of nausea”, provoking in him “dissatisfaction and instability”. Still, according to him, the acceleration of

baroque art is linked to production and spurt, presenting a coefficient of “abruptness”, which decides the foria’s orientation: “Where nature shows a curve, we find perhaps an angle, and instead of a continuous and regular regression or increase of light, the light or the dark will appear abruptly through the bulk and without transition” (Zilberberg, 2013, s/p). Thus, Zilberberg continues, while the Renaissance art, softer and slower, is more durable, the baroque art has by rights just the moment.

Such concepts return to the same author’s reflection, in which he presents the concept of “happening” as corresponding to surprise, at the moment when the subject comes into contact with the object and is absorbed by it, followed by a decrease in the impact provided by the apprehension of the object. In TSK, if by means of the architecture of the contents plane, the disturbances which affects the receptor in the first two episodes decrease as the miniserie advances, by the aspect of the expression, what is noticeable is that the work keeps surprising – and intriguing – the viewer throughout its whole course, which ends up preventing the complete apprehension of the content and resulting in negative reception by the public.

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