

Asia Pacific Media Educator

Issue 18

2007

Article 7

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Abstract

Exhaustive news coverage of violence and organized crime in Brazil, usually sensationalist in nature and designed for immediate impact, have contributed to banalizing the issue and stifling more in-depth reflection. However, the voices that are silenced by the mass media, find an outlet in another kind of journalism that aims to plunge into the reality of contemporary Brazil. Literary journalism has investigated this realm in minute detail, setting events in their proper context and revealing the everyday life of people who are directly affected by violent crime a world that is familiar to few outside the Brazilian slums. This article looks at the work of Brazilian journalist Caco Barcellos and analyses the literary techniques and procedures he employs in his book *Abusado*. The analysis of this book seeks to reveal another perspective on the issue of violent crime, which differentiates itself from the stigmatising view of poor people and slum-dwellers presented by the police, the State and the Brazilian elite.

Plunging into the underground: poverty and violent crime in contemporary Brazil

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Abstract

Exhaustive news coverage of violence and organized crime in Brazil, usually sensationalist in nature and designed for immediate impact, have contributed to banalizing the issue and stifling more in-depth reflection. However, the voices that are silenced by the mass media, find an outlet in another kind of journalism that aims to plunge into the reality of contemporary Brazil. Literary journalism has investigated this realm in minute detail, setting events in their proper context and revealing the everyday life of people who are directly affected by violent crime a world that is familiar to few outside the Brazilian slums. This article looks at the work of Brazilian journalist Caco Barcellos and analyses the literary techniques and procedures he employs in his book *Abusado*. The analysis of this book seeks to reveal another perspective on the issue of violent crime, which differentiates itself from the stigmatising view of poor people and slum-dwellers presented by the police, the State and the Brazilian elite.

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One of the most pressing issues in contemporary Brazil is that of urban violent crime. This kind of crime is associated with the trafficking of drugs and arms and organised crime. The rise of violent crime is indisputable and research indicates that the homicide rate trebled in some Brazilian cities in the course of the 1990s (Downey, 2003; Zaluar, 1998).

This article analyses the response of one narrative journalist, Caco Barcellos, to this phenomenon and contrasts his journalistic novel,¹ *Abusado* (2004) with general reporting of crime in the Brazilian media.

Any representation of history is always drawn up by a subject who has social and political ties to a specific concrete social reality. When someone witnesses an event, they also reconstruct it according to their own particular mental apparatus and social and cultural background. When reporting on an event the observer selects, organizes and prioritises items of information, by applying his or her narrative strategies to them. It is argued here that the realistic narrative processes of literary journalism are capable, when portraying a microcosm, of laying bare a broader social reality, which is refashioned, not only by the voice of the narrator/journalist, but also by the many voices present in long-form works of journalistic non-fiction.

Urban violence in Brazil

Up to the mid-1960s it was common in Brazil to endow illegal or delinquent activities with an aura of romanticism and to idealise the outlaw. The criminal —albeit by way of an ambivalent attitude— took on an air of the transgressor as hero, who opposed the established forces of law and order. The Brazilian cultural imagination is peppered with such references, be it in cinema, literature, the visual arts, theatre, dance and music.

Criminality seen as a form of revolt was often compared with a certain revolutionary spirit. The bad guy was a wanderer, an anti-hero, who opposed the system, a bohemian who shunned formal work and was an active participant in the cultural life of the city. The visual artist, Hélio Oiticica, who frequented the *bas fond* of the city of Rio de Janeiro in the 50s and 60s, even befriended some criminals and paid homage to one of them, Cara de Cavalo, in two of his works, one of which bore the inscription: “Be a criminal, be a hero!”.

Luiz Eduardo Soares (2000) finds in this benign interpretation of the spirit of criminality a certain tendency to eulogise “adaptive creativity”, which allows the specifics of the moment and social ties to prevail over the cold detachment of the law. The dark side of this reading, lying somewhere between naivety and condescension, could be seen to be the “negation of the basic principles of justice, such as equality before the law, and lack of faith in democratic institutions” (p. 27).

From the 1980s on, there has been an ideological turnaround on the part of intellectuals and researchers, who have abandoned the ideal of the good criminal. It is no coincidence that this was also the period when the military regime came to an end and democratic institutions came to be valued in Brazil. It was also a time when violent crime associated with organised crime gangs and the trafficking of drugs and arms were on the rise in major cities in Brazil. The 1980s also saw a rise in the power

of the *Comando Vermelho* (Red Command), the emergence of new criminal factions, and the resulting turf wars for the trade in illegal drugs in the *favelas*² of Rio de Janeiro, along with the appearance of cocaine on the illegal drugs market.

Full understanding of urban violent crime in contemporary Brazil requires an approach that goes beyond simplistic explanations in terms of social exclusion and attempts to comprehend the phenomenon in the broader, more complex context of the social, economic, political and institutional factors associated with the emergence of hybrid cultural values:

The image of the kid from the *favela* carrying an AR-15 or an UZI machine-gun, which he believes to be a symbol of his virility and a source of great local power, wearing a baseball cap inspired by the North American black movement, listening to funk music, snorting cocaine produced in Colombia, and anxious to acquire the latest style of Nike trainers and a brand new car, cannot be explained by rising unemployment in Brazil....On the one hand, the question of who brought him these instruments of power and pleasure; and on the other, of who inspired him and of how the values that drive him to pursue unbridled pleasure and power came to be instilled in him and perpetuated, are obviously questions that do not have much to do with the value of the local minimum wage (Zaluar, 1996: 55).

Poverty, the domination of the *favelas* by criminal gangs, the choice of drug dealing as an accepted career and the lack of access to the formal employment market are pre-existing factors, which help explain the rise of organised crime. But the sub-culture of the gangs, the access to consumer goods generated by the illegal drug market and the possibility of “social climbing” within the world of drugs and the influence of role models, such as relatives or friends who already work in the illegal drug trade, are some of the other factors that have been identified as being conducive to increasing involvement of young people in organised crime (Dowdney, 2003).

Coverage in the media

Organised crime – and its violent side – has long since ceased to be a matter of interest exclusively to the forces of justice and the police. It is an issue that is of great public concern and political import, and has come to occupy the attention of thinkers, researchers and social players from various segments of society. The media are also interested in the question. But the nature of media coverage of crime is a highly contested area. As Zaluar argues:

If high-speed transmission of information has led to the public being better informed and has trained it to think about what is going on, it has often verged on a form of vulgarisation that distorts information and furnishes more confusion than enlightenment. News relating to violent crime has become a commodity. The more sensational it is and the greater impact it has, the better it sells (Zaluar, 1998: 247).

The spectacle of atrocities that the media reproduces, results in a standardization of opinions and emotions and allows for distortions such as the “tourism of desolation”³, a kind of “itinerant voyeurism”. The most disturbing feature of this distortion is that

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it leads people to become accustomed to violence. To a greater or lesser extent, the press reproduces and divulges the stigmatizing perspective of the police, the state, the elites and the middle class with regard to poor people and favela-dwellers.

The media also ends up flattering the vanity of criminals. For a criminal, appearing in the media as a dangerous and violent character legitimates his power and extends his dominion. One sequence in the film *Cidade de Deus* [City of God], by Fernando Meirelles (Brasil, 2002), illustrates this point well: the drug dealer Zé Pequeno is proud to see his picture on the front page of a newspaper posing with a gun alongside his gang. Many figures from organised crime are regular features on the national television news: Fernandinho Beira-Mar, Elias Maluco, Flávio Negão, Marcinho VP are just some of the names that have become famous in this way.

Paulo Vaz (2006) has noted a change in the way crime was narrated between the 1980s and the 21st century. In the 1980s, crimes where the victim knew the perpetrator, such as crimes of passion, dominated the news, and the stories were narrated principally from the point of view of the offender and his or her motives, paying little attention to the victim. The effect produced by this kind of report is that of distancing the reader or the viewer from the real story being told. So long as the crime has occurred in private the readers or viewers, secure in the comfort of their own homes, do not feel vulnerable to the violence blazoned across the newspaper headlines (Vaz *et al.*, 2006). The facts that have come to dominate the news now, deal with crime in public places and are no longer restricted to crimes of passion committed in the privacy of one's own home. The point of view has shifted to that of the victim and their loved ones. According to Vaz, this change of focus, that brings to light the risks to which virtually everyone is subject, encourages the reader or viewer to identify with the victim and view the criminal as a cold, dangerous and ruthless figure.

This image of the anonymous criminal is connected to the rise in drug trafficking and organised crime. Gang leaders become "celebrity criminals". However, such notoriety comes at a high price and many of the criminals who appear in the headlines end up being slain, as the media has made them more recognisable (Penna, 2004). One example of this was Marcio Amaro de Oliveira, better known as Marcinho VP, leader of a drug gang on the Dona Marta hillside *favela*, in the southern district of Rio de Janeiro, who was the main character in Caco Barcellos' journalistic novel, *Abusado – o dono do morro Dona Marta*.

Considered "small fry" within the *Comando Vermelho*, the criminal organization with which he was associated, Marcinho VP made it onto the pages of the local Rio press, when the film director, Spike Lee, decided to film a video clip for Michael Jackson in the Santa Marta *favela*, in 1996, an area that was then controlled by this drug dealer. This not only brought that *favela* to the attention of the Brazilian public, but also reinforced the power the drug dealer had in various areas which are dominated by organised crime, since the film-maker negotiated with Marcinho VP over permission to shoot the video clip on his turf. This incident undermined the authority of local officials who were left out of the negotiations and the drug dealers, although acting illegally, gained legitimacy as those in control within the *favela* (Penna, 2004).

The control exercised over territory in the *favelas* by drug traffickers has often led the media to refer to organised crime as a parallel authority, an assertion which is open to mistaken interpretations, as Luke Dowdney points out:

The control exercised over communities by criminal gangs should be seen as being simultaneous with that of the state, not as supplanting or competing with it. There are no parts of Rio the state would be incapable of entering or occupying, if it decided to. Besides, the state does have a limited presence (admittedly only limited) in *favela* communities. Acceptance of the control exercised by criminal gangs by favela-dwellers is not due to complete negligence on the part of the state, but to the lack of legitimate alternatives to government. The state has failed to establish a social contract with favela-dwellers and this is something that the gangs can do with great efficiency. The gangs thereby take over the socio-political space that the state has not succeeded in occupying. (Dowdney, 2003: 198)

The attention that the press has given to this situation has not been without distortion. All three main Rio newspapers succeeded in getting into the *favela* to interview Marcinho VP, who agreed to speak, so long as his identity was not disclosed. Not only was his identity revealed, but his statements were twisted in such a way that he appeared to incriminate himself in the news reports. Where Marcinho had said “I don’t smoke, I don’t drink. I only smoke good weed⁴”, *O Dia* newspaper printed: “I don’t snort coke, I don’t smoke and I don’t drink. I only kill the right guy”. In *Jornal do Brasil* the same statement appeared as: “I don’t snort coke, I don’t smoke, and I don’t drink. My only vice is killing. I only kill the right guy⁵”, thereby helping to construct the image of an unscrupulous, ruthless killer that the media, social institutions and the middle class reader want to believe in. As Penna explains:

The media cannot step beyond the mirror of its own fabrications. It remains a hostage to a specular, imaginary logic, structured according to familiar binary opposites — the same/the other, demonization/glamorization — selling consumer images of aestheticized violent *alter egos*. The irresistible superficiality of these images, whose production and circulation is entirely subject to the logic of consumer society and the sale of “truths”, is a symptom of a large-scale move towards parcelling out and privatizing public space. (Penna, 2004: 84)

The narrative of violence in *Abusado*

In contrast to the mass media reporting, the journalistic novel, *Abusado* (Barcellos, 2004), aims to immerse itself in the real world of the *favela* controlled by drug dealers on the Dona Marta hillside and thereby goes beyond merely making a spectacle of violence and glamorising its perpetrators. After five years of research, Barcellos sets events in their proper context and discloses much that the media distorts or omits to tell, revealing a world that is familiar to few who live outside the poor suburbs of big cities.

The Santa Marta *favela* first gained notoriety in the media in 1987, during a dispute between rival gangs for control of the trade in illegal drugs. The incident went down in the history of the community as the “1987 war” and revealed to the nation at large,

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through the lens of the press, the heavy weaponry used by the drug dealers and the children wielding arms.

Abusado tells the story of the “rise and fall” of the drug dealer Juliano VP⁶, how he joined the *Comando Vermelho*, his personal relations, and his relations with the community, the police and the media. Although Barcellos had initially proposed to tell the story of organised crime on the Santa Marta *favela*, the book turned into a biography of Marcinho VP. Nevertheless, the journalist carried out a painstaking study that goes far beyond mere biography, showing how the drug dealers organize themselves and the lives of local people.

The owners of the joints where coke and pot were sold, were basically businessmen who did not pay taxes and used arms to counter their competitors and, from time to time, honest police officers. They led a sedentary, tedious, bureaucratic life. They needed to understand accounts and have ready cash to pay for the raw materials. They also had to manage the hiring and firing of salespeople. And the most important task was the daily or weekly payment of look-outs and pensions for the families of business partners who had been put in jail. They also had to keep the gang’s armoury well-stocked and up to date and pay sufficiently enticing bribes to bent cops. Drug dealers also played the role of counsellor, priest, representative, judge and executioner in the everyday business of the community. (Barcellos, 2004: 77)

The journalistic novel draws on the resources of journalism, using a brisk, direct and factual narrative, but also goes beyond this. Complex intertwining literary techniques are used to produce the desired real-life effect. Extensive descriptive passages, obsessions, recollections, flashbacks detailing psychological motives, the inclusion of sub-plots in the broader narrative, and details from specific points in time and specific locations are just some of the techniques used. Such devices allow the author to scour the back-alleys and dead-ends of the *favela* and dredge up a rough-hewn portrait of its raw reality. He describes how the *favela* grew up and is organised, the poverty and injustice, which are the staple diet of its inhabitants, brought about by negligence on the part of the local authorities and an often brutal and corrupt police force, and by the growth and spread of organised crime, with its arsenal of arms and drugs, based on its own codes and laws and heavy firepower. The detailed reproduction of dialogues echoes the language of the *favelas*:

“If you work for the government, you make money. If you work on the telly, you make money... Hotel owners make money, airlines, brewers, they all make money. So why shouldn’t we? You’re a cool dude. You dance samba. And you’re gonna settle for nothing? Get out of that shit, man!” Juliano said, in an attempt to convince him to get involved in drugs.

“It’s samba, Juliano. The reward is the joy of parading for the beautiful people. I have them drooling at my feet down there!” argued Vico.

“You haven’t got a clue, Vico. It’s the best party in the world, man. And it’s our party, right? So why’s the money not ours too?”

Mendonça, as always, suggested a call to arms.

“You wanna take money from the beautiful people, Juliano? You’ve gotta be tough, use force. That’s the only law those kind of people understand!”
(Barcellos, 2004: 84)

Although he shows the hardships of social exclusion, Barcellos avoids dramatising it and his portrait never descends into facile and sentimental moralising. By giving a voice to those living on the margins of society, Barcellos raises troublesome social issues. He is thus able to disclose a broader social reality, which is recreated in the chorus of voices present in the text. With wry wit, he presents, in fast-paced dialogues in the language of the favela-dwellers and the argot of the drug gangs, an enlightening vision of the inhabitants of this community and the lives they live. There is also a human element: the people are portrayed as kindly and outgoing, capable of doing good and fighting back, but without idealizing them:

The grandfather of Careca and Vico, João Bento, had been one of the migrants in the forefront of the first collective action organised by the Catholic Church. He was a builder’s mate and had laid down the paved steps that replaced the slippery track up the hillside, which, when it rained, had made the lives of the locals a living hell. He’d done it on a shoestring, using broken bricks and waste material from the high-rise apartment blocks being put up in Copacabana, where he worked more than ten hours a day.

On his rare days off, he filled a barrow with the waste he’d collected and wheeled it up to the *favela*. His friends who worked in the street markets chipped in with wooden boxes used to pack fruit and vegetables. (Barcellos, 2004: 65-66)

The narrative interweaves images of an apparently peaceful life in the community – voluntary workers struggling to improve living conditions on the hillside, people sitting on their doorsteps with the doors open and children playing in the street – with scenes of the brutal violence the inhabitants of Santa Marta have to endure:

Bullet-holes riddled the walls and the big houses on Rua Marechal Esperidião Rosa. At number 25, young Ana, who had just turned twenty, was out of her wits. Some bullets had pierced the door to her house and buried themselves in her bed. But she’d been lucky. She had a bad back and, shortly before the shooting had started, had lain down on the floor to do stretching exercises to alleviate the pain. The shots missed her by less than two feet. Meanwhile, Ana’s sister, Cristina Ramos, was on her way home, riding on the back of her husband’s motorcycle. Antonio Carlos Ribeira had once played volleyball for the national team and was known as Badalhoca. The couple, who had stopped off to savour the cooler than usual evening over a beer in a Botafogo bar, were taken by surprise to find themselves in a war zone when they arrived home.
(Barcellos, 2004: 18)

The scene – which culminates in Ana’s family deciding to leave the hillside and the city – poignantly portrays the everyday life of the community and contrasts it with another episode, in which a young middle-class mother decides to go and live on the *favela* so as not to abandon her son, who has become involved in drugs. She hopes that she will be able to persuade him to relinquish his life of crime but she ends up getting involved with one of the drug dealers, watching as her son dies and her lover

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is imprisoned. She is left with two grandchildren to raise. Nevertheless, she stays on in the *favela*.

Women are a striking presence in the day-to-day life of the community and also in the career of the drug dealer, Marcinho/Juliano VP, both before and after he becomes “boss” of the Dona Marta hillside. He relies on the support both of his biological mother and of the woman who brought him up, as well as that of his sister and of his friend and confidante, Luz. He also provides a source of continual fascination for other women, both inside the *favela* and without, and has many lovers, some of them highly successful middle and upper middle-class Rio women. He thereby attains the status aspired to by many young men who enter a life of crime: “Loads of women, loads of money and the power of life and death over the people he controlled. Juliano was loving his first year as hillside boss.” (Barcellos, 2004: 332)

However, the life of a criminal is by no means idealised. Barcellos’ narrative reads as a critique of the abuse of power and the violent outbursts of the drug dealers, with their network of personal connections and systems of distribution for illegal goods and services. The violence is not glamorized and the deaths resulting from torture or police executions and the shoot-outs between police and drug dealers or between rival factions are starkly portrayed.

The relationship between the police and the drug dealers is an ambivalent one. The criminals negotiate bribes and arms deals with corrupt civil and military policemen, and police officers frequently dole out harsh treatment to ordinary citizens, invading their homes in pursuit of the dealers, abusing their authority and relying on brute force. At other times, they are portrayed with their backs against the wall, outgunned and outnumbered by the drug gangs:

On arriving at the look-out, they could see a police van parked at the side of the street down near Leblon beach. Although it was two-way, the avenue was too narrow to do a three-point turn. Their convoy had probably already been spotted. The way to do it was to keep going straight ahead and get ready for a possible clash with the police. Player poked the muzzle of his gun out of the window. The barrel of a machine-gun also appeared out of the window of the first car – Shaggy’s. Behind them was Paulista, who already had the enemy target – a blue and white Beetle – in the sights of his AR-15. Flavinho moved the Santana down a gear to get a better grip on the tarmac.

The police Beetle was parked at the side of the road, on the left from the point of view of someone coming down Niemeyer. Inside, the pair of soldiers, who were watching the approach of the armed convoy, turned the engine on and reversed off, to avoid getting into a stand-off with a gang that was far better manned and armed than they were. They backed off up the road and took cover behind the gas-station near the car-wash. (Barcellos, 2004: 105)

Police action is unplanned and dictated by the public security policy whims of whatever local government has recently been elected. Barcellos also portrays the ruthlessness of organised crime gangs, with their clinical, summary system of justice for those who fail them or defy their rule. Since the 1990s, the *Comando Vermelho* has adopted the practice of roadside kangaroo courts in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, including Dona Marta. The terror such courts inspire can be seen in the description

of the habitual practices of Patrick do Vidigal, drug boss of another hillside *favela* controlled by the *Comando Vermelho*:

Bits of human limbs were found floating near the rocky walls of Vidigal's hillside. Crime investigators also frequently found fingers, feet, hands or a severed head floating in the sea or washed up on Leblon beach, the closest point to the place where Patrick's trials took place. Sentence was carried atop the hillside at the point where the ocean lapped at the foot of the precipice. The youthful executioners, who were usually in their teens, formed a firing squad and then had to chop up the bodies of the victims with an axe and toss the parts into the sea. (Barcellos, 2004: 446)

Structure and narrative

The book is divided into three parts. The first, *Time to Live*, begins at the end of the 1990s with a failed operation on the part of Marcinho/Juliano VP's gang when it falls into a police ambush. The gang's driver is killed and the leader's head is grazed by a bullet. The story then moves back to recount Marcinho/Juliano VP's teenage years, his friends, community life on the *favela*, and the first war the inhabitants of Dona Marta hillside had to face. Marcinho/Juliano then goes into "exile" before the hillside is retaken by the *Comando Vermelho* and the drug dealer becomes leader of the gang and comes to dominate the *favela*.

The second part, *Time to Die*, begins with the negotiations with the producers of the Michael Jackson video clip on the *favela*. The episode, which had already attracted the attention of the media, culminates in the controversial interview which Marcio/Juliano gives to the Rio press drawing the spotlight of the media and the police onto him. A series of arrests and escapes follows, where Marcio/Juliano is helped by family-members, friends and corrupt police officers. The drug trade on Dona Marta hillside, under constant police reprisals, goes into decline leaving the gang in financial difficulties. In an attempt to raise capital, the drug dealers are forced to plan a series of robberies, all of which fail. In statements to the press in which he talked about social justice, Marcio/Juliano ended up attracting the attention of artists and intellectuals, who subsequently got in touch with him in order to understand his ideas better. One of these, the film-maker, João Moreira Salles, ended up befriending Marcinho VP and offered to pay him a study grant, should he choose to give up his life of crime⁷.

The third and last part, *Farewell to Arms*, tells of the first meeting between the journalist and the drug dealer and the negotiations regarding the book, the flight to Argentina, the desire to give up the drug business, the return to Rio de Janeiro to take back control of the hillside and Marcinho's capture by the police, when he is taken to the Bangu maximum security prison.

Although it was well received by a significant portion of the general public and by shapers of public opinion, Barcellos' book also received numerous criticisms. One of these was that it turned Marcinho VP into a hero. Another, more cutting one, was that the author had published the book, knowing that its explosive content could precipitate the death of VP. This is what did in fact happen, a few months after the publication of *Abusado*. The journalist's apprehension on this count had already

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been expressed in the first edition of the book, on the occasion of his first meeting with the drug dealer. In subsequent editions, Barcellos included a postface where he comments on how he felt when he received the news of the assassination of Marcio/Juliano VP:

Unfortunately, the death of Juliano confirmed the fears that had plagued me since the day we first talked about the book. My concern grew when he was on the run in Argentina, and invited to go and live in France, and I decided to return to Rio de Janeiro at the height of the police hunt for him.

I must confess that I started to believe that they would kill him when they arrested him, even if he didn't resist. I was going by other stories of criminals who gained notoriety in the press and ended up being killed by the police. But Juliano's arrest did not conform to this rule. He was sleeping, alone and unarmed, when he was arrested, and his life was spared in accordance with the rule of law. (Barcellos, 2004: 556)

The publication of the book raised controversy among the inhabitants of the Santa Marta *favela*. Some accused Barcellos of divulging the real names of slain drug dealers and causing problems for their families. Others criticised him because he had published photos of criminals killed by the drug gang without obtaining the consent of their families. There were those who did not like his emphasis on crime in the *favela*, and would have preferred him to have portrayed the community from a different angle. Others argued that the drug dealer, Marcio Amaro de Oliveira, aka Marcinho VP, did not deserve to be remembered at all and that his days were numbered anyway, with or without the publication of the book (Netto, 2003).

But Barcellos' work has helped to shed light on an issue that, still today, is complex and shrouded in mystery and that he has told stories that the mainstream media would not dare to print. The media talks a lot about violence and organised crime, but knows little about it from the inside. The realistic narrative that we find in *Abusado* re-establishes the possibility of a dialogue with contemporary social issues. By giving pride of place to the issues of poverty and violent crime in an engaging and accessible language, it encourages empathy with those who live in the poor suburbs of big cities. Barcellos steers clear of the denunciatory tone of an informer, that predominates in mainstream media discourse on violent crime. The most evident effect of the latter is a feeling of fear and insecurity, which produces, as an immediate consequence, a certain indifference towards poverty, inequality and injustice.

However, although Barcellos shows one side of the problem, such as the drug trade, the war between organised criminal gangs, and the relationship between the criminals and corrupt police officers, the reader will be frustrated if he or she expects to find here a more in-depth story of the relations between the lucrative trade in drugs, arms and organised crime outside the *favela* through political corruption and money-laundering. By focusing his attention on the Santa Marta *favela*, the author seems to forget that most of the responsibility for the unbridled rise in urban violent crime lies outside the *favelas*.

It is no mere coincidence that the growth in urban violent crime is a phenomenon that has arisen at the same time as globalisation. As global trade steps up, social and community relations are torn apart. It is therefore possible to make an objective

assessment of the internationalization of organised crime, with its quite specific political and economic features, although the subjective side, involving a break with traditional values and the resulting breakdown in family ties and interpersonal relations, should not be overlooked.

Final Remarks

This study of the work of Caco Barcellos has highlighted the differences between literary journalism and conventional journalism. By going beyond a mere account of the facts and providing a broader vision of reality, literary journalists are able to draw on journalistic resources in order to produce in-depth treatments of lasting interest of the stories they cover.

Regarded as a hybrid genre, literary journalism has come to combine intensive investigative journalistic practices, such as interviews and fact-finding, with the narrative structures and techniques of fiction-writing. One of the most important procedures employed by literary journalists is that of immersing oneself in the subject matter or in the personality of the character, thereby allowing for more in-depth investigation of the issue the author is addressing.

Literary journalism returns to the idea that the art of good story-telling is an essential part of journalism. At a time when the print media, under pressure from the extensive changes occurring in the contemporary world, is going through a phase of exploring new approaches, a return to the grand style of literary journalism may be useful in helping to draw up new models, principally for those who believe that the future of newspapers and magazines lies in an improvement in the quality, not only of content and analysis, but also of the style of writing.

The comparative study of conventional journalism and the techniques used by literary journalists should be encouraged in university journalism courses as a way of encouraging students to be aware of, make use of and build on these alternative means of communication.

Notes

- 1 The term “journalistic novel” is used here to refer to Barcello’s book length non-fiction account of Marchino VP and the Dona Marta hillside.
- 2 I have opted not to translate the Portuguese term “favela”, as “slum” or “shanty town”, as these terms have overwhelmingly negative connotations and do not adequately convey the specific features of the Brazilian favela.
- 3 “Favelas tours” are a common feature in Rio de Janeiro. These are excursions where tourists visit favelas, as if on a safari.
- 4 By “good weed” he means marijuana. TN In Portuguese, the noun “mato” (weed) is a homonym of the first person singular of the present tense of the verb “matar” (kill).
- 5 For details of this episode, see Barcellos (2004: 349-360).
- 6 The author chose to conceal the identity of his characters, using codenames. Juliano VP thus refers to the drugs dealer, Marcio Amaro de Oliveira, known as Marcinho VP.

- 7 The incident made the press and precipitated the resignation of the then under-secretary for public security in the Anthony Garotinho local government, the anthropologist, Luiz Eduardo Soares, who introduced innovative proposals for combating violent crime in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

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