

**Scene-by-Scene Construction: Narrative Journalism as a Literary-Factual Mosaic in *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] by Zuenir Ventura / *Construção cena a cena: a narrativa jornalística como mosaico lítero-factual em Chico Mendes: crime e castigo, de Zuenir Ventura***

*Francielle Maria Modesto Mendes\**  
*Francisco Aquinei Timóteo Queirós\*\**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the literary and journalistic characteristics in *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] by Brazilian journalist Zuenir Ventura. This study seeks to understand how this reportage book uses literary elements to compose the journalistic-literary narrative. We focus on the assimilation of a specific feature of the narrative, centered on scene-by-scene construction. This study is based on the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and the Circle, which help to understand the overlap of journalistic, historical and literary narratives.

**KEYWORDS:** Literature; Journalism; Zuenir Ventura

**RESUMO**

*A presente pesquisa analisa as marcas literárias e jornalísticas presentes no livro Chico Mendes: crime e castigo, do periodista brasileiro Zuenir Ventura. O artigo busca compreender como o livro-reportagem ora em estudo utiliza os elementos da literatura para compor a tessitura da narrativa jornalístico-literária. O escopo do trabalho centra-se na assimilação de uma característica peculiar à narrativa do livro-reportagem, centrada na construção cena a cena. Será utilizado como arcabouço teórico de Mikhail Bakhtin e o Círculo, cujas análises ajudam a compreender as imbricações entre as narrativas jornalísticas, históricas e literárias.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Literatura; Jornalismo; Zuenir Ventura

---

\* Universidade Federal do Acre – UFAC, Rio Branco, Acre, Brazil; [franciellemodesto@gmail.com](mailto:franciellemodesto@gmail.com)

\*\* Universidade Federal do Acre – UFAC, Rio Branco, Acre, Brazil; [aquinei@gmail.com](mailto:aquinei@gmail.com)

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the overlap of journalistic and literary narratives, by trying to understand how the plot in *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] is constructed in connection with the representative nuances that refer to fact<sup>1</sup> and fiction. The concept of “fiction” is presented in *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] as a dimension that mediates history, literature and journalism – as its *literary-factual* discourse proposes a “truth” that corresponds to the boundaries of cultural, social and political realities.

Accordingly, we observe that the realm of fiction shows, in the process of the narrative representation, elements that converge on the similitude of literary and historical-journalistic practices, assimilating the power of language into the construction process of the narrative.

This study is based on the methodological references of the US style known as New Journalism.<sup>2</sup> We focus on the elements of scene-by-scene construction.<sup>3</sup> The

---

<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this paper is not to discuss concepts related to fact, news and events. It is understood here that the utterances present in these terms help us understand how the meanings in New Journalism are operated and processed. In order to clarify the concepts used herein, the notions of fact, news and events are based on theories by Miquel Rodrigo Alsina (2009). For the author, an event is a social phenomenon that is historically and culturally determined. Obviously each cultural system establishes which phenomena deserve to be considered as events and which ones are unnoticed. Events are a group of known facts. Facts are a specific, concrete configuration of events. Therefore, facts would be everything that happen in the world. The news – for Alsina – is affirmed as a social representation of the everyday reality, generated institutionally and manifested in the construction of a possible world.

<sup>2</sup> Juan de Moraes Domingues (2012) explains that, in the United States between the late 1950s and the early 1960s, literary journalism started to gain strength with a movement that altered the textual construction of information published in press media, especially newspapers and magazines. Gay Talese, Tom Wolfe, Philip Roth, Jimmy Breslin, John Hersey, Norman Mailer, Lilian Ross, Hunter Thompson, Truman Capote and Joseph Mitchell became some of the expert users of literary resources in the production of their texts. The method was known as New Journalism. For some authors, New Journalism was a movement that started in the 1960s in the US and changed the way to write journalistic narratives. However, Marcelo Bulhões (2007, p.145) challenges the theory that it is a “movement.” According to him, there was not, at any time, an outline of ideas established by a cohesive group of representatives. For him, New Journalism was an attitude processed in the fluency of a textual practice, developed in some American newspapers and magazines, initially with texts of the so-called special reports, published in the *Esquire* in the *Herald Tribune*.

<sup>3</sup> Scene-by-scene construction is the basic element of New Journalism. It allows reporters to organize stories like a huge picture, which renders a faithful and dynamic feature to the narrative by alternating new elements in the construction of the journalistic plot. This resource potentializes the elements of news by going beyond the limits of events and presenting broader views of reality.

corpus analyzed is *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment]<sup>4</sup> by journalist Zuenir Ventura.

By introducing new possibilities of analyzing “reality” and of surfacing the conceptual apparatus through which facts are ordered in discourse, New Journalism provides a number of instruments that lead to deeper readings of the construction of the journalistic text and to a meticulous analysis of the world.

The “style” of New Journalism invaded the domains that opposed literary, journalistic and historical references, and embraced them as verbal images of reality. Marcelo Bulhões (2007) points out that writers – poets, novelists, playwrights – are engaged both in factually verifiable events and in fictional narratives. Thus, literature is expanded into the arena of situations or universes that are not committed to the rational reality of the empiric world. Literature “may even challenge or violate the concrete existence of beings and phenomena” (BULHÕES, 2007, p.18).<sup>5</sup>

The fictional and imaginary dimension of facts does not mean that they have not actually happened. It means that any attempt to describe events should take into account distinct forms of imagination. As a result, suppositions that separate history from literature are questioned, and the decisive role of language is put into focus in the descriptions and conceptions of historical reality.

Lloyd Kramer (1989, p.104)<sup>6</sup> states that “history can never be entirely separated from literature or philosophy, or other disciplinary languages, though it can never be identical to those other discourses either.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, according to him, “rethinking the boundaries of language provides a means for rethinking and expanding the boundaries of history” (KRAMER, 1989, p.104).<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> The reportage book *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] compiles reports written by Zuenir Ventura about environmentalist Chico Mendes, from Acre, murdered on December 22, 1988. Ventura’s book is organized in three parts. The first one deals with the “Crime,” presenting the reports written by Ventura for *Jornal do Brasil* in the early 1989. It focused on Chico Mendes’s murder. The second part, entitled “The Punishment,” addresses the coverage of the murderers’ trial. The third part has a number of texts written in October 2003, when Ventura revisited places and characters involved in the crime.

<sup>5</sup> TN. The English translations of quotes from books not published in English have been done by the translator of this article for the purpose of its publication. Text in original: “podendo desafiar ou até transgredir a concretude da existência dos seres e dos fenômenos.”

<sup>6</sup> KRAMER, Lloyd. Literature, Criticism and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick Lacapra. In: HUNT, Lynn (Ed.). *The New Cultural History*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>8</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

New Journalism hence establishes a discursive configuration whose emphasis is placed on language, textuality, and narratives – whether they are anchored in the historical, journalistic or literary matrices. It is important to note that the composite of *literary-factual* structures does not suppress the need for historical or journalistic evidence. However, these *literary-factual* structures rearrange the boundaries of languages by which such structures are described in such a manner that history can modify, not only validate, one's understanding of the world.

The intersection between the literary and journalistic categories makes it possible, then, for the textual production to expand its verbal scope of action by presenting more dynamic and relativized literary-discursive constructions.

According to Fernando Resende (2002), opening the field of action for literary and journalistic discourses does not mean only to contribute to the very idea of breaking with genres. It means to deem these discourses as possible variations of the discursive surface in general, inserting them in an expanded verbal universe:

It is suggested that one should not consider the text in terms of its non-compliance with its genre. Instead, one should consider the text as it is remade today, or the text which proposes a re-reading of the very genre that undeniably presupposes it. One should follow closely the idea that today there are texts – obviously derived from other texts – that are manifested in a singular manner so that it questions the very act of literary writing. Rather than challenging its origins, it challenges its very manifestation as discursive propagation, its utterance, the signifier derived from its own writing process (RESENDE, 2002, p.34).<sup>9</sup>

By analyzing the overlap of journalism, history and literature, we can notice, therefore, that it is not possible to consider the language as neutral or to ignore its interferences. The text constitutes a web of resistances – a dialogue. The access to the past is conditioned to its existence as a text. Accordingly, its documents and its evidence are also textual. As a consequence, the meaning of a text is not reduced to what the author intends to convey, nor to what the reader understands. The signification

---

<sup>9</sup> Text in original: “O que se sugere é que se pense não na obra que desobedece a seu gênero, mas no texto que hoje é feito, ou, ainda, que até propõe uma releitura do próprio gênero que, inegavelmente, o pressupõe. Deve-se seguir de perto a ideia de que hoje existem textos – obviamente derivados de outros – que se manifestam de maneira singular, de modo a questionar o próprio fazer literário, colocando em questão não suas origens, mas a sua própria manifestação enquanto propagação discursiva, sua enunciação, o significante derivado do seu próprio fazer.”

of a text occurs dialogically in the space between one and the other. On that account, there is not one single truth. There are truths, in the plural.

The journalistic and historical plots are not the “truth” even though one may affirm that these plots present the events with the rigorousness of observation and with the accuracy of what actually happened. Yet, they are incomplete accounts of facts. They are filtered through the lens of journalists, historians, language, and forms of representation that these plots use in order to communicate such facts.

In the reportage book *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment], one can notice that the construction of the journalistic narrative pervades social, political and individual aspects. In this book, the descriptions of the world remain open to disputes. A distinct feature in Ventura’s book is the acknowledgment of the active role of language, texts and narrative structures in the construction and expansion of the description of historical reality. Ligia Chiappini Moraes Leite (2007) points out that 20th-century narrative – including that of New Journalism – is dissolved into several centers:

Chronology is disturbed; past, present and future are merged; the consciousness levels are affected, and reality is invaded by an oneiric state. The relative aspect of our perception, regarding space and time, is assumed and exposed; the “epidermal world of common sense” is unmasked and denounced as sheer appearance; temporal distension is turned inside out by the merger of present, past and future, and by the creation of a simultaneity that radically alters not only the narrative structures, but also the composition of the very sentence that loses its logical connections (LEITE, 2007, p.72).<sup>10</sup>

The narrator is replaced by a voice that is directly involved in what is narrated. Facts are unveiled and presented in a way that is direct, present and sensitive due to the overlap of language, emotions and stream of consciousness. “With that the distance

---

<sup>10</sup> Text in original: “Abala-se a cronologia, fundem-se passado, presente e futuro, estremeçam os planos da consciência e o onírico invade a realidade; assume-se e se expõe o relativo na nossa percepção do espaço e do tempo; desmascara-se o “mundo epidérmico do senso comum”, denunciado como simples aparência; a distensão temporal é revirada pelo avesso, pela fusão do presente, do passado e do futuro, pela criação de uma simultaneidade que altera radicalmente não apenas as estruturas narrativas mas também a composição da própria frase que perde seus nexos lógicos.”

between narrator and narrative is annulled. Moreover, a basic principle of classic narrative is altered: causality” (LEITE, 2007, p.72).<sup>11</sup>

As a result, we understood that the narrative does not organize works of fiction only. It structures the ways to assimilate and to explain reality facts. Thus, journalistic events do not correspond solely to the art of constructing narratives. It also corresponds to “the art of life, of the narrative that people organize in order to explain and understand facts around them” (PONTES, 2009, p.35).<sup>12</sup> When it comes to verbal art, then, the terms fiction and reality cannot be analyzed as negative or positive, nor as a lie or the truth.

The reality presented by the “movement” of New Journalism is permeated by a mosaic of different social voices, which are tensely articulated on the bases of two concepts by Mikhail Bakhtin (1984)<sup>13</sup>: polyphony and dialogism.

In Bakhtin (1984),<sup>14</sup> the idea of polyphony is emphasized, which constructs rich social mosaics, “at various dialogic angles” (p.266).<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that, in *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment], the plurality of voices concretizes an alchemy of world views, which results in a new mixture of voices, in a new dialogue. In such new dialogue, reality emerges and is concretized as a polyphonic account of a strong consensual-adverse power, in which the voices of characters, author, text and readers overlap. The narrative is converted into an agonistic arena, in which the subjects, the discourses and the realities of the world are in confrontation. Therefore, the aspects of New Journalism, as presented herein, reflect the perspective of Mikhail Bakhtin’s analysis (1984)<sup>16</sup> of Dostoevsky’s plots, considering, naturally, the proportional differences of space, place, and time.

---

<sup>11</sup> Text in original: “E, com isso, anula-se a distância entre o narrador e a narração, alterando-se também um princípio básico da narrativa clássica: a causalidade.”

<sup>12</sup> Text in original: “mas também da vida, da narrativa que o homem organiza para explicar e compreender os fatos à sua volta.”

<sup>13</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

<sup>14</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>15</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>16</sup> TN. Although the date of the work is the same, the authors refer to the appendices found in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. However, it is important to point out that these appendices are also found in the essay collection *Estética da criação verbal* in Portuguese [In references, see Bakhtin (2003)].

Bakhtin (1984, p.276) affirms that the narrative in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* "is absolutely devoid of any sort of finalizing functions."<sup>17</sup> The plot fulfils its role to place man in different situations, which reveal and instigate him. In Zuenir Ventura's book, the characters are led to confront one another, but in a way that they do not remain in the inner realm of the narrative. Instead, they are led to assume the plurality of voices and independent consciousnesses.

The character's polyphonic presentation ensures the interaction of many consciousnesses, which engage in dialogue with each other. They interact, fill the gaps and evasivenesses left by their addressees with their voices, constituting what Bakhtin calls the "great dialogue" (1984, p.63).<sup>18</sup>

By observing that the subject is engaged in dialogue with a wide group formed by other subjects and with the surrounding social reality, Bakhtin (1981)<sup>19</sup> resumes his discussion on heteroglossia<sup>20</sup> in the novel and draws attention to polyphony as the different voices in the novel.

The narrative process of *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] articulates the discursive nuances, the cultural and imaginary aspects that are hidden in the political-social intricacy of the journalistic plot. In the course of the plot organization, Ventura's book can, thus, structure plural and symbolic aspects of the characters, encompassing elements related to the representations of valid consciousnesses and the inter-discursive and inter-subjective tensions that unfold on the surface of the text. Literary, journalistic and historical elements are juxtaposed on the same narrative palette.

---

<sup>17</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Three Fragments from the 1929 Edition Problems of Dostoyevsky's Art. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp.275-282.

<sup>18</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>19</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist and translated from Russian by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp.259-422.

<sup>20</sup> The 1988 Portuguese edition of Discourse in the Novel was translated by Aurora Bernardini et al. On a footnote they explain that heteroglossia refers to "the group of different languages that compose the discourse of the prose novelist" [In Portuguese: "o conjunto de linguagens diferentes que compõem o discurso do prosador-romancista Bakhtin (1988, p.107, footnote 1)."] According to Bakhtin (1981, p.316), it "is also diffused throughout the authorial speech that surrounds the characters, creating highly particularized *character zones* [*zony geroev*]. These zones are formed from the fragments of character speech [*polureč'*], from various forms for hidden transmission of someone else's words, from scattered words and sayings belonging to someone else's speech, from those invasions into authorial speech of others' expressive indicators (ellipsis, questions, exclamations). Such a character zone is the field of action for a character's voice, encroaching in one way or another upon the author's voice." For reference, see footnote 19.

In the *corpus* of this study, individuals are always conceived as social beings. It is about a subject who is not anchored in individuality, in a “self.” On the contrary, it is about a subject who exists in a defined social, ideological, and historical space.

Vološinov states that it is also necessary to consider a

[...] typical and stabilized *social purview* toward which the ideological creativity of our own social group and time is oriented, i.e., we assume as our addressee a contemporary of our literature, our science, our moral and our legal codes.

Each person’s inner world and thought has its stabilized *social audience* that comprises the environment in which reasons, motives, values and so on are fashioned. The more cultured a person, the more closely his inner audience will approximate the normal audience of ideological creativity; but, in any case, specific class and specific era are limits that the ideal of addressee cannot go beyond (1986, pp.85-86; emphasis in original).<sup>21</sup>

In Zuenir Ventura’s book, the subject’s voice points to a certain place and expresses a social reality. The interweaving of a group of different voices constitutes and integrates the social-historical space of the characters. The subject is not homogeneous – his “speech” is constituted by the superimposition of multiple discourses, opposing discourses, which negate and contradict each other.

Thus, one of the goals in *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] is achieved so as to capture the impression of life in the explanations of the acts in the book and, in its way, to assign meaning to the world. These features can be restored in the journalistic-literary prose much more than in the traditional journalistic practice, as the latter is based on *the lead* structure and on the *inverted pyramid*, assuming a telegraphic and monologic aspect of the concrete reality.

Maura Oliveira Martins (2005), referring to Bakhtin, indicates that the Russian theorist is interested in the moment when the dialogue manifests itself, when the discourse is materialized and obtains an author – even if this author is collective – inserted in social contexts that will define different conditions of interpretation:

The subject’s speech, therefore, is not seen as the primary source of meaning, as it never terminates relations with preceding speeches. Nevertheless, among this great number of many possible contexts

---

<sup>21</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.



expressed in the singularity of each utterance, there is, for Bakhtin, an aspect that is considered universal and that must be observed in each and every situation of language use – the fact that words only acquire meaning and produce effects inside a condition of communication between an individual addresser and an addressee to whom the speech is directed. The theorist’s attention is directed to the study of the forms with which the social situation – to which the word is related – determines the ways of its use (MARTINS, 2005, p.27).<sup>22</sup>

The metaphor of the dialogue used by Bakhtin (1984)<sup>23</sup> presents discourse as interaction among subjects. Hence, dialogism<sup>24</sup> refers to the relations established between the “self” and the “other” in the discursive processes initiated historically by individuals. This “other” encompasses the social world in which the subject lives.

The dialogic relation does not occur only between interpersonal discourses, be them written or oral. It can be applied between languages – in literature, in styles and even in cultures. Accordingly, the idea of dialogism is not connected to the concept of understanding or consensus. Instead, it comprehends the conflicts and ambivalences of human relations located in the discursive sphere:

The idea contained in this concept is that all utterances (everyday or artistic) bear some kind of dialogic relation between them. According to Bakhtin, we all can recognize these dialogic features in everyday speech, in real life. For him, “in real life as well we very keenly and subtly hear all these nuances in the speech of people surrounding us, and we ourselves work very skillfully with all these colors on the verbal palette” (1997b/ 1929).<sup>25</sup> Hence the theorist’s interest is to

---

<sup>22</sup> Text in original: “A fala do sujeito, portanto, não é vista como a primeira fonte do sentido, pois ela jamais corta relações com as falas que a antecedem. Porém, dentre esse grande número de contextos possíveis expressos na singularidade de cada enunciação, há, para Bakhtin, um aspecto considerado universal e que deve ser observado em toda situação de uso da linguagem: o fato de que as palavras só adquirem sentido e produzem efeitos dentro de uma condição de comunicação entre um emissor individual e um destinatário de sua fala. Sua atenção está voltada para o estudo das formas pelas quais a situação social a qual a palavra está vinculada determinam os modos de seu uso.”

<sup>23</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>24</sup> According to Bakhtin (1984), dialogism is composed of a group of voices and quotations. The main focus is that every text is constructed from a debate with other texts, with other discourses. “Under the perspective of dialogism, consciousness is not a product of an isolated self. It is a product of interaction among and coexistence of many consciousnesses, which participate and coexist with equal rights, respecting each other’s values” (BEZERRA, 2013, p.xxii). Text in original: “Na ótica do dialogismo, a consciência não é produto de um eu isolado, mas da interação e do convívio entre muitas consciências, que participam desse convívio com iguais direitos, respeitando os valores dos outros que igualmente respeitam os seus.”

TN. Paulo Bezerra translated *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* from Russian into Portuguese.

<sup>25</sup> For reference of the quotation, see footnote 13, p.201.

systematize a knowledge of the social domain and analyze its occurrence in literary speech (MARTINS, 2005, p.28).<sup>26</sup>

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, Mikhail Bakhtin (1984)<sup>27</sup> argues that the “chief characteristic” (p.6)<sup>28</sup> of the author of *Crime and Punishment* is not situated in “a multitude of characters” (p.6),<sup>29</sup> lives and narrative constructions that are present in the novels, but in the plurality of independent voices and consciousnesses that permeate such characters.

In the plots by the Russian novelist, the characters do not seem to reproduce the thoughts of one author. They become owners of their own discourses. Dostoevsky's novel is therefore balanced on the adverse, but consensual, palette of distinctive visions of the world. “A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels” (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.6; emphasis in original).<sup>30</sup>

In *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment], Ventura's position in relation to the characters is sustained in a problematic way in terms of dialogism and polyphony. The narrative does not present a sole, finished discourse; it allows readers to expand meanings. On that account, for New Journalism, polyphony constitutes the element that harmonizes the plurality of independent voices; it produces several effects of meaning and reflects multi-faceted ideologies:

The essence of polyphony lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent and, as such, are combined in a unity of larger order than in homophony. If one is to talk about individual will, then it is precisely in polyphony that a combination of several individual wills takes place, that the boundaries of the individual will can be in principle exceeded. One could put it this way: the artistic will of polyphony is a will to combine many wills, a will to the event (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.21).<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Text in original: “A ideia contida nesse conceito é a de que todos os enunciados (cotidianos ou artísticos) guardam algum tipo de relação dialógica entre eles. Segundo Bakhtin, todos sabemos reconhecer essas faces dialógicas da fala no discurso cotidiano, na vida real. Para ele, “na prática cotidiana, ouvimos de modo muito sensível e sutil todas essas nuances nos discursos daqueles que nos rodeiam, nós mesmos trabalhamos muito bem com todas essas cores da nossa paleta verbal” (1997b/1929). Seu interesse, portanto, é o de sistematizar um conhecimento de domínio social e analisar sua ocorrência na fala literária.”

<sup>27</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>28</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>29</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>30</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>31</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

Bakhtin's statement originates in his focus on the interaction between opposing tendencies in literature and in life – an interaction thoroughly described by the theorist, in reference to Dostoevsky's 'dialogic imagination.' Bakhtin's dialogism (1984)<sup>32</sup> is composed by an intertwining of voices and by a representation of plural consciousnesses. The fundamental question in Bakhtin's work is that every text is constructed on the premise of an agonistic dispute with other texts, other narratives. Therefore, according to the Russian theorist, the narrators' discourses are always discourses of others, which underlie in the tensions inside literary works by means of inter-discursive and inter-subjective relations. The plurality of voices is problematized as points of view related to the world, to people, and to culture.

Kramer (1989)<sup>33</sup> reiterates Bakhtin when he highlights that in general great novels present inner oppositions more deeply than other texts do, as literary forms frees language. Hence, literary forms problematize the categories that prevail in all other realms of culture:

This attention to the dialogic process in great literature becomes relevant to the historical analysis of other texts and contexts in that it stresses the importance of contestatory voices. The texts or social realities of past societies evolve through constant dialogues that must be examined and entered from a variety of perspectives and that cannot be simply reduced to a single, monologic meaning (KRAMER, 1989, p.114).<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, the dialogic analysis of New Journalism enables the discussion between ambivalent categories in many, manifold levels, such as the dialogue between opposing ideas in specific texts, the dialogue between historians and journalists, the confluence of the concepts "fact" and "fiction," as well as the dialogue between texts and contexts. Nevertheless, "[n]one of these oppositions would form simple dichotomies [...] because the dialogue becomes possible only through those many points at which the oppositions tend 'always already' to overlap" (KRAMER, 1989, p.114).<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>33</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>34</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>35</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

The book studied in this paper problematizes and adheres to the *fictionalization* of journalistic narrative – configuring an attitude that is different from the attitude in US writings in the late 1950s — in which *the lead* structure<sup>36</sup> and *the inverted pyramid*<sup>37</sup> prevailed.

In *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment], an expansion is observed in the social reality of what one wants to narrate, which renders an aesthetic aspect to the scope of the news. Zuenir Ventura extensively uses the nuances of 19th Realism-Naturalism, reaffirming the beliefs that the assimilation of everyday life is the major subject matter of texts and that the observation of empirical reality is literature writers' main strategy.

As stated by Ian Watt (2001),<sup>38</sup> 19th-century realist writers maximized the use of details in literature, i.e., the use of techniques that sought to convince by using exterior devices due to their closeness to the aspect of the observed reality.

According to Rildo Cosson (2001), in New Journalism the complexity of facticity is anchored more in mimesis and in verisimilitude than in veracity or fact checking. Even though the factuality of New Journalism uses the same documents and elements that legitimate the narrative construction, it excludes the means of “controlling subjectivity through a number of realist narrative processes, which conceal or try to conceal the arbitrary and subjective nature of the story” (COSSON, 2001, p.36).<sup>39</sup>

A journalist's report is composed by a vast range of angles. It is interpreted, reconstructed and recomposed from different perspectives. Patrick Charaudeau (2007) states that representations create an organization of reality with transposed mental images in discourse or in other behavioral manifestation of individuals who live in society. Such images are constituted as if they were reality itself:

---

<sup>36</sup> According to Mário Lucca Erbolato (2004), *the lead* appeared first in the United States, in *The New York Times*. It is used in journalism to name the opening paragraph of a text, i.e., the paragraph that leads and orients readers from the objective approach of an event. *The lead* (in Portuguese – *lide*) intends, with the direct order of the sentence, to answer six basic questions about a fact: what, who, when, where, how and why. From *the lead*, the news story is developed in a descending order of importance. It is still a model in many countries, including Brazil.

<sup>37</sup> In the *inverted pyramid* model, information is organized in order of importance – from the most important element at the top to the least important at the bottom.

<sup>38</sup> WATT, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 2001.

<sup>39</sup> Text in original: “controle da subjetividade por um conjunto de processos narrativos realistas, processos que ocultam ou procuram ocultar o caráter arbitrário e subjetivo da sua história.”

[These representations] are based on empirical observations of social exchanges. They construct a discourse that justifies such exchanges. Therefore, they produce a value system that is established as a reference standard. A certain social categorization of reality is elaborated. Not only does this categorization reveal the relation of “desirability” that the group has with their everyday life experience, but it also reveals the kind of strategy that makes the discourse intelligible and that characterizes reality – a type of metadiscourse that reveals its position. In sum, representations point to a social desire, produce standards, and reveal value systems (CHARAUDEAU, 2007, p.47).<sup>40</sup>

By introducing a new possibility to analyze reality, even by means of imagination, New Journalism becomes an instrument that provides individuals with new possibilities of reading journalistic texts and with a certain way to access the world from a new cultural and social perspective.

As a consequence, the concept of fiction is considered a mediator among the practices of history, literature and journalism, as its discourse intends to propose a “truth” that corresponds to reality. In the book analyzed herein, fiction unveils the process of narrative representation – of “reality” or of “fiction” and of their interrelations.

The journalistic-literary feature, present in New Journalism, is structured according to four basic characteristics, namely scene-by-scene construction, such as a novel or film in which one scene moves to another without worrying much about the chronology of facts; reproduction of full dialogues, rather than fragments of quotations, such as in daily press; detailed description of places and of people’s physical characteristics and lifestyles; use of different points of view and stream of consciousness.

In the *corpus* of this study, we analyze the characteristics of scene-by-scene construction in *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] by journalist Zuenir Ventura.

---

<sup>40</sup> Text in Portuguese: “Elas se baseiam na observação empírica das trocas sociais e fabricam um discurso de justificativa dessas trocas, produzindo-se assim um sistema de valores que se erige em norma de referência. Assim é elaborada uma certa categorização social do real, a qual revela não só a relação de “desejabilidade” que o grupo entretém com sua experiência do cotidiano, como também o tipo de comentário de inteligibilidade do real que o caracteriza – uma espécie de metadiscorso revelador de seu posicionamento. Em resumo, as representações apontam para um desejo social, produzem normas e revelam sistemas de valores.”

## 1 Scene-by-Scene Construction

In scene-by-scene construction, the author superimposes the scenes, structuring them as a composite of several meaningful units. Each “piece” institutes and configures the fact in the framework of its multiple features so as to provide readers with the feeling that they are witnessing facts as they occur.

Scene-by-scene construction is the basic element of New Journalism. This resource allows reporters to organize stories like a huge picture, which renders a faithful and dynamic feature to the narrative by alternating new elements in the construction of the journalistic plot. It potentializes the elements of news, going beyond the limits of the events and presenting broader views of reality. Hence, scene-by-scene construction breaks with the bureaucratic structures of *the lead* and ensures perennality and depth to journalistic reports.

The definition of scene-by-scene, as explained herein, is close to Norman Friedman’s concept,<sup>41</sup> according to which “the modes of transmission of story material” (1967, p.119)<sup>42</sup> and the differences between *summary narrative* and *immediate scene* (1967, pp.119-120)<sup>43</sup> are presented. These expressions, object of this study, were later simplified by other researchers, and recognized only as *summary* and *scene*.

Friedman defines summary narrative as “[...] a generalized account or report of a series of events covering some extended period and a variety of locales, and seems be the normal untutored mode of storytelling” (1967, pp.119-120).<sup>44</sup> From such perspective, the following excerpt of Zuenir Ventura’s *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] is in accordance with the definition proposed by Friedman:

Xapuri wakes up early. At six o’clock in the morning, she is agitated, we may say, by a bucolic movement. A fog, closer to mountainous cities, still involves her and is replaced later by a scorching sun. Between six and seven, everyone who was supposed to leave the house – preferably by bicycle – had already left. It is the time when

---

<sup>41</sup> Article originally published in the journal PMLA (Vol. LXX) in 1955. Later, in 1967, it was published in New York by *The Free Press*, in the collection *The Theory of the Novel*, edited by Philip Stevick.

<sup>42</sup> FRIEDMAN, N. Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept. In: STEVICK, P. (Ed.). *The Theory of the Novel*. New York: The Free Press, 1967, pp.108-137.

<sup>43</sup> For reference, see footnote 43.

<sup>44</sup> For reference, see footnote 43.

the first bus – out of the two daily buses – leaves for Rio Branco. It is when people, carrying bread under their arms, run into each other on the street, where they greet each other, and sometimes stop to talk about the news of the day, which arrive here on TV two hours in advance (VENTURA, 2003, p.41).<sup>45</sup>

In the construction of the *summary narrative*, the text is mediated by a narrator who is in charge of presenting the events to the readers, by showing, summarizing, and condensing them, “overlooking details and, sometimes, summarizing a long time in history in few pages” (LEITE, 2007, p.14).<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, the construction of the text is structured on a discursive monophony, which makes it evident that the plot is constituted by a single voice. Accordingly, narrative is not formed by a plurality of social voices, nor is it marked by an intense heterogeneity. A space – in which the desire is constitutively interrelated with the social – is not constructed. Disagreements are not aroused; social digressions and independent consciousnesses are erased.

In the *summary narrative*, there is not the great dialogue; there is, instead, the monologic discourse of silenced consciousnesses and the composite of “erased” voices in unison.

On the other hand, the *immediate scene* or just *scene* “emerges as soon the specific, continuous and successive details of time, place, action, character and dialogue begin to appear. Not dialogue alone but concrete detail within a specific time-place frame is the *sine qua non* of scene” (FRIEDMAN, 1967, p.120).<sup>47</sup>

Accordingly, the events in the narrative are never shown as a microcosmic description of social facts. The narrative has historical and political implications, i.e., the scene – in these terms – constitutes a complex range of meanings.

---

<sup>45</sup> Text in original: “Xapuri acorda cedo. Às seis horas da manhã, quando um nevoeiro mais próximo das cidades serranas ainda a envolve, para ser substituído duas horas depois por um sol escaldante, ela é agitada, se assim se pode dizer, por um bucólico movimento. Entre seis e sete horas, todo mundo que tinha que sair já saiu de casa, de preferência de bicicleta. É o momento em que parte o primeiro dos dois únicos ônibus diários para Rio Branco e em que as pessoas se cruzam nas ruas com o pão debaixo do braço, se cumprimentam e às vezes param pra comentar as notícias do dia, que, pela TV, aqui chegam com duas horas de antecedência.”

<sup>46</sup> Text in original: “passando por cima dos detalhes e, às vezes, sumariando em poucas páginas um longo tempo da história.”

<sup>47</sup> For reference, see footnote 43.

The following excerpt was taken from Zuenir Ventura's *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment]. It describes the murder of environmentalist Chico Mendes on December 22, 1988:

With the towel hanging on his right shoulder, as usual, Chico went towards the bathroom, outside the house, about three meters away from the kitchen door. He almost jumps down the uneven, ill-made, eighty-centimeter-high steps. He could not resist the plea of two-year-old Sandino, who ran after him and asked to come along. Chico picked up the boy, went to the door, which opened from the inside, from left to right. He pulled the bolt, half-opened the door quickly, got scared of the darkness and came back inside to pick up the flashlight. Outside, behind the coconut tree, 8.2 meters away from the kitchen door, Darci Alves Pereira did not notice the quick movement of the door opening and closing. He had not been there long, about fifteen or twenty minutes. Without a watch, he could only calculate the time when he reconstructed the crime, as he remembered that he heard the church bell ring when he entered his hiding place. There would be a church service for the 8th grade class graduation at 7:30 PM. In these cases, as seminarian Miguel da Rocha Rodrigues informed in this deposition on January 1, 1989, it was customary for the bell to toll first at 6:30 PM. The second time the bell would toll was at 7 PM and the last one at 7:15 PM. Based on this information, the forensic experts calculated the time of the crime: 6:45 PM.

As Darci watched from his hiding place, Chico came back, with Sandino in his arms, to pick the flashlight, saying: "Tomorrow I will put on some lights in this backyard." That was when Ilzamar remembered that his son had the flu.

- You can't take him, he's got the flu, Chico!

- Come on, let him go, poor thing wants to.

But Ilzamar wouldn't give in: "Besides, he has to eat dinner." She grabbed the boy from his father's right arm – the arm that would soon be pierced by eighteen grains of lead – and went to the living room to feed him in front of the TV. She was already sitting when she heard the explosion (VENTURA, 2003, pp.16-17).<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Text in original: "Com a toalha sobre o ombro direito, como tinha mania de fazer, Chico partiu em direção ao banheiro, do lado de fora da casa, a uns três metros da porta da cozinha que se desce quase aos saltos, através de três degraus desiguais, toscos, numa altura de oitenta centímetros. Não resistindo aos apelos de Sandino, de dois anos, que correndo atrás pedia para ir também, Chico pegou o menino no colo, foi até a porta, que se abria de dentro para fora, da esquerda para direita, puxou o ferrolho, entreabriu-se rapidamente, assustou-se com a escuridão e voltou para pegar a lanterna.

Do lado de fora, atrás do coqueiro, a uma distância de 8,2 metros da entrada da cozinha, Darci Alves Pereira não chegou a perceber o rápido abrir e fechar da porta. Não estava ali há muito tempo, uns quinze, vinte minutos. Sem relógio, ele só pôde calcular o tempo quando fez a reconstituição do crime porque se lembrou de que, ao entrar para a tocaia, ouviu o sino da igreja tocar. Haveria uma missa de formatura de oitava série às 19h30 e, nesses casos, como informou o seminarista Miguel da Rocha Rodrigues no seu depoimento no dia 1º de janeiro de 1989, era costume o sino dar uma primeira chamada às 18h30. A segunda às 19h e a última às 19h15. Com essas informações, os peritos calcularam a hora do crime: 18h45.



In this excerpt, Zuenir Ventura emerges as the mediator of the characters' voices. Therefore, he concretizes Bakhtin's polyphonic metaphor. The fact that the narrative is not closed allows readers to have a wider production of meanings. Thus, polyphony is the element that composes the plurality of independent voices. It produces diversified effects of meanings and reverberates multiple ideologies.

It is pertinent here to point out how this movement of voices occurs in the discourse of New Journalism, whose experience mainly proposes the suspension of the author's moral position. Such position, which has to exist, should be implicit in the text, "such as a common thread that ties speech lines without affecting or altering them; thus, readers can draw their own conclusions in a more autonomous manner" (MARTINS, 2005, p.29).<sup>49</sup>

In Ventura's excerpt, one can notice the construction of a polyphonic plot, in which all characters have autonomy and express their conceptions, regardless of their accordance (or lack thereof) with the author's ideologies:

What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.6; emphasis in original).<sup>50</sup>

Discussing Bakhtin's theories, Carlos Alberto Faraco (2009) states that the creative voice, i.e., the author/creator as an aesthetic-formal element, always has to be a second voice – the discourse of "the author/creator is not the direct voice of the writer (the writer/person); it is an appropriation refracted into some social voice in order to be able to organize an aesthetic whole" (FARACO, 2009, p.92).<sup>51</sup>

---

Enquanto Darcí espreitava na tocaia, Chico voltava, com Sandino no colo, para apanhar a lanterna, dizendo: "Amanhã boto uma luz nesse quintal". Foi quando Ilzamar se lembrou da gripe do filho.

- Num pode levar, não, o menino tá gripado, Chico!

- Ah, deixa ir, o bichinho tá querendo.

Mas Ilzamar não abriu mão: "Além do mais, ele tem que jantar". Arrancou o menino do braço direito do pai – o braço que daí a pouco seria perfurado por dezoito grãos de chumbo – e foi dar-lhe de comer na sala em frente à televisão. Já estava sentada quando ouviu a explosão."

<sup>49</sup> Text in original: "como um fio condutor que amarrasse as falas sem afetá-las ou alterá-las, para que o leitor pudesse tirar suas próprias conclusões de forma mais autônoma."

<sup>50</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>51</sup> Text in original: "autor criador não é a voz direta do escritor (do autor pessoa), mas de um ato de apropriação refratada de uma voz social qualquer de modo a poder ordenar um todo estético."

In the analyzed example, the narrative organizes the fact as something that is present, dynamic, and lively. Zuenir Ventura reveals every minutia, every detail, and the events are shown directly to the readers. The fact is seen as if it were formed by different scenes as in a cinematographic projection.

In the example above, Zuenir Ventura (2003) goes beyond the aspect of the news and constructs the fact, scene-by-scene, presenting the details of a Chico Mendes who has the “towel hanging on his right shoulder,”<sup>52</sup> goes “towards the bathroom,”<sup>53</sup> and picks up his son. Compared to such singular and simple images, there is the image of Darci Alves Pereira, the man who will soon fire the bullet that will pierce Chico’s arm with “eighteen grains of lead.”<sup>54</sup>

The images laid out as such bear informative, literary and newsworthy features simultaneously. We could consider the fictional narratives in *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment] as a combination of literary and factual elements, in which the narrative fluency stands out, and so do cinematographic-like resources and suspense flashes.

## Final Considerations

Bakhtin and the Circle’s literary conceptions comprehend, in a productive way, the reflections involved in the journalistic-literary parameters and practices – the object of the *corpus* of this study. The Russian theorist becomes, thus, the common thread to consider Zuenir Ventura’s narrative as a polyphonic, dialogic “space,” “devoid of any sort of finalizing functions” (BAKHTIN, 1984, p.276).<sup>55</sup> In *Chico Mendes: Crime e Castigo* [Chico Mendes: Crime and Punishment], the narrative remains open and establishes dialogues that are not predicted. It presents a greater composite of social voices and is configured as a field, which is open to new discursive contributions.

In Ventura’s reportage book, the bases of New Journalism renew the belief that the concreteness of everyday life and the observation of empirical reality form the main strategy of literary writers.

---

<sup>52</sup> Text in original: “a toalha sobre o ombro.”

<sup>53</sup> Text in original: “partiu em direção ao banheiro.”

<sup>54</sup> Text in original: “dezoito grãos de chumbo.”

<sup>55</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

The scene-by-scene construction determines the connections and fosters the construction of political and historical events. It restores the unity of social life and demonstrates that even the simplest structures can be coded in the narrative. The “reality” is given new possibilities and new proposals for interpretation. Unlike fiction writers, journalistic-literary writers do not create characters nor facts. At most, they “unveil” them and free them from invisibility.

According to Fredric Jameson’s postulations (1981),<sup>56</sup> narratives should be understood here as *socially symbolic acts*. For that matter, the construction of written texts, according to New Journalism or according to the historical matrix, presents the qualities of social existence, its conflicts and its contradictions.

From such perspective, scene-by-scene construction is an element of configuration of the *literary-factual* narrative. Furthermore, it is a hermeneutic exercise of disclosure, whose role is to critically unravel the multi-dimensional *political unconscious*, revealing the narrative to history and seeking to understand the conditions under which the text has or acquires meaning.

As affirmed by Jameson (1981),<sup>57</sup> narrative presents and represents reality; in other words, it constructs or institutes it. At the same time, narrative is kept apart from such reality. In sum, all narratives are constituted from the antithetic pair disclose/enlighten, conceal/distort.

Thus, the defense of a *political unconscious* proposes the very analysis of the multiple ways that lead to the disclosure of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts.

New Journalism, with scene-by-scene construction, provides a dialogic process in which it is possible to confirm the interrelation among literature, history and journalism. Consequently, we can certify that each utterance – empirical or poetic – constitutes a social act and, essentially, a political event.

In the course of the plot organization, Ventura’s book can therefore structure plural and symbolic aspects of the characters, including elements related both to the representation of valid consciousnesses and to the inter-discursive and inter-subjective tensions that unravel in the surface of the text. Literary, journalistic and historical components are juxtaposed on the same narrative palette.

---

<sup>56</sup> JAMESON, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1981.

<sup>57</sup> For reference, see footnote 59.

## REFERENCES

- ALSINA, M. R. *A construção da notícia*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2009
- BAKHTIN, M. *Problemas da poética de Dostoiévski*. Trad. Paulo Bezerra. 5. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2013.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A respeito de problemas da obra de Dostoiévski. In: *Estética da criação verbal*. Trad. Paulo Bezerra. 4.ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003, p.195-201.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Reformulação do livro sobre Dostoiévski. In: *Estética da criação verbal*. Trad. Paulo Bezerra. 4.ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003, p.337-357.
- \_\_\_\_\_. O discurso no romance. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Questões de literatura e de estética: A teoria do romance*. São Paulo: Editora da Unesp/Hucitec, 1988, p.71-210.
- BAKHTIN, M. (VOLOCHÍNOV, V. N.) *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem: Problemas fundamentais do método sociológico na ciência da linguagem*. Trad. Michel Lahud e Yara Frateschi. 12.ed. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2006.
- BULHÕES, M. *Jornalismo e literatura em convergência*. São Paulo: Ática, 2007.
- CARVALHO, A. L. C. *Foco narrativo e fluxo de consciência*. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2012.
- CHARAUDEAU, P. *Discurso das mídias*. Trad. Ângela S. M. Corrêa. São Paulo: Contexto, 2007.
- COSSON, R. *Romance-reportagem: o gênero*. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado, 2001.
- DOMINGUES, J. de M. *A ficção do Novo Jornalismo nos livros-reportagem de Caco Barcellos e Fernando Morais*. Tese (Doutorado). Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2012.
- ERBOLATO, M. L. *Técnicas de codificação em jornalismo*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2004.
- FARACO, Carlos Alberto. *Linguagem & diálogo: as ideias linguísticas do Círculo de Bakhtin*. São Paulo: Parábola Editorial, 2009.
- FRIEDMAN, N. Point of view in fiction: the development of a critical concept. In: Philip Stevick, ed. *The theory of the novel*. New York; London: The Free Press/ Collier Macmillan, 1967, p.108-37.
- JAMESON, F. *O inconsciente político: a narrativa como ato socialmente simbólico*. Trad. de Valter Lellis Siqueira. São Paulo: Ática, 1992.
- KRAMER, L. Literatura, crítica e imaginação histórica: o desafio literário de Hayden White e Dominick Lacapra. In: HUNT, L. (org.). *A nova história cultural*. Trad. Jefferson Luiz Camargo. 2. ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001.
- LEITE, L. C. M. *O foco narrativo*. 11. ed. São Paulo: Ática, 2007.
- MARTINS, M. O. *Estratégias de representação do real: um olhar semiótico às narrativas do New Journalism de linha direta*. 2005. Dissertação (Mestrado). Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, São Leopoldo, 2005.

PONTES, F. S. *Teoria e história do jornalismo: desafios epistemológicos*. 2009. 251f. Dissertação (Mestrado). Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, 2009.

RESENDE, F. *Textualizações: ficção e fato no Novo Jornalismo de Tom Wolfe*. São Paulo: Annablume, 2002.

VENTURA, Z. *Chico Mendes: crime e castigo*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003.

WATT, Ian. *A ascensão do romance*. Trad. Hildegard Feist. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2010.

Translated by Raquel D'Elboux Couto Nunes – [rdelbouxnunes@gmail.com](mailto:rdelbouxnunes@gmail.com)

*Received February 24, 2016*

*Accepted April 14, 2017*