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“The book must leave space for questions”: Report book and proof of the truths

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to understand how some Brazilian journalists who write report books explain to their readers the information presented in their works. A debate is simulated between the researchers of the book-report such as Lima (2009), Vilas Boas (2006), Rogé Ferreira (2004) and Catalão Jr. (2010), added to the statements of journalist writers Fernando Moraes, Lira Neto, Daniela Arbex, Caco Barcellos and Zuenir Ventura, collected by the author of this article. Respondents ponder the peculiarities of the search for truth in different conditions of producing reports for the book format. The conclusion points to the need for constant self-analysis by journalist writers regarding the possible contradictions of the interviewees and the documentary sources.

Keywords

Journalism; Report books; Proof of the truth; Biographies.

Introduction

When writing a report book, the writer journalist deals with peculiar conditions of production. Theoretically, he has more time to search and collate documents and to interview, with patience and feedback, a large number of sources that can reach more than a hundred. He also has more space to address issues distant from the factual, and may even produce trilogies or quintologies, in addition to exercising supposed freedoms of thematic choice and angulation. All of these advantages may suggest that the report book is immune from presenting, in the final work that reaches the reader, contradictory views or biased interpretations about the biographical characters or historical events.

The proposal of this article is to project, in a contentist interpretative analysis and in perspective of debate, visions of academic researchers who produce doctoral theses about report books in Brazil, such as Lima (2009), Vilas Boas (2006), Rogé Ferreira (2004) and Catalão Jr. (2010). The interpretive mosaic gets complete with statements by journalist writers, such as Lira Neto (biographer of the Brazilian ex-president Getúlio Vargas and of the also Brazilian singer and songwriter named Maysa); Fernando Morais (Olga, Chatô); Zuenir Ventura (*1968: o ano que não terminou, Cidade partida*); Daniela Arbex (*Holocausto Brasileiro, Cova 312*) and Caco Barcellos (*Rota 66 e Abusado*), interviewed by Maciel (2018). In the interviews, they deal with the journalistic dilemmas of presenting one or multiple truths with respect for biographical characters or with contemporary problems addressed in their work.

It seems to be transparent - based on academic reflection and testimonies of writer journalists collected using the in-depth qualitative interview method, that the presence of the contradictory also scares them during the production of a report book. It is not possible to offer it in the next day's story or in the next minute one. To put in contrast several speeches at the final draft helps, but in the face of uncertainties, since it counts on the time as an ally, the interviewed reporters prefer to continue searching for new evidence which the press has not offered within their production limits.

Another problematic: the memories of the sources, expressed during in-depth interviews, can be blurred by the confusion of information. It is up to the journalist writers to orchestrate the speeches in lines of force that balance the inalienable right of everyone to express their opinions, in a work that often involves a process of self-analysis decisions". A typical strategy is to go back to the interviewees several times to see if, faced with the same questions, they will eventually change their mind. The author's honest attitude towards his reader, this essential partner, in the face of inevitable historical gaps, is always to share his doubts and to be open to new journalistic works that will or will not solve them in the future. These and other issues are at the center of the debate proposed by this article.

"I think the reader has to share his doubt"

Professor Catalão Jr. (2010, p. 235) realizes a common point in his discursive analysis of 18 best-selling books-report in the period of 1966 to 2010.¹: "Rarely, author's doubts, indefinitions or concerns are rarely found, either regarding the reported events, the defended theses or the information that supports them and the process by which they were obtained". The researcher finds in the works of the journalists studied the predominance of a "tone of security and certainty", as much as the "epistemological effectiveness" of the report, as well as "in relation to himself and his own competence as a producer of knowledge" (Catalão Jr., 2010, p. 235). In a propositional sense, Catalão Jr. recommends paths for the writer-journalist:

For example, it can give up the questionable and dubious omniscience in favor of a

1 Among the best-selling books are Olga (1985) and Chatô, *o rei do Brasil* (1994), by Fernando Morais; *1968: o ano que não terminou* (1989), by Zuenir Ventura; *A ditadura envergonhada* and *A ditadura escancarada* (2002), by Elio Gaspari; and *A viagem do descobrimento* (1998), by Eduardo Bueno.

narrator who is not presented as having absolute truths (...). How does it seriously sustain the unidimensional and univocal understanding of reality, the postulation of an unequivocal and complete knowledge and the claim to the absolute truth inherent in the figure of the omniscient narrator? How does it ignore the diversity of perspectives, voices and social definitions from which it is possible to report an event or to approach a situation? How can we neglect the acknowledgement that the journalistic discourse, like any other, does not reproduce reality “as it is”, but it only represents it from a certain point(s) of view? If you recognize the validity and relevance of questions like these for your professional and discursive practice, it may be beneficial for the reporter to establish a broader dialogue with genres and authors in the literary field, in order to identify techniques and procedures that allow him to express his manner more adequately to understand journalism and the world he proposes to represent (Catalão Jr., 2010, p.176).

Journalists who write report books interviewed by Maciel (2018) report that they have sometimes encountered different versions regarding specific passages, for example, their biographies. Lira Neto (personal communication, 2016) says that when he was doing interviews for the book *Maysa: Maysa: só numa multidão de amores* (2007), about the Brazilian singer and songwriter, Maysa, sometimes “I talked to three people about the same subject and had three different versions about the same episode”. In order to try to overcome the controversies, he first sought the “light of some documentation source”, but, if this was not enough, in the final narrative “he offered the reader the opportunity to get to know the three versions. So, according to so-and-so it was like this, according to so-and-so it was like that and according to so-and-so it was neither like this or like that” (Lira Neto, personal communication, 2016). Reflecting better on this procedure about defining the truth, Lira Neto explains in the same interview:

So that's it, it's something else that we have to understand. Sometimes the biographer feels the need to solve everything, to close all the edges. No, I believe the reader has to share his uncertainties, I think the book has to leave spaces for just that. So far it is known, from here it is not known and to make the reader also understand that this gap is sometimes inevitable and eternal, never, never will be known for certain what happened. Even so, one more important thing to add about this discussion is that every historical, every narrative is a reconstruction. It is never the fact itself. And that is for an absolutely clear reason, isn't it? That the facts do not exist by themselves, they exist filtered from our view. So when they say: “Ah, the biographer, the historian is” (...) When I see someone say: “Ah, there is a book here, everything is true”. What truth, pale face? There is no such thing, is there? So (...) what we have to pursue as a researcher, as a journalist, as a historian, whatever, is the relentless search for something that is conventionally called fact. But knowing that this search has some inevitable impediments due to the search process itself. And you will always be doing this reconstruction of a fact from certain sources, from certain points of view. So, this is not a problem of biography, this is a problem of historical research itself (Lira Neto, personal communication, 2016).

Another challenge faced by Lira Neto was to prepare the biography, in three volumes, of the Brazilian ex-president Getúlio Vargas. In the explanatory text entitled “*Este Livro*”, which is part of the first volume of *Getúlio* trilogy (2012, p. 526), the author makes his conception of the journalistic-biographical look very clear: “In fact, it has always worried me the fact that Getúlio has never been the target of an exhaustive, modern journalistic biography, careful in dealing with primary sources, attentive to the abundance of academic studies regarding the period”. Just ahead of his writing, he reports his ambition of not falling into the trap of the “impressionism in most biographical-journalistic book-reports ever published about the character” (Lira Neto, 2012, p. 526). Aware of the complexity of his biography, Lira Neto also dismisses any intention of offering a definitive biography, even in three volumes: “When it comes to Getúlio, many questions remain unanswered. This book does not intend to eliminate them, to exhaust them, or to resolve them definitively, but rather to offer new contributions, elements and possibilities to the debate” (Lira Neto, 2012, p. 526).

In the same piece, Lira Neto differentiates his work as a journalist biographer who has already

produced content about Getúlio Vargas, on the one hand, by his official biographers and, on the other, by historians of the period. As for the first ones, it is considered that they “had a chance to draw a kind of hagiography - copious and laudatory - about the former president. On the opposite side, they bet on the complete deconstruction of the biographee. In this case, apologists and detractors force themselves to cancel each other, due to the partiality of the opposite signs” (Lira Neto, 2012, p. 526). As for historians, Lira Neto ponders that “they wrote biographical profiles as synthetic as they are fundamental” (2012, p. 526). And he adds, in a comparative sense, what is his true definition of journalistic biography when it compares his work with these researchers: “Due to the specificity of their pieces, deliberately they went through the percussion of the detail, the aesthetic dimension of the narrative and through the - almost archaeological - investigation of the private sphere, raw materials of a journalistic biography” (Lira Neto, 2012, p. 527).

In order to accomplish his unique project, Lira Neto reports to his readers the attention to primary sources, the basis for the search for a truth about Getúlio Vargas. “For two and a half years, I visited different Brazilian cities, looking for documents, periodicals, objects, rare publications, testimonies, films, music and photographs, any clue that would help me tell Getúlio story” (Lira Neto, 2012, p. 527). It is a wealth of documents invoked by the writer as proof of his effort to come close to the most reliable description of the ex-president. Only in the Getúlio Vargas personal archive, according to Lira Neto (2013, p. 494), “there are no less than 4679 entries between the years 1930 and 1945, each of them corresponding to a specific set of manuscript, audiovisual or printed documents”. The famous Getúlio Vargas diary notes, on the other hand, involved the biographer’s attentive reading of “thirteen notebooks, which when they were published in book form resulted in more than 1200 pages all together” (Lira Neto, 2013, p. 494).

Multiple-field theorists understand that contemporary society faces a practically chronic meaning crisis and is barely visible in the coming years. It is evident, from the point of view of the exposed authors in this article, that journalism, despite the threat from social networks, still maintains its role of representation, interpretation and construction of reality, especially in challenging works such as book reports. Professionals or organizations which produce information that exhibit a Cartesian view of showing a single possible version of events do not effectively contribute to the collective construction of a democratic reality.

“When the person calls it The Biography, be suspicious of it”

When studying the work of Brazilian biographers² Vilas Boas (2006, p. 126) also critically realizes that “a veil of absolute truth covers biographies, the vision of journalist-biographers and the perception of reviewers and preface writers”. Further, in addition, he proposes the question that he answers himself: “Can the biographer reach the truth about the biographee? Can the whole of an individual’s life be recomposed philosophically speaking by writing it? I believe not” (Vilas Boas, 2006, p. 126). Even so, the author points to “a certain established biographical tradition, a tacit model that operates with an ordered chronology, a coherent and stable personality, actions without inertia and decisions without doubts” (2006, p. 126).

Vilas Boas (2006, p. 126) believes that, just as in the History field which it has been contemporarily placed as “a provisional answer about the past”, the journalistic-biographical report “also bears the burden of its author, his personal impressions, his formation, his history, his life, his commitments to the society that formed him and for him”. Another point perceived by the researcher (2006, p. 131) is that,

2 In his doctoral thesis, Sérgio Vilas Boas studied the biographies *JK, o artista do impossível*, by Cláudio Bojunga (2001), *O anjo pornográfico, a vida de Nelson Rodrigues*, by Ruy Castro (1992), *Fidel Castro, uma biografia consentida* (2002) and resumed to look at - already started in his master’s degree - *Chatô, o rei do Brasil* (1994), by Fernando Morais, *Mauá, Empresário do Império* (1995), by Cláudio Bojunga and *Estrela Solitária, um brasileiro chamado Garrincha* (1995), by Ruy Castro.

as a result of an exhaustive investigation, gathering numerous physical documents and hundreds of oral interviews, several biographies written by journalists in Brazil may appear, at first sight, “super consistent” under the guise of historiography, literary essay and agile journalistic language, sometimes creative and thought-provoking”. However, in his perspective, the reader and the researcher need to be aware of the fact that they can bring “more the rhetoric of the truth than the truth of rhetoric” (Vilas Boas, 2006, p. 131). Vilas Boas (2006, p. 133) adds that a way to improve the biographical process is to establish “a more sophisticated understanding of the inexorably subjective nature of his actions and reflections”. Biographees, as the author recalls, are not “consistent, logical, simple and direct beings as journalists-biographers try to make us believe through the ostentation of their lost and found items, their gigantic archives of information, their prodigious memories, their ideas fixed” (2006, p. 133).

Analyzing journalistic biographies, Vilas Boas (2006) realizes that the biographical journalists usually list hundreds of interviewees and, sometimes, thousands of pages of documents could yield several books about the subject. It is a matter of defending, in the prefaces and presentations of their books, their discourse that is presenting indisputable truths. But he warns of the contradiction: “Is quantity a guarantee or an alibi? Maybe both. The fact is that we, readers, do not have access to the worldview that guided the biographer’s movements on the chessboard that is the biographism” (Vilas Boas, 2006, p.146).

It is not clear, for example, in this contract with the reader, what information the biographer decided to discard. This fact leads to the observation that “we are not guaranteed the right to know the doubts and impasses that inevitably occurred to them” (Vilas Boas, 2006, p. 146). In other words, in the author’s opinion (p. 166), “this crude, fragmentary and gaping mass of documents (of all types and forms) is open to explicitation by the convincing-self towards greater transparency”. Such a narrative strategy often ends up not being adopted under the claim that only the various aspects of a life situated in its time are being presented, without judgment.

For Vilas Boas (2006, p. 138), journalists sketch “(rational and sensory) perceptions about someone”, since the biographees “are or have been there, before any reconstruction that can be done of them”. The researcher recommends that biographical journalists can “break with their Cartesian obligations and truly assume themselves as subjects in the world, subjects of the subject in focus and subjects assumed (declaredly present) in the world of their narrative” (2006, p. 138). And he more clearly defends a journalist’s self-analysis process, shared with readers:

So, there is no stated or implied rule that prevents the journalist-biographer from giving transparency to his narrative by including (pertinent, sensible, restrained) his doubts, his choices, his conflicts, his impasses, his experiences along the biographical journey; to say, for example, how it got there and how far it could not go because of this or that. But not only a line or two in the prologue. I refer to exposing oneself in the context of what is narrated, in order to impart frankness and freedom of spirit (Vilas Boas, 2006, p. 146).

Fernando Morais (personal communication, 2016), who constantly deals with historical material in his works, as *Olga* (1985), *Chatô* (1994), *Corações Sujos* (2000) and *Os últimos soldados da Guerra Fria* (2011), invokes, in an interview with Maciel (2018), the amulet of in-depth interviews and their constant repetition. They would be a way of reaching a more plausible interpretation of the truth in his works. Thus, these interviews, in their conception, should be “loooooong, if necessary, return to speak with the interviewee two, three, four, five times if necessary” (Morais, personal communication, 2016). This practice would help to deepen the sense of contradictions, but it does not guarantee a single, final and indisputable interpretation of the facts found, as he commented in the same interview:

When I deal with the frontal shock of information, I cannot determine which of the two versions is correct, I give them both. In the case of *Chatô* [o rei do Brasil] this thing happened several times. There were things mentioned and the person swore not, I

swear, I saw it, the other one told too. What should I put? I put both sides. So it's a lot... You will find this in several of my books, to say: so-and-so ensures that the teacher did this, so, even though Beltran, who was also on the scene, has a different version. I think that, as opposed to revealing a weakness of the author, or an inability to find out what is right, I think it is honesty. The reader will know that it is not an obvious thing. And another thing: what is the point of view? If both of us cover the same fact. A guy stabbed his mistress here on the street. You work for one newspaper, I work for another one. We go there, talk to the same people, see the same corpse, everything. But your story may be completely different from mine. What are the Gospels if not four stories written on the same topic by four different authors? You know? The newsman at the time put four reporters to cover it. But that's it, they are different views. It is the glass half empty and half full. (Morais, personal communication, 2016).

Faced with reflections brought from many years of journalistic practice in newspapers, magazines, books and, now, the internet, Fernando Morais says, in an interview with Maciel (2018), he does not believe that there is a definitive biography: "When the person calls it The biography, be suspicious of it". On one occasion, Morais was with his daughter in a large bookstore in New York, and when he tried to show her where Olga's translation was, he was eventually informed by an employee that there was not only a specific shelf for biographies, but a whole floor. He tells: "So I went there, there was Olga and such, but one thing really caught my attention. At that time, I counted 19 or 20 different biographies of Jacqueline Kennedy. So it's a lot of pretension, a lot of arrogance, a lot of pride, for someone to say that biography is definitive" (Morais, personal communication, 2016).

In Olga own preface, Fernando Morais (1993, p.15) seeks to adopt a sincere position in relation to his readers, stating: "This book is not my version of the life of Olga Benário or the communist revolution of 1935, but what I believe to be the real version of these episodes". And, right after, he complements, commenting on possible inaccuracies: "Any inaccuracies found throughout this history, however, should be debited exclusively for my impossibility to confront it with different versions" (Morais, 1993, p. 15). Morais prefers to make it clear to the reader that the journalistic interpretation of the story involves a tortuous path; "And there will certainly be inaccuracies, not least because I myself came to advance investigations based on apparently true versions, but which would later be denied by new research or interviews" (1993, p. 15). Thus, in insoluble cases, the commitment that he assumes with the reader stands out: "And there were still situations in which, faced with contradictory versions about a given episode, I was led by investigations and evidence to choose one of them" (Morais, 1993, p.17).

To nurture this healthy utopia in the field of journalism, historically consolidated as a narrator and interpreter of reality, with the potential to build it, depends a lot on the experience of journalist writers. In their more individual works, they would need to be willing to transcend the narrative crisis with creativity, honesty and transparency in their relationship with the reading public. The interviews with journalist writers summarized in this article indicate that everyone seems to be aware of the role they play in the social construction of reality in their books, although they may not be so evident in the inner pages of their works, in addition to the walls of prologues and presentations, as realized Vilas Boas (2006).

"This clash I have to tell the readers"

According to Lima (2009, p. 85), the journalist who writes report books should take advantage of certain facts that count in his production process, such as the fact that he does not need to "revolve around factuality, about the event". Thus, you will be able to exercise the glimpse of "a higher horizon penetrating the situation or more lasting issues that make up a land of lines of force that determine events". This more conscious approach to events, characters and issues, reported in a book report, should, according to Lima, aim at a more "contextualizing, dynamic, integral" approach (2009, p. 85). Like other

researchers on book-reporting in Brazil, Lima suggests to the writer journalist:

Unlike factual journalism, the modern book-report tries to introduce, in its focus, a lens that begins to observe reality in the expanded dimension perceived by modern science. It is no longer about the reduced view of Cartesianism, but about the incorporation of comprehensive modern optics. It is not even about diving into the imaginary as fantasy or fiction, but as elements that help explain the real in a total, systemic context. Journalism does not cease to address the real, it is not mistaken by fiction. But he denies that the real is only its most apparent, visible, concrete, material portion. When science advances to more subtle horizons of perception, why should journalism remain restricted to a short-sighted field, in modern terms? Why shouldn't I find the points of confluence between the visible real and the less tangible that insinuates itself camouflaged, timid and elusive, behind concrete events? Why couldn't I systematically perceive the hierarchical order that permeates all of existence? (Lima, 2009, p. 131).

Dealing with contemporary themes in books such as *Chico Mendes: crime e castigo* (2003), *1968: o ano que não terminou* (1988) and *Cidade partida* (1994), journalist and writer Zuenir Ventura (personal communication, 2016), says, in interview with Maciel (2018), betting on immersion in environments as one of his main strategies to understand a certain reality. At the age of 62, when developing field research for the last book mentioned, Zuenir Ventura plunged into a Brazilian funk party in the community of Vigário Geral, as he commented in the interview: "I went to the *baile funk* and there was my view, the view of the chronicler. For me it was an existential experience that I don't speak professionally, but it was incredible, can you imagine it: I have lived here 30 distance minutes of Vigário Geral and it is another universe, totally different" (Ventura, personal communication, 2016). The journalist confesses that he resisted the temptation to "rent a hut" in the region he visited constantly, because, in his conception, that would be "distorting a little" (2016). This attitude represents his concern in the sense of presenting a truth to the reader who follows his immersion trajectory: "I mean, I am not from here, I am from Ipanema, hey. And this clash I really have to reveal to the reader, not to pretend that I am finding everything natural, I am living here, everything is natural" (Ventura, personal communication, 2016).

Zuenir Ventura (personal communication, 2016) argues that in the role of interviewer, he avoided adopting a posture that he considers common in many cases, in journalism, of the "sin of pride, if not arrogance". In *Cidade partida*, the journalist in-depth interviewed a leader of the drug trade. "I was patrolled in the Flávio Negão interview. Man, to interview a drug dealer, a bandit. I said: 'No, look, I wanted to know what goes on in the head of a bandit, a drug dealer'. In normal heads I know more or less" (Ventura, personal communication, 2016). In this difficult relationship, which lasted three nights of interviews with the criminal, Zuenir says that his greatest fear was whether his character would be sincere. "And it ended up being (sincere), because he said things with greatest tranquility. I stayed three nights listening to Flávio Negão saying how he killed, how he tortured, how it was... it was very difficult" (Ventura, personal communication, 2016). Zuenir concludes that he has always tried to adopt a respectful attitude towards any interviewee, "not as a virtue, but as a professional obligation" (Ventura, personal communication, 2016). Reflecting on one of the main myths of the profession, the author recalls that the French filmmaker Jean Luc Godard said that "even the camera is on the right wing or left wing". And he complements with a personal reflection on the search for truth:

So this objectivity, this thing, which was one of the press myths of the [19] 60s is ... it is not achievable, but it needs to be pursued. It will not be totally exempt, now you have to look for it, you have to respect the others opinion. This is it, to reconcile this is my opinion, this is my point of view, but it does not mean that it is The point of view. Anyway, just to say that the investigation you will never have the perfect investigation, because, in short, you are talking about mankind and with material that is material, in short, a load of very large subjectivity, opinion and such (Ventura, personal communication, 2016).

Among the journalists who dedicate themselves to writing reporting books, Daniela Arbex is one of those that most adopts a confessional tone regarding her investigative processes in the body of the text of her books. In the *Holocausto brasileiro* (2013), she deals with the unhealthy situation and death of thousands of inmates at Hospital Colônia, in the city of Barbacena. And, in *Cova 312* (2015), she uses the documentation produced by the military government to prove that the ex-guerrilla fighter Milton Soares did not commit suicide in his prison cell, but was murdered in a previous torture session. In both works, the journalist takes on the first-person narrative in a few pages to tell the backstage of the reports. Therefore, the fear of making a mistake in interpretation, even with interviews that can occur up to five times with the same source, led Daniela Arbex to adopt a practice that is considered a taboo in journalism:

Whenever I publish a book... I cannot send a text to an interviewee, because he goes crazy and publishes it, anyway. But I sit and read with all the characters before I publish it, the part that belongs to them. I read their part, the whole text. Why? Because I want the person to feel represented. So I have no shame, it doesn't bother me at all. I would love to surprise the person, but the person will say: "She made a mistake, that's not me". Or she doesn't feel represented with that story of hers. The book is one thing to stay. So imagine a mistake that will persist for a lifetime. No, it can't. And the cool thing is to see how people react, because people cry, they say: "Wow, this is my story, how did you get it?", and stuff (Arbex, personal communication, 2016).

But this method does not exempt the journalist from some questions, as in the case of the book named *Cova 312*. She remembers that, when reading an excerpt from the originals for a specific character, it happens what she calls a problem: "of the person willing to be more hero than that he was" (Arbex, personal communication, 2016). The source asked her to change some sections that, in his view, would have errors in the interpretation of his conduct. Daniela Arbex (2016) preferred to argue that, as it was not an information error, she would not make the change, using an argument that involves the authorial power of a journalist. "So it is like this: it's difficult. Because I change when the information is wrong. Now the way I built it, if the person didn't like it, it is my authorship. I don't change it at all" (Arbex, personal communication, 2016).

"If you go out knowing everything, what is so funny about that?"

The challenge proposed by the author of book-reports compared to the traditional postures of journalism practiced in newsrooms, can be stretched to the point of establishing a forceful social criticism. According to the studies by Rogé Ferreira (2004, p. 405), certain authors of report books, of a more critical and social nature, can clearly post themselves in the struggle for the (re)articulation of the public sphere, questioning and breaking, in to some degree, the verisimilitude of the fictions taken as reality by the hegemonic truths and illuminating dark and unknown areas".

Rogé Ferreira (2004, p. 411) perceives a certain type of writer journalist who proposes to his readers "narratives that present characteristics of a multiple reading of existence, of the real and of the world, simultaneously being in tune, internally among themselves and, outside, beyond the circles themselves, with past works and historical contexts". Thus, from new perceptions of "form-content", a book-report can, in the author's conception (2004, p. 362) elaborate "a new knowledge of the real (repressed in several ways)", pointing out structural contradictions of society not so apparent in traditional journalistic and historical discourses.

Both in *Rota 66* (1992) and in his two other books, *Abusado: o dono do morro Dona Marta* (2003) and *Nicarágua: a revolução das crianças* (1982), Caco Barcellos (personal communication, 2016) challenges the prescription of impartiality and neutrality, always placing itself in the narrative. At various times he

talks about his anxieties, ethical indecision, ways of approaching the characters behind the scenes, in addition to analyzing his different role in relation to a prevailing mainstream media. This coherent, honest and constant attitude pleases the reader very much, as it can be seen from the various editions sold out in bookstores (less from the pioneer *Nicarágua*, which is rarer and published by a small publisher). In addition to his tv persona, which also follows the same path of approaching controversial themes and giving voice to the anonymous, he managed to consolidate his professional personality as an author of books that matters and provoke a visceral reflection in the reader and his ingrained concepts.

In chapter 31 of the book *Abusado*, the reporter enters the narrative to make it clear to the reader how he approached the drug dealers in the Dona Marta community in Rio de Janeiro, particularly his main character, Marcinho VP, called Juliano in the piece. The curious thing is that the drug dealer himself was the one who summoned Caco to a conversation in his hiding place in the favela, in the period when he was being sought by the police, in the late 1990s. It was the beginning of a series of clandestine contacts that culminated in Marcinho VP's proposal that the journalist would write a book about his life, a biography.

In the book, Caco Barcellos reveals his counterpart for the character, proposing a work not about him, but about the entire gang and the operation of the traffic system on the favelas in all its details. Given the acceptance, the reporter began to realize the limits he would face when approaching the world and the lives of "outlaw characters, convicted and fugitives from justice. It was undoubtedly a challenge full of ethical, moral and legal implications" (Barcellos, 2003, p. 459). In other words, the journalist consciously accepted the task of reporting - reviewing the pre-conceived or sensationalist concepts - the knowledge holdings of those characters, their intersubjective relations and particular forms of social representation.

Still in chapter 31, the reporter tells that he had to establish tacit contracts with his various characters so as not to incur ethical lapses in the role of journalist and citizen. From the beginning, he made it clear to all interviewees that he did not want to know about future or future criminal plans, which would immediately make him an accomplice. He told them he was only interested in facts from the past. Whoever was alive at the launch of the book would be identified under a pseudonym and whoever had died would have their real name revealed.

Even so, Caco Barcellos noticed a lot of reluctance in the first interviews. It was only overcome after the journalist adopted the strategy of starting the book by interviewing relatives and friends of people involved in the drug trade who had already died. The tactic allowed him to accurately reconstruct the entire history of wars that marked that community. From then on, he gained the trust of the survivors and began to collect testimonies from a more privileged perspective than an editorial reporter from a police department. Shortly before the publication of the book, already in prison, Marcinho VP asked for an advance reading and the author denied it, claiming that he had already submitted to his analysis the transcript of all his interviews, which totaled almost 300 pages. He added that he would do the same if he were making a book about the president of the republic.

In an interview with Maciel (2018), Caco Barcellos considered that it is impossible to read the world in a Manichean way; "The more you refine and refine and open your chest, open to be surprised, it becomes more cool, because if you already go out, in quotes, knowing everything, what's so funny about it? You already start with a thesis, with a theory, then it is not so funny anymore, right? The cool thing is that you are surprised" (Barcellos, personal communication, 2016). He added that, whatever the media vehicle he works in, his favorite moment is the capturing, especially to meet characters in communities that are not very focused by the media. "It is talking, gaining trust with each other, and then in the more distant areas, where the press does not circulate, we are received as a king, as a queen, you are in bed with the person, sitting, drinking coffee with them, this is very nice" (Barcellos, personal communication, 2016). Finally, regarding the process of debugging what was apprehended in a territory of so much otherness, Caco Barcellos commented in the same interview on his technique to establish a narrative in the book-report close and reliable to what he found in the real life heat:

And I built all *Abusado* on people's speeches. And going up the favelas makes it very easy for me, because when we are investigating, I try to understand the stories first, summarize, headline, then I go into detail. And with them, of course, they already give you the finished novel. He doesn't say, "Oh, you don't know, that night was one of the worst in the world. I have never suffered so much in my life. No, he says like this (imitating a rascal stereotype way of speaking): "Hey, eight o'clock at night. I'm sitting here in the room. I can't believe it. Yeah... and man, keep talking... Hey, a shot, it's not, it's a kid". Until you arrive in the main story almost five hours later you already had an exciting night. Until he gets to the real shootout he passes, straaaaight talk. "Then it got messy, the police knocked on my door. The Police, fuuuck, you digg it? you're *alemão* and I was still with my girlfriend and such, getting physical with her, and the screaming guy. What the fuck, which police, which *alemão*?". And the dialogue remains. And you keep provoking more. Someone had a woman's voice, that I don't know who was. How do not you know? Which side did it come from? I wanted to go after the woman's voice the next day, it's an endless process. (Barcellos, personal communication, 2016).

In dealing with realities of violence and oppression of human beings - and even of values clashing - Caco Barcellos seems to face a challenge that could even be misinterpreted by the final public, the reader. The prejudiced view towards police journalists, even fostered by fellow reporters from other areas, that they are giving criminals a voice is common. Perspective that ended up not being realized in the case of the book work by Caco Barcellos, since there was a good reception in bookstores and by the critics.

Elements for a possible conclusion

Even perhaps without fully knowing the theoretical intricacies that marked the overcoming of the theory of truth as correspondence to the consensual theory of truth, the journalist writers interviewed by Maciel (2018) seem to be attentive to the conceptions of construction of the real articulated by journalism. Thus, they would be stimulating a collective process of learning and emancipation of the reader who, with them, share that interpretation proposed in the work. All the stages of preparing a report book can have as a central point this reflection based on the impact that this work will present before the interpretive community. An observation and search for a joint understanding of the real-historical in which journalist, writer and reader put themselves as partners.

In the exercise of meeting with the Other, one of the objectives is to capture the liveliness and melody of everyday speech. Be deeply attentive to silence and also to the fact that speech, like documents, can be camouflaged, populated with enigmatic ellipses. The gestures, the attitudes of the characters and the environments in which they are inserted are a lot to be observed - a legacy of the new journalism and a whole tradition of Brazilian reporter-chroniclers. In the case of biographees, who are often complex and controversial people, multiple interviews in an interpretive mosaic, it needs to translate this human wealth. Another issue mentioned in the interviews with Maciel (2018) is the need for constant attention to the fact that there is no disinterested information. Someone's speech is always a subjective interpretation, as well as the so-called narrative voice of the writer, which challenges principles such as impartiality and objectivity. Since memory is slippery, it is necessary to avoid leaving the field with preconceived ideas.

It is also noticeable the feeling of more freedom and autonomy during the elaboration of a report book that gives the impression that the work as a writer is not as controlled as in the hierarchical force lines of a newsroom. When the book is ready, the relationship with the reading public, an essential element for a collective interpretation of the historical reconstruction gathered in many pages, seems closer, less blurred by the veil of the traditional media journalistic institution. This sense of autonomy, however, is not the only condition for the works to be born free of stereotypes, typifications and reductionisms. Having more time to interview, compare and confront arguments about historical facts or narrated characters

does not guarantee that the book will provide a multiple and complex reading of contemporary times. As the journalist is part of the life world, he interprets, he is subject to the strong load of values and beliefs that he needs to balance.

When journalists talk about the narrative construction of their books, they often argue at length about the spirit and central message they hope to see understood by their readers. Biographers, in particular, seek to reason about the boundaries between their work and the work of the historians. In other words, these writers indicate certain knowledge, the result of constant self-reflections, of the mechanisms of interpretation and construction of the reality they articulate. It is not a work of an isolated author, an original one, but it is a work of interpretations and maps of meaning shared with their readers. Although they resist criticism regarding the need to make their decisions even more explicit throughout the texts, and not only in prefaces and book presentations.

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