

## BOOK REVIEW

# *A Sociedade do Telejornalismo (The TV Journalism Society)*

ALFREDO VIZEU (ORG.)

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REVIEWED BY **Beatriz Becker**

In an analysis of the research works carried out from 1989 to 2004 at the University of São Paulo (USP), Moreira (2005:9-24) observed that the number of academic journalism research works grew, especially from 2001 to 2004. However, works dealing with TV journalism did not appear among the seven main topics researched. In addition, since the first edition of *Brazilian Journalism Research* launched in 2005, 50 articles referring to theoretical and practical studies in the journalism field were published up to 2007, and only five were focused on televised newscasts. While the TV newspapers became the product with the greatest impact on contemporaneous life in the last decades, the development of academic research works in TV journalism in Brazil has not been very significant. In the last five years, however, there has been a relevant increase in the number of studies and research works concerning televised newscasts. The very transformations of Brazilian society, the greater number of university degree courses implemented, the inclusion of studies and more qualified journalism researchers in the field of research in communication, in addition to the interest in studying TV newscasts have contributed to this growth.

The creation of the *Sociedade Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo* (Brazilian Society of Journalism Researchers) was decisive for the TV journalism studies' attainment of the current results. In 2003, at the First National Encounter of Journalism Researchers, the idea was launched of establishing a network of researchers interested in studies of televised newscasts. The following year, in 2004, the first Coordinated Communication on TV Journalism was carried out at the Encounter in Salvador. In 2005, the researchers decided to launch the first book of

the network, *Telejornalismo, a nova Praça Pública* (TV Journalism, the new Public Square), gathering together the main issues referring to the research works and the results of the research at that time. *A Sociedade do Telejornalismo* (The TV Journalism Society), the network's second book, reveals a maturing of the critical reflections being developed.

TV and the newscasts, in their more than fifty years of existence, became consolidated in Brazil as a symbolic territory in which the different social groups experienced feelings of citizenship and belonging. They take on a role of preservation of the relationships of power, and consequently a social control, in the political and cultural agenda setting in the country. But they also play a vanguard role, as a unifying agent of Brazilian society, unveiling conflicts and making possible changes, even molding these possibilities. TV newscasts were chosen as a subject for analysis by different authors because they effectively stand out as strategic instruments for construction and mediation of everyday social reality, intervening and constituting local and national identities, by means of their representations and enunciative strategies, offering knowledge for the perception of Brazil and the world, and references in the television viewers' interaction with a daily life full of risks. *A Sociedade do Telejornalismo* seeks to account, in different approaches, for the complex social function of televised newscasts in Brazil.

The book reveals a wide variety of theories and methodologies utilized by the authors in order to move forward with the research works in this field. From semiotics to the analysis of discourses and content to agenda setting and news-making, this generation of researchers takes on the challenge of expanding critical reflection on journalism, and especially on TV journalism, as a form of knowledge, of discursive strategies and reading contracts of televised newscasts with television viewers, and of advancing in the comprehension of the relations between media and politics, of the production routines of the processes for construction of the news, and of the formation of the identities and of the perception of time and space in the audiovisual territory of TV reality.

Motivated by the development of an epistemology of TV journalism, Alfredo Vizeu Pereira Junior and João Carlos Correa try to demonstrate in *A construção do real no telejornalismo: do lugar de segurança ao lugar de referência* (Construction of the real in TV journalism: from the place of security to the place of reference) the hypothesis that TV newscasts represent a relevant place of reference for Brazilians similar to that of other institutions which permeate social life and in the construction of reality, emphasizing their exoteric, pedagogical

functions, of familiarization and of safety, revealing reality, mediating the various fields of knowledge, serving as a place for guidance and establishing links of belief, confidence, stability and tranquility for facing everyday life at the present time.

Utilizing the presuppositions of discourse analysis, Hegan examines in *Jornalismo, mito e linguagem: uma abordagem teórica dos apresentadores-estrela* (Journalism, myth and language: a theoretical approach to star newscasters) the role of the anchorman in TV newscasts, discussing the myth of perfection constructed and attributed to the newscasters in the daily construction of TV reality, which enables us to carry out a reading of subjectivities in journalistic accounts. Observing the relations between myth and language, he presents a theoretical course for us to understand why and how newscasters cease to be producers of information and begin to be the news itself, protected and legitimated by the “discourse of truth”, adding at the same time credibility and spectacular approach to the news.

Porcello emphasizes in *Mídia e poder: os dois lados de uma mesma moeda, a influência política da TV no Brasil* (Media and power: two sides of the same coin, the political influence of TV in Brazil) the sophisticated system of trade-offs established in the power relationships between media and politics in Brazil, throwing light on the processes of conquest of a democratic society, in a historical analysis of four commercial TV stations and of the language of the newscasts and their ideological filters. Based on categories proposed by Roland Barthes – *fait divers*, power, culture and discourse – he attempts to construct a theoretical referential in order to discover what is hidden behind the appearances in the presidential campaigns, and carries out a critical reflection on the media as the place where politics occurs, revealing that the media are not only on the side of power, but are power itself, which make and undo political party alliances for their own benefit.

Lins demonstrates in *Falibilismo: incertezas na construção do telejornalismo* (Fallibleness: uncertainties in the construction of TV journalism), from the viewpoint of Pierce, that scientific and artistic research works are processes which mature gradually, capable of confirming, rejecting or just re-dimensioning ideas and perceptions of reality, because certainty is an ideal difficult to attain. Assuming that scientific discourse has served as a reference for journalism, he considers that the news is a representation marked by incompleteness. He emphasizes that journalistic messages result from a complex construction with collective authorship of texts, involving different

communicative acts and actors, and present flaws and mistakes which contribute to a precarious, imperfect construction of the news, open to revisions and improvements.

In *Telejornalismo e identidade em emissoras locais: a construção de contratos de pertencimento* (TV journalism and identity in local stations: the construction of contracts of belonging) Coutinho observes the relation of belonging and the affinities established between a TV station and its public in the city of Juiz de Fora in the State of Minas Gerais, reflecting on the type of link constructed with the community. He explains that the concentration of production in the region surrounding the station's headquarters tends to confer on the regional TV newscast identities and links of a local nature. He also identifies an attempt by the station to draw closer to the audience, which influences the editorial line of journalistic programs and the form of presentation of the topics, also revealed in the coverage of sporting events, in the invitation for the audience to participate in the TV newscasts, and in the utilization of short statements by the population on various matters. He emphasizes, however, the commercial nature of this strategy, in which empathy and credibility function as ways to attract advertisers and increase profitability.

The new technologies have transformed the relations between time and space in contemporaneous life, promoting a hybridization of supports and languages, which have been incorporated by the televised newscasts in their discursive strategies. Based on semiotics, Fachine reveals in *Procedimentos e configurações espaço-temporais no telejornal* (Procedures and space-time configurations in TV newscasts) changes in the interactions between anchormen and the news which suggest for television viewers a dilution of the frontiers between the studio and the street, and the perception that the transmission and the reporting of the news occur at the same time as the social event and with the same duration. The search for spatial and temporal continuity can be observed in the moving of one of their newscasters to external locations, constructing another anchoring point for the newscast and in the incorporation of the plasma monitor into the scenery of the TV newscasts, which makes it possible for the newscasters to intervene more directly in the exhibition of the news reports.

In reading these six articles we lost our belief in journalistic objectivity and impartiality, and we learned how different enunciative operations seek to involve the audience, but we also observed how TV newscasts are, at the same time, essential and strategic products in complex societies, containing multiple meanings. *A Sociedade do Telejornalismo*

undoubtedly reveals an advance in the research on televised newscasts which now faces the challenge of transcending case studies and moving toward the formulation of a critical theory of TV journalism which can also serve in the promotion of new content and ways of telling stories of everyday life in the televised newscasts, sustained by the plurality of interpretations, by the diversity of social actors and by esthetic innovation, offering theoretical parameters for a professional practice more committed to social responsibility and the public interest, at a time when Brazilian television enters a new stage in its history.

## | NOTES

- 1 Moreira, S. V. (2006) "Trends and New Challenges: Journalism Research in Brazil." *Brazilian Journalism Research* 1 (2): 9-24.

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