

# Violence in Literature: The romance of violence in Latin America

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## Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to analyse what could be seen as a transformation of a genre of fiction, the novel of violence. In sociological tradition, various authors have chosen the detective novel as a research object to explain modernity. This sociological tradition in studies of detective fiction allows us to suggest the emergence of another form of romance, the novel of violence, in the last thirty years. In México, the latest works of Carlos Fuentes (México, 1928-2012) belong to this genre of novels. Also, Elmer Mendoza (México, 1949-) who write about the detective and the organised crime. In the novels of violence, crime and solution are secondary, because violence is seen as a structuring element of social reality. New forms of murders arise: violent crimes, international drug trafficking, sexual abuse and violence, rape, corruption, and torture. These forms appear as an aesthetic of “brutalism” and “cruelty”. The world of the novel of violence is a world without law, defined by the ineffectiveness or simply the absence of the police or the judiciary. There is a lack of a legitimate authority, formal or informal, signifying the crisis of the judicial system. But, also, this literature appears to have worldwide lectors in late modernity.

**Keywords:** sociology of violence, literature, detective fiction, novel of violence.

## 1 Introduction: Crime fiction and modernity

**T**he relationship between romance and society, power and violence, explains the various dimensions of late modernity crisis. In literary creations published in the Age of Globalisation of Conflictiveness, the novelty in the axis of the plot is the presence of violence mediating social relations. It is possible to distinguish various narratives about forms of violence, drug dealing, and violent crime in contemporary Latin American societies. This is the political context where the phenomena of violence acquire new contours. A plurality of different kinds of social norms is realised, and even violence is a norm; it is something more than legal pluralism, bringing us to visualise the simultaneity of patterns of orientation of behaviour that are often divergent and incompatible. The purpose of this essay is to analyse what could be seen as a transformation of a genre of fiction, whose novelty can be perceived in the transformation of its narrative structure, albeit incorporating some trends of the detective novel (Tavares-dos-Santos; Teixeira, 2013; Tavares-dos-Santos; Passiani; Salom, 2016).

## 2 The sociological tradition regarding detective fiction

In sociological tradition, various authors have chosen the detective novel as a research object to explain modernity. Enrico Ferri wrote in 1909, developing its criminal anthropology, that to the characters immortalised by art it could be asked “to what extent artistic intuition knew to predict or follow the notions so painfully acquired by the scientific experience of the true nature of the crimes and criminals” (Ferri, 2001, p. 29).

Siegfried Kracauer, using Kant and Hegel, publishes *The detective fiction: philosophical treatise*, in 1925, noting that crime novels start from a central idea: “The idea of a civilised society completely rationalised; it takes this idea with a radical bias, in a stylised and aesthetic refraction. (...) They are

a deforming mirror that, faced at the civilising process, reflects a caricature of his perverse substance” (Kracauer, 2010, p. 24).

Michel Foucault pointed out that the crime novel in the nineteenth century had as its function “to show that the delinquent belonged to an entirely different world, unrelated to familiar, everyday life.” (Foucault, 1975, p. 292). This production of otherness of the criminal happened at a time of changes in the law towards criminalisation of popular illegalities, which transformed social bandits in criminals, although golden bandits, as Arsène Lupin.

In fact, literature can be one of the narratives able to demonstrate the theories about crime elaborated since the nineteenth century, as Vincenzo Ruggiero suggested: “reading some classics of fiction and revisiting some speeches and sociological and criminological concepts” (Ruggiero, 2003, p. 3). The author juxtaposes Dostoyevsky and Lombroso, Cervantes and Merton, Baudelaire and the theories of deviant behaviour, Zola and the feminist criminology, James Baldwin and racism. Finally, he compares Melville, Mann and Mark Twain with white-collar crimes and the crimes of the powerful elites (Ruggiero, 2003).

Ernest Mandel, from a Marxist approach, wrote: “The real subject of the first detective novels is not the crime or murder, but the enigma. The recurring themes have always been money, power, sex, social differentiation and social distinction” (Mandel, 1988). The problem is analytical but not social and legal. He concluded: “The disorder leading back to order and this coming back to disorder; irrationality disturbing rationality; and rationality restored after irrational uprisings. Here is the core of the ideology of the detective story” (Mandel, 1988, p. 76).

Jacques Dubois points out the features of the detective novel linked to modernity: the mass production, derived from the serial publication (feuilleton); the justice hero; the labyrinth figure as a picture of the social world; and the enigma narrative (Dubois, 2006, p. 18). He wrote that the

literary murderer is rarely a bandit or terrorist, but that “common people could be perpetrators of the crime, a fact that is all the more satisfying as it is unpredictable” (Dubois, 2006, p. 109).

Tzvetan Todorov identified a dual narrative in the detective novel, the story of the crime and the story of the enquiry into the crime: the fable and the plot (Todorov, 1969, pp. 96-97). He distinguishes between the novel of the enigma and the *roman noir*, making a methodological observation: “the new genre is not necessarily built by denying the main feature of the old one, but is rather based on a complex of different characters, without regard to forming with the first a logically harmonious whole” (Todorov, 1969, p. 104).

Octavio Ianni (1993) wrote about the dictator novels, a literary genre that depicts the character of charismatic, tyrannical and brutal representatives of dictatorship in Latin America. The genre is present in the writing of authors like: Miguel Angel Asturias (1899-1974), Uslar Pietri (1906-2001), Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980), Augusto Roa Bastos (1917-2005), Gabriel Garcia Marques (1927-2014), Carlos Fuentes (1928-2012); and Mario Vargas Llosa (1936 -). All these authors have been representative of the magic realism in the late 20th century and give us a clue to understand contemporary literature in Latin America.

Fredric Jameson realised the innovation in detective stories, shown in the work of Raymond Chandler (1888-1959), in which the words are transformed into objects. Chandler was a painter of the American life: “He left us fragmentary images of environments and places, fragmentary perceptions that, for some formal paradox, are inaccessible to serious literature” (Jameson, 2014, p. 9). Since then the violence was present: “all violence appears to us immediately, both pathetic and pitiful, so brutal on the physical aspect as insignificant morally” (Jameson, 2014, p. 47).

Luc Boltanski analysed detective stories looking into their participation in the episteme of the late nineteenth century, in parallel to the emergence

of sociology and psychiatry. These intellectual productions have in common an analytical frame of social reality – the research – from which they propose to question the apparent reality seeking to find a reality much more hidden, deeper and more real” (Boltanski, 2012, p. 61). The investigator's role is to restore the reality: “The detective is the State in an ordinary state of exception” (Boltanski, 2012, p. 112).

Jean Pons wrote in *Le Temps Modernes* (1997, p. 9), created by Jean-Paul Sartre:

The *roman noir* becomes an immediate and engaged literature. Immediate because it tells us directly about the trivialities and convulsions of our times (...). Engaged because the current affairs that it takes and transforms into literary fashion give rise to political propositions. (Pons, p. 9).

So, he could conclude: “The *roman noir* is a committed and offensive writing because, by exposing the mechanisms that explain the reasons of things and acts, it denounces the procedures of lying, alienation and violence that surround the social space” (Pons, p. 9).

Finally, Philippe Corcuff pointed out two features of the *roman noir*: 1) a social anchor, with a critical look at modern society; 2) a disenchanted vision that preserves a moral component (Corcuff, 2013, p. 8). He identifies the French “neopolar” author Jean-Patrick Manchette, although we could also include Swedish novelists like the late Stieg Larsson with his remarkable *Millenium*.

### **3 The literature of violence in Latin America**

This sociological tradition in studies of detective fiction allows us to suggest the emergence of another form of romance, the novel of violence, in the last thirty years, “from a complex of different characters, without regard to form with the first [genre] a logically harmonious whole” (Todorov, 1969, p. 104). In the classic crime novel, the detective runs lonely throughout the

pages, although a secondary character may appear playing a supporting role (Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, for instance). Deductive-inductive logic shows its face, but the murderer is typically a no professional criminal. The private detective is the hero who restores the social order that had been threatened by crime.

In a new type of plot whose first novels appeared in 1940s, the *roman noir*, the hero is a detective, or even a policeman, but he is often prone to vices such as alcoholism. The detective is a troubled and vulnerable hero, an anti-hero: he “is beaten, wounded, constantly risks his life” (Todorov, 1979, p. 103; Misse, 2013). The figure of the anti-hero that emerged in the literature of the twentieth century, since Kafka and Musil, following the metamorphoses of culture, now undergoes a formal modification: the problematic hero leaves the scene and its place is occupied by a character's dissolution process and the appearance of several collective characters coming from another world, a series of contra-heroes. Very often the character placed at the centre of the action belongs to underprivileged social groups: a black man, a woman, a Hispanic. This is the case of the American writers Charles Himes and Walter Mosley, who put black investigators in the centre of the plot. The Spaniard author, Arturo Pérez-Reverte, wrote a novel where a woman takes the leadership of an international drug organization, *La Reina del Sur* (Pérez-Reverte, 2010).

This new type of narrative was present in Latin America crime novel. In Mexico, the cultural events linked to drug trafficking – the *narcocorrido* (music), the *narcocine* and *narcoliteratura* – occupy a prominent place in the media, visual arts and literature. Among the most famous authors in this genre are Elmer Mendoza, Daniel Sada, Luis Humberto Crosthwaite and Carlos Velásquez (Palaversich, 2013; Michael, 2013). Even authors that are not Mexican have placed the action in the country, as the Spanish Arturo Pérez-Reverte and the Chilean Roberto Bolaño. The latter's amazing novel, *2666*, literarily demonstrates the links between contemporary violence, institutional police violence and the criminal murderess (Viscardi, 2013).

In Colombia, some literary works about *La Violencia*, the civil war between liberals and conservatives that started in 1948, used the style called the novel of rural customs (Gabriel García Márquez, with *La Mala Hora*; Gustavo Álvarez Gardeazábal, with *Cóndores no entierran todos los días*).

Nevertheless, in the last thirty years, most novels on violence deal with the world of drugs trafficking, as in the works of Fernando Vallejos, Jorge Franco, Juan Gabriel Vásquez and Gustavo Bolívar Moreno. In these novels, the plot includes more than a single murder (usually presented in the opening pages of classical detective novels). Throughout the chapters, the authors present a series of murderers and also torture. It is possible to observe the powers of macro and micro social actors in action, capitalists and politicians; these often exercise their power following the rules of the market, though also including corruption and brutality. The social conflict moves to the centre of the literary figuration, but the individual drama is not there, nor the rebellion: the criminals become legitimate persons. There we find various other characters, rather than just the detective or the police. Peculiar too is the presence of female characters, not as victims as they usually were in classical crime novels, but as crime leaders, often succeeding chiefs who had been killed or imprisoned. The motivation for action is money, power and sex. Two writers could help us to understand this new fiction in Latin America: Carlos Fuentes and Elmer Mendoza.

### ***Carlos Fuentes: the lacerated body and the fortune***

The latest works of Carlos Fuentes (México, 1928-2012) belong to this genre of novels. *La voluntad y la fortuna* (Destiny and Desire) (2008) – is a story of friendship between two former school friends. It designs a dense tapestry of fantasy combined with the history of contemporary Mexico, where drug trafficking has become a major social problem: “today we’re exploding as citizens of the Narconation” (p. 173), where “Everybody’s for sale, everybody can be bought” (p. 147). The novel begins with the scene of

a head separated from his body, caressed by the waves of a beach on the Pacific Ocean at night. The severed head of Josué Nadal recalls, rambles, and tells his story. Its reasons that the country do not provide employment, food, or education for most of its people. Therefore, the severed head argues, the Queen of Crime has a lot of power coming from cocaine. The narrator of *Destiny and Desire* is this severed head. It knows that in this ambience, the evil of seeking power and fortune is celebrated as the greatest God. Thus, the Prison San Juan de Aragon appears as a mirage of Mexican society. Another character, the Professor Antonio Sanginés, is a scholar of the literature on crime, studying Beccaria, Dostoyevsky, Butterworth, Livingstone and Owen. The others main characters are: Filopáter, the rebel priest; the magnate Maximiliano Monroy; Miguel Aparecido, who remains in prison by choice; and Lucha Zapata, a young woman, a drug addict.

The second book of Fuentes is *Adam in Eden* (2009), a comic novel of political intrigue. In the text, there are biblical symbols for character names, phrases that recall Bible verses, intertextuality and deconstructions of passages from the Old and New Testaments. The main character is Adam Gorozpe, a respected businessman in Mexico, who has such a perfect life that it resembles that of his namesake in the Garden of Eden. But there are snakes in this garden too, and in order to save the relationship with his wife, the marriage, the life and soul of the country, he may have to resort to the wrath of angels to expel all the snakes from the Eden, that is, from Mexico. Adam's wife Priscilla, in love with the impetuous director of National Security – also called Adam – who uses violence against the victims to hide the fact that he is releasing drug dealers and murderers. Another character is the little boy, God, who has begun to preach on the streets in a white robe and stick-on wings, inspiring Adam's brother-in-law to give up his job writing soap operas to follow the junior deity and imploring Adam to do the same. Even Elle, Adam's lover, thinks that the child is important for salvation.



In this context, all the characters are hopeless: the novels express social dramas, an eternal present without future possibilities. Sometimes, the detective disappears and there are several criminals: common people or people who belong to criminal organisations. In case of violence, the central character is an anti-hero or a contra-hero. Power, brutal sex and money are his/her main goal.

The action normally takes place in the poor neighbourhoods of large cities, where drug trafficking requires the language of violence, the macho culture is prevalent together with the cult of the hero, even if the hero will experience a short life (Zaluar, 2004). The cities are the social space, pictured as fragmented, divided and degraded. If we analyse the modes of domination, there is domination by micro-power, politics, sex and power. There is no enigma to solve anymore, the crimes remain unsolved while the guilt is dissolved along the narrative. In this type of novel, the societal time has no future, leaving the person lost in the uncertainty, lacking any hope: a kind of hyper-present time.

### ***Elmer Mendoza: the detective and the organised crime***

*Un asesino solitario* (A lone killer) (Mendoza, 1999) is a book in which the narrator is a hired assassin, Jorge Macías, alias Yorch, who has indigenous features, is lonely, having occasional lovers, and is attached to his gun, though, in the words of the character, 'I never wanted anything with women or with narcos' (Mendoza, 1999, p. 87). The plot of the novel unfolds in a fashion opposite to that of detective novels: the murder will occur at the end. "Barrientos, brother, do you remember Barrientos? That candidate for presidency? Ah, they hired me to do away with him" (id, p. 11).

The whole story is the preparation of the act against the presidential candidate of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), in Culiacán, in the morning of the day the real murder took place in Tijuana: the afternoon of

March 23, 1994. The crime, however, is not consummated. Something was expected to happen, which did not happen. The is about a political murder like those of Obregón, Kennedy and Olof Palm. Politics is the background of the novel (p. 130).

In that same year, the Zapatista uprising occurred in Chiapas: 'On the first of January there was a riot: the Chiapas made their appearance and instead of celebrating New Year as God commands, they got up in arms' (p. 43); 'They were willing to die fighting because they were starving anyway' (p. 47). Then Chief H. says it: 'Chiapas is your destiny, he said, and your mission is to eliminate three Zapatista leaders' (p. 85). Before, he had already taken charge of attacks on students.

The narrative tension leans on the conspiracy as a framing device: the conspiracy is the theatre itself, the scene of the crime, even if this latter does not happen. The framing device is the hired crime. Macías will perceive in the end that he would also be a victim of the device.

The other characters are also based on real people presented with aliases: Abrahan Malinovski, journalist; the Zapatista leader Sub-Comandante Lucas; the Commissioner for peace in Chiapas, Samuel Machado; the presidential candidate of the PRD, Cardona; the conservative candidate of the PAN, Max; and Luis Eduardo Barrientos Ureta, the murdered.

The novel is written in the regional idiom of Sinaloa, which is full of terms that come from English: wachar, estanbai, guiskis, tícher. Multiculturalism is also framed in the story, as there are mentions of both Mexican popular culture – *Los Tigres del Norte*, the *Apsons*, the *Credence*, the *Carrion Brothers*, Alejandra Guzman, football, the films of Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete, television and American culture (*Playboy* magazine, *Tarzan*, movies) and also the *Beatles* are mentioned). However, the narrative tension suspends the outcome of the puzzle.

The fiction unfolds within a context of criminal order, such as that of Mexico nowadays (Michael, 2013). In many moments of the story the symbol of death is present, as a backstage of the political scene.

#### **4 The novel of violence: a new literary genre?**

We must now identify the structural differences between the novel of violence and the detective novel. Since the French *nouveau roman*, the character of the anti-hero has been analysed as a form of rebellion, which brings the social conflict back to the centre of the literary figuration (cf. Tavares dos Santos et al., 2016). For some authors, in fact, violence appears as a foundation of the social element. In Freud, Elias and Girard, violence appears as constitutive of the human nature, inherent to her condition. On the one hand violence would be, paradoxically, constitutive of society itself, born under the sign of an original violent act; on the other hand, the society needs to contain violence to ensure its own continuity.

There were several literary influences culminating in this new genre of novels. First, an influence from the romance of subjectivity, such as the tormented and guilty souls in Dostoyevsky. A second influence was the magic realism, of structural dominance. The third influence comes from Kafka's narratives in which there is a false accusation, the strength of the opacity of power, as well as the inconclusiveness of the enigma. The fourth influence comes from the theatre of the absurd, by authors such as Beckett, Pinter, Arrabal and Ionesco.

In contemporary North American literature, violence also can be found pervading the romance narrative of authors such as Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, Norman Mailer, Margareth Atwood, Marge Piercy, Philip Roth and Don DeLillo (Bachner, 2011). The American scholar Sally Bachner seeks to expose the visibility of violence: "Violence brings us into contact with an otherwise hidden and inaccessible reality, and that ordinary speech habitually occludes and falsifies the real (Bachner, 2011, p. 3).

Several other forms of violence – political, police, sexual, criminal – are also depicted in the works of Págo Ignacio Taibo II (Mexico), David Peace (England), Dominique Manotti (France), Don Winslow (US), Roberto Bolaño (Chile), Stieg Larsson and Henning Mankell (Sweden) (Pepper; Schmid, 2016) and Ricardo Piglia (Argentina) (Pinto, 2019).

This globalisation of the detective novel involved new characters, the state fonctionnaires and internationalisation of crime. Three sets of works according to Pepper and Schmid (2016): first, the writers locate the context in a city and generate a multidimensional understanding of the relationship between crime and neoliberal capitalism; second, criticism from authors who use wider environments such as borders and transnational regions; third, another set of analysis that addresses hybrid novel texts, which merge the conventions of criminal fiction with other genres. In other words, the hybridisation of literary forms found its greatest expression in the detective fiction and in the novel of violence (Pepper; Schmid, 2016: 5).

In a recently published book, British sociologists Mary Evans, Sarah Moore and Hazel Johnstone studied the detective novel in the post-1970 period, covering a set of one hundred and six authors primarily from England and the Scandinavian countries. The authors establish a relation between this genre and the explanation of the current society, analysing the literary production focusing on the investigation process:

We are therefore proposing here, first, that detective fiction has a complex and important relationship to both the social and the epistemological order in contemporary western societies. Second (...) that it is concerned with life, and the problems of life, that people living in the west encounter, either as fact or in terms of worries, concerns and fantasies about that word (Evans; Moore; Johnstone, 2019, p. 3).

They also perceive some general characteristics of the set of these detective novels: first, the permanence of the various forms of inequality (class, gender, race); second, the question of the moral legitimacy of the law

and its enforcement by police; third, the inquiry into the validity of the values and forms of today's society; fourth, the state's attitude toward policing and the problems of crime and punishment. In short, Europe's detective novel, since the 1970s, comprises a broad discussion of politics – in both public and private spaces – in contemporary world (Evans et al., 2019, p. 3-9).

In fiction of violence, unlike the detective novel, the “problematic hero” leaves the scene, being replaced by the dissolution of the characters – then, the problematic contra-hero makes his/her appearance. Some features stand out in this new genre: the diffuse violence, cruelty, fragmentation of social space, but also the lacerations of the bodies.

In *La virgen de los sicarios* (Vallejo, 1994), young killers make a request to the saint: “I need to be hired; my shot must be effective; and don't let them kill me” (p. 17). In *Rosario Tijeras* (Franco, 1999), the powerful drug smugglers are nameless; the narrator refers to them as “the toughest of the tough” (p. 23). Criminals crowd the novel, either belonging to criminal organisations or emerging from among ordinary people.

The detective emerges as a fallible human being, sometimes in collusion with forms of violence. The dead appear repeatedly, including in the form of tortured bodies. Moreover, in the romance of violence, there are several other characters: the detective, the policeman; the politicians; the gang members, male and female assassins, contract killers (*sicarios*), and members of organised crime. There are also a diffuse mass of working class and lower-class characters, sometimes living in poor neighbourhoods or slums, and the homeless. The characters' names are frequently either elliptical or absent.

The components of the narrative are quite different. In the crime novel, the motifs guiding the criminal act were money, power, and sex. In the *roman noir*, money and sex predominated. It has some typical features:

there are no surprises in the last pages; descriptions are cynical; and comparisons connote a certain roughness (Todorov, 1979, p. 102).

By contrast, the novels of violence condense money and sex, but they also combine micro-power and macro-power. There are also powerful characters in action, including capitalists and politicians. The ruling class in Latin America often exerts its power without democratic rules, making frequent use of brutality and corruption.

The plot usually includes more than one murder: throughout the chapters, the authors present a series of murders. The novelties are the tortured bodies and the brutal violence, a mimesis of social life in late modernity. The criminal act is sometimes marked by cruelty. The characters embody a brutalised violence, and often bear a grudge. Violence became a subjective value (Ginzburg, 2012)

In the enigma novels, the supreme moral value is individualism, influenced by the values of aristocratic society that see the world eroded by money (as in Agatha Christie's novels). The *roman noir* consolidates competitive individualism and focuses on the crisis of American society after the Great Depression. Cynicism is widespread in an urban environment. In the novel of violence, indeed, the figures are those of the liberal market society, competitive and predatory, marked by the abuse of drugs and a rude individualism.

The location of the plot is also completely different. In the enigma novel, it is the aristocratic house, the English countryside, a place of elegance and discretion (Agatha Christie); or the great city, such as London, with its winding streets and fog (Conan Doyle). In Hammett and Chandler, it is an urban space, often the small town, degraded, with a pathological social body. However, in the novel of violence, we find the metropolis, fragmented, with the separation between rich and poor neighbourhoods, and the proliferation of vulnerable or deprived urban areas (Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Medellin).

The powerful man is “the hardest of the hard” – *los duros de los duros* – those who hired Rosario Tijeras, the main character of Jorge Franco. They could also impose a plasticised feminine aesthetic, with the death, as in the character Catalina, in Gustavo Bolivar Moreno’s *Sin Tetas no hay Paraíso* (Without tits there is no Paradise). In other words, female characters are ambiguous, sometimes victims, as Catalina, sometimes powerful, including drug trafficking leaders: as the characters of *La Reina del Sur*, of Arturo Perez-Reverte, or *Rosario Tijeras*, of Jorge Franco.

If we observe the patterns of domination, in the first place we have the traditional domination. In the case of the *roman noir*, we find a charismatic domination, claiming to be bureaucratic. In the novel of violence, domination is a matter of who owns the money, be it of legal or illegal origin, but that nonetheless has a corrupting influence on political power.

The enigma solution is a distinctive feature of the three types of crime fiction. In the classic novel, the puzzle is always solved, the author often provides the reader with a series of clues in order to involve him in the web and to share the solution. In the *roman noir*, the solution often precedes the outcome of the plot, appearing to be secondary to the unfolding events. However, in the novel of violence there is no definite solution: the enigma itself vanishes, remaining a latent narrative.

The notion of time that the classic novel manifests is the evolutionary time of progress and reason. In the *roman noir*, there is a time of crisis, epitomised by the economic depression of capitalist society. In the novel of violence, there is a society living in uncertainty and insecurity. The novels express a tragic fate, an eternal present that has no possibility of future: all the characters are hopeless. Often, only a desperate love could continue to give meaning to human dignity.

Nevertheless, there are significant differences in the types of violence these novels represent. In the puzzle novel, violence is individual, often from a noble character; the murder is often carried out using poison or with a bullet. In the hard-boiled novel, violence is acted out between individuals, marked by physical action and the use of firearms. In the novels of violence, crime and its solution are secondary, because violence is no longer seen as a kind of diversion, but as a structuring element of social reality.

Without assuming that violence is presented as inherent to social relations, it can be said that violence has participated as a basic component of primary socialisation processes, as well as secondary processes of creation of new forms of sociability. It is not just the violence of one class over another or from one ethnic group against another, but also violence throughout society, and exercised by many social actors in all public and private spaces.

In the novel of violence new forms of murders arise violent crimes, international drug trafficking, sexual abuse and violence, rape, corruption, and torture. These forms appear as an aesthetic of “brutalism” and “cruelty”. The world of the novel of violence is a world without law, defined by the ineffectiveness or simply the absence of the police or the judiciary. There is a lack of a legitimate authority, formal or informal, signifying the crisis of the judicial system.

The final lesson of these novels is anguish and nihilism, both of which suppress the future in a world without a destiny. What may remain from our humanity is a fragile love, the character's search for something else: at the end of an exhausting journey of wanderings, a frail passion could suggest a hope for a new culture of nonviolence. Finally, this mode of literature teaches us about the contours of the culture of violence in contemporary society.



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