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# THE FEMININE IN THE “REPORTER BOOK”:

## an epistemological view on gender and journalistic practices<sup>1</sup>

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25200/BJR.v14n1.2018.1029>

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Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo

**ABSTRACT** - This article is part of an exploratory movement from a post-doctoral study. Statements taken from interviews with Eliane Brum, Fabiana Moraes and Alexandra Lucas Coelho, authors of reporter books who integrate the role of subjects and the research corpus, revealed actions of resistance towards the form of journalistic objectification. Journalism was observed through the prism of gender, focusing on discourses from reporters on professional practices that subvert the dominant masculine logic and elaborate an interpretation of journalistic knowledge. A set of practices emerge, identified as feminine, which are inhibited and diminished in the hierarchies of journalistic values. It provides a more complex lens for observing reality and subjects; it demonstrates the inability of journalistic objectification, forged in the nineteenth century, for reading in the twenty-first century world. It suggests thinking about new and necessary eyes through which to see journalistic practices and the criticism of journalism.

**Key words:** Reporter Book. Journalistic Practices. Gender.

### O FEMININO NO “LIVRO DE REPÓRTER”: uma mirada epistemológica de gênero sobre as práticas jornalísticas

**RESUMO** - Este artigo é parte dos movimentos exploratórios de pesquisa de pós-doutorado. A partir dos depoimentos das jornalistas Eliane Brum, Fabiana Moraes e Alexandra Lucas Coelho, autoras de livros de repórter que integram o rol dos sujeitos e o corpus de pesquisa, encontramos pistas das ações de resistência ao modo de objetivação jornalística. Neste exercício reflexivo, o jornalismo é observado pelo prisma de gênero, focalizando nos discursos das repórteres sobre as práticas profissionais que subvertem as lógicas masculinistas dominantes e elaboram uma exegese do saber jornalístico. Um conjunto de práticas foi identificado como fazendo emergir o feminino interditado e inferiorizado nas hierarquias de valores do jornalismo. Sugere lentes mais complexas

pelas quais a realidade e os sujeitos podem ser observados; demonstra a incapacidade da objetivação jornalística, forjada no século XIX, para uma leitura do mundo no século XXI. Dá fôlego para que se pensem os novos e necessários óculos a serem utilizados nas práticas jornalísticas e para a crítica do jornalismo.

**Palavras-chave:** Livro de Repórter. Práticas Jornalísticas. Gênero.

### **LO FEMENINO EN EL “LIBRO DE REPORTERO”:**

#### **una mirada epistemológica de género sobre las prácticas periodísticas**

**RESUMEN** - Este artículo busca problematizar algunos fundamentos del periodismo occidental a la luz de las contribuciones feministas, pensando sobre la cobertura de violación hecha por la prensa de referencia, teniendo el reportaje “A rape on campus”, publicada en noviembre de 2014 por la revista norteamericana *Rolling Stone*, como estudio de caso. Nos proponemos pensar el periodismo a partir de cuatro proposiciones ligadas a las teorías feministas: perspectiva; experiencia de las mujeres; objetivo en favor de las mujeres; y sujetos situados. Además de pensar un periodismo posible a partir de fundamentos feministas, nos dedicamos a cotejar de qué maneras esa potencia de periodismo dialoga, choca, contradice e interpela fundamentos tradicionales y universales del periodismo, sobre todo aquellos relativos a la ética y los derechos procesos de escrutinio.

**Palabras clave:** Periodismo Generificado. Cobertura de Violación. Feminismo. Ética.

### **Introduction**

A privileged area of the analysis on journalistic practices is outlined in the “reporter book” (Marocco, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2016). This concept, formed by regularities found in samples from the study “The discursive control that takes shape and circulates throughout journalistic practices<sup>2</sup>”, was used as the basis for the research corpus from a post-doctorate study still under development<sup>3</sup>, from which this article represents some exploratory movements. Using a survey conducted by Marocco (2010) as a starting point, the current works from these reporters/authors were scanned in order to identify journalistic practices relating to alterity. Careful reading of these books revealed an important point. A group of female journalists who, aside from their gender, share a form of journalistic objectification that subverts the modern-positivist-masculine logic of journalism (Veiga da Silva, 2015). The reflective exercise of this study is based on statements taken from three authors and looks at gender in journalism, focusing on a set of practices expressed in their reporter books which we perform an enunciative analysis on.

Based on our findings, we looked at gender and science through the eyes of feminists in order to analyze the actions of Eliane Brum<sup>4</sup>, Fabiana Moraes<sup>5</sup> and Alexandra Lucas Coelho<sup>6</sup> – advocates of Brazilian and Lusitano journalism, recognized for their work in both traditional press and literature. Based on reflections from their books and references they made in an interview with Marocco (2012)<sup>7</sup>, we organized a group of elements in which these three women subvert the dominant logics and elaborate an interpretation of journalistic knowledge in reporter books.

Here gender is understood from an epistemological perspective, derived from the concept of power (Scott, 1990; Bonetti, 2011). In this concept, gender “marks the more diverse social actions, but is not restricted to the biological sex/gender/body relationship which encompasses and provides the feeling of organization in social life” (Bonetti, 2011, p. 62). Thus, journalism is observed through the prism of gender focusing on a set of practices expressed in the reporter books which suggests a break from certain regimes of truth that have historically kept journalism modern, positivist and masculine.

Hegemonic journalism, as a product from the nineteenth century, is part of what Foucault defined as episteme; a coherent system of ideas and values formed by a set of discursive contexts that serve as a matrix for collective forms of representing reality (Crespi & Fornari, 2000). Situated within a rationality similar to the Modern paradigm, journalism can be seen as an analogy for the production of scientific knowledge, knowledge that is not only understood in a modern, positivist, illuminist form, and the base for the mode of journalistic objectification and for describing its practices, but also as a part of a global, capitalist and masculine system (Grofoguel, 2012). An epistemological point of view of gender and a feminist critique of science provide a path for reflecting on the bases of rationality prevalent in contemporary journalism and, equally, for observing resistances against it within the field.

On the bases of modern-positivist rationality, which served (and still serves) as a totalitarian model of epistemological principles and methodological rules for validating knowledge as truth, we find clues to where journalism was organized to produce social knowledge and recognize itself as credible knowledge for society (Veiga da Silva, 2015). The modes for producing news – particularly the practices and professional culture – converge with the mode for producing science, especially as Ijuim says (2013), through the inspiration in the modes

for capturing and “discoursing” reality with the intent of adding truth value to constructed knowledge. Furthermore, “positivism is the aspect that influences [in journalism] the rise of objectivity and analogies for verifying and wording the scientific method” (Pontes, 2010, p. 3-4).

The foundations of journalistic objectivity are close to scientific views that, while “searching for ‘objectivity’ [...] try to guarantee it through a reductionist design” (Silvino, 2007, p. 286), within a system of binary thought which expresses the lack of subjectivity in all processes that describe the practice and mold the rhetoric of impersonality as “good journalism”. The meeting of journalism and science also came about in order to “gain recognition from society, not so much as a discourse of impressions and opinions from journalists on daily life, but as an ‘objective’ or ‘neutral’ discourse” (Marocco, 2011, p. 4). In this way, it is immersed by a structure of dominant thought:

It is full of dualist, Cartesian reasoning, characteristic of Illuminist thinking, this structure is based on a binary logic built on pairs of opposites; for example, subject/object, body/mind, reason/emotion, objectivity/subjectivity, transcendent/immanent, culture/nature, active/passive, etc. (Sardenberg, 2002, p. 95).

The foundations for good journalism, inspired in scientific foundations, are also established according to the normal social hierarchy that, in an analogy of gender, brings power and status of conventional attributes closer to masculine:

For feminists, the key point is that these dichotomies are built, in analogy, and based on the differences perceived between the sexes and the inequalities of gender. Thus, the concepts of subject, mind, reason, objectivity, transcendence, culture, and others that structure the principles of Modern Science were identified as “masculine” whereas the other terms of dichotomy – object, body, emotion, subjectivity, immanence, nature, etc. which the first ones command a hierarchical respect over – are part of what is historically constituted as “feminine” (Lloyd, 1996). In other words, just as Joan Scott suggested (1988), the categories of gender also appear as instruments of representing power in scientific constructions (Sardenberg, 2002, p. 96).

The androcentric nature of modern-positivist epistemology is perceived through feminist criticism of science that especially places “the scientific parameters in question that define who can or cannot be a subject of knowledge, what knowledge can be or even what can be known” (Sardenberg, 2002, p. 93):

[...] the principal points of feminist criticism of science deal with denouncing its particularist, ideologic, racist and sexist character: Western knowledge operates within the logic of identity, drawing on reflexive categories incapable of seeing the difference. [...] It is based on a universal concept of man, referring to white, heterosexual, civilized, from the First World, discarding all those who do not fit this reference model. Likewise, masculine practices are more valued and hierarchized in relation to feminine ones, the private world is deemed less important within the public sphere and Western imaginary (Rago, 1998, online)

Feminism and post-modern philosophy “have encouraged feminist criticism that attacks the core of science, especially regarding the gender categories that are implied in building the notions of subject, rationality, objectivity and other similar epistemological ‘principles’ and strategies associated with illuminist thinking” (Sardenberg, 2002, p. 95). This rationality comes from the way that reality and subjects are understood and discoursed upon, obeying the dominant logics and regimes of power-knowledge (Foucault, 2012) that, over time, transform differences into inequalities. Journalism can reflect on these epistemological perspectives and strategies both in its practice and its relationships of power and discourses on knowledge that it produces. Looking at gender can expand on these understandings

[...] within the concept is an instrument for analyzing the impact of ideologies on the structure of not only the social world but also the intellectual one, inasmuch as gender is also a central element in the constitution of self as well as a classifying principle for organizing the universe (Heilborn, 1991). It deals with a category of thought and therefore a construction of knowledge – that is why the traditional concepts of epistemology should be re-evaluated and redefined, in order to “[...] analyze the effects of gender on and within knowledge” (Flax, 1990)” (Sardenberg, 2002, p. 93).

The positivist/masculine logics are evident in hegemonic journalism both in relations of power and in establishing practices and the types of social knowledge that it produces (Genro, 1987; Meditsch, 1992). Looking at how news is organized, at the hierarchy in newsrooms, and at the discourses on reality we can see how much gender and power relationships represent the dominant norm in society. From a gender analogy point of view, *hard news* is considered masculine within the hierarchy of news; it occupies the more prestigious places. It is no coincidence that politics, crime, and economy, fields that are historically considered masculine, are what *hard news* reports on (Veiga da Silva, 2014). Moreover, they represent

this place of power and are mostly used as sources and reproduce regimes of truth in journalism discourses.

The androcentric bias can be seen in the molding of identity, values and professional culture on a whole. The myth surrounding journalists follows the same masculine norm: the hunter, the hero, the defender of democracy. Dispute, competitiveness, proactivity, authority-authoritarian and domination are values surrounded this myth. These values relate to relationships of power and hierarchy in newsrooms since they bring power and status to professionals who possess a combination of these masculine attributes, mostly favoring men but not excluding women who possess the same attributes. In line with the culture of society to which it belongs, journalism has a professional culture that shares the conventions of gender that assign women to an inferior position, to one of lesser power and status (Veiga da Silva, 2014). Subjectivity is also prohibited here, diminished in the foundations of journalistic objectivity.

An attribute regarded as feminine, subjectivity (and all elements related to it such as sensitivity, the body, subject and professionals’ world views) occupies the foundations of hierarchy in journalism. Understood as being pushed away from journalistic objectivity (for not being “full of dualist and Cartesian reasoning”), subjectivity is suppressed not only as a language that aims toward impersonality in discourse for the purpose of neutrality, totality and the value of truth, but also in critical reflections on practices, both by professionals and a large number of studies on the field. For a long time, like in other fields of knowledge, criticism in journalism studies has closely followed “prolonged predominance of Social History in Marxist traditions that over-neglected subjectivity and the symbolic dimension” (Rago, 1998, online).

In procedures that erase the subject from supposedly objective and neutral discourses, the choice of sources is part of the strategy that guides discursive practices in journalism. “Within the limits of information, the word of journalists cannot be authorized anymore unless they show their entry in an order of journalistic discourse through the presence of a witness as a source of information and the ‘confession of the truth’ (Dent, 2008) that it presumes” (Marocco, 2011, p. 03).

The reporter books are one of the spaces in which resistance and subversion to these logics is evident, and reflective criticism on the practice of journalists/authors from this journalistic “gender” might represent a paradigmatic break and an epistemological view as we shall see next.

## The reporter book and criticizing practices

Journalistic objectivity established itself as a concept aiming to produce truth as “correspondence, ‘loyal’ to the facts, and which goes beyond the threshold of media society” (Vattimo, 2009, p. 11). In order for structuring it other strategies of real objectivity were established apart from breaking away from literature. In the middle of the nineteenth century, *news* and *comments* gained different spaces in papers, qualifying information (news) and comments (opinion). Reflections on the practice, shaped by the press at the time (Marocco, 2004), became part of its basic foundation which in some form would create gaps.

We identified discourses in the reporter books on journalistic practices which continue the possibility of “comment<sup>8</sup>”: they are more than just an “opinion” or another support for reporting. These materials, like theories, generally set themselves apart from the institutional nature of journalism and from an endogenous gender, like an ombudsman. The margins of journalism and its theories materialize the experience of having been withheld from newspapers and affect journalistic practices by first recognizing a text which had already been published in newspapers or is crystallized in theories (Marocco, 2012). In both cases, whether verifying or in the style, comments on practices and theories promote a kind of utopia in journalism; a process of journalism. The reporter books formalize comments as they play out a dual role of updating texts for regulating journalism (whether in theories or newsroom manuals) and they help shape journalistic discourse and what was silently articulated in the first text (Marocco, 2011).

The “reporter book” criticizes journalistic practices and also presents comments and subjective actions that resist the “author-reporter”<sup>9</sup>. We use the expression “reporter book” because it is a type of individual authorship which separates itself from the professional *ethos* and collective authorship of time-place in journalism. This practice in new place-time foundations does not break from journalism even though the “reporter-author” builds his or her own creative work place within journalism where criticism is knowledge of the present. In this new epistemological level the reporter investigates and designs the event in its complexity, in a “pyramid of intelligibility”:

The pyramid writes, takes apart and re-writes events depending on the entry angles. That is where its richness is, in triggering numerous forms for understanding reality. Transposed with journalism, the “pyramid of intelligibility” helps to produce events and understanding how discursive events unfold, activating and revealing a discursive network. For Foucault (1990), analyzing these plots means rebuilding a unique appearance from defining multiple events, considering that it is not natural to find sustainment or support in things for this network of intelligible relationships, it is the logic of a game of interactions with variable and uncertain margins (Marocco, Zamin & Boff, 2012, p. 4)

You could argue that the reporter books present the exercise of journalism in another form and are important towards building knowledge on journalistic practices. While this knowledge breaks from the modes of journalistic objectivity, recovers subjectivity, increases the polyphony of sources and provides a reflection of the practice, it also breaks from the masculine and positivist hierarchy, leading to an epistemology which is more accustomed to difference than totalization. In other words, while opening up the eyes and ears that observe reality and subjects, taking into consideration subjectivity in the cognitive processes, it strengthens alterity in journalistic practices: those considered as others are not framed and narrated by reporter-authors in a binary and Manicheistic logic of “good and bad”, which often transforms the differences into inequalities using normalized standards of society, serving as a parameter for reading reality from an objective-subjective value of journalism and of journalists. It indicates the emergence of a system of thought and practices that predict complexity and not simplicity and diminishment, and whose notion of objectivity is closely related to the feminist objectivity defended by Donna Haraway (1995).

In her perspective of feminist objectivity, Haraway deals with “limited location and localized knowledge, not transcendence and division between subject and object”, and indicates the ways in which we can become responsible for that which we learn to see” (Haraway, 1995, p. 21). She is saying that it signals possible meanings from a vision that is constituted from systems of active perception that build traditions, interpretations and specific modes of seeing. Therefore, Donna Haraway suggest how we can move away from the perspectives of totalization and full relativism which she considers to be “tricks from God” because they are understood as perspectives that equally and entirely promise a view of everywhere and nowhere,



common in science (Haraway, 1995) and journalism. Through this perspective “objectivity does not describe disengagement, it deals with taking risks in a world in which we are permanently mortal; in other words, we do not have the final control. Lastly, we do not have clear and precise ideas” (idem, p. 41).

Eliane Brum, Alexandra Lucas Coelho and Fabiana Moraes, three journalist-authors of reporter books appear to us to be exponents of breaking paradigms and epistemology in journalism: from modern-masculine-positivist journalism to post-modern-complex-feminine journalism; from corporeal positivist objectivity to embodied and situated objectivity; from a totalitarian view to an openly localized view; from a binary thought to a complex thought on reality; from an ethic built on deontological ideals proposed for a fixed and technical rationality that prohibits subjectivity and reflections on the practice (and ends up reproducing unequal relationships of power) to an ethic that envisions subjectivity as a path to permanent reflections on the practice and which is in constant dialogue with the self and the other (which leads to alterity and diminishes the power to transform differences into inequalities). The statements these journalists gave help us to reflect on and reassess practices, moving closer to what journalism is, particularly in regards to its power to transform and democratize society.

### **The feminine who give journalism a new body**

Reading the reporter books from Brazilians Eliane Brum and Fabiana Moraes, just like the one from Portuguese Alexandra Lucas Coelho, has helped not only to elaborate on the idea of “reporter book”, connected to criticizing journalistic practices, but especially to opening up listening on how this reflection is made by journalists, which gives a glimpse into how professional identities and the set of knowledges that guide its practices are formed, taking the banned subjectivity as a *locus* for constituting authorship and analysis on the field.

An objectivity situated presupposes that it can leave clear form where it speaks, it sees, it hears – our “subject position”. When interviewed about triggering discursive memory about forming professional identities, Eliane Brum – born in Ijuí, in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, in 1966 – and Alexandra Lucas Coelho, born in

1967 in Lisbon said, “they speak of each other and of the profession the chose at the same time. This helps us access who they are – or, in the wild game of memory, who interprets who they are – but also the meanings that circulate in daily journalism” (Vieira, Veiga & Furtado, 2012, p. 130). Fabiana Moraes – born in 1974 in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco – exercises her reflection on herself and the journalistic practice in her book’s narrative “The birth of Joyci...” dedicating one of the chapters to defending “subjective journalism”. While describing their professional trajectories and practices, the journalists retell their stories of life and subjectivity (families and places of origin, views of the world, values, and feelings) as if they were part of the threads that weave their professional identities. They do not separate subject from professional, nor professional from journalism. Indicating their subject positions, they told us not just where and from what place reality is perceived. The three gave us clues of a “corporeal” practice:

Ever since I was small I have been a listener and an observer, I've never been much of a speaker. So, instead of playing, I always preferred listening to my older relatives, the people in the community. My uncle had a bowling alley, and everyone in the community used to go there to play cards, buy salami, they sold those candies that you could only find there. And I just sat listening to stories. So that's where I started to become a reporter [...]. (Brum in Marocco, 2012, p. 72, emphasis added)

I never wanted to be anything else; I knew I wanted to write. The practical thing to do from that point was to be a journalist. [...] I have always had this passion. Where do I come from? I come from a desire to write and know the world. So journalism gave me these two things: the desire to write and to travel. So, these were the two decisive points from the beginning, ever since I can remember [...] I don't know, ever since I was 10, 11, 12 years old [...]. Journalism was a journey that allowed me to build this bridge between writing and the world, it allowed me to travel and see the world. And learn to listen to people and to look at people. The issue of looking is a decisive one because journalists are able to see a greater number of things in a situation. No two journalists write the same text about the same situation, and the diversity of work is also related to what that look can bring; in other words, not everyone sees the same thing (Coelho in Marocco, 2012, p. 158, emphasis added).

The senses of look and listen, the sensations, the intuition (attributes determined as feminine), normally kept from prescriptions for a practice that intends to be objective and neutral, they are elements reiterated in the descriptions of actions. The body and feelings are part of the rationality in the process of cognition for

reading and narrative on reality, and are indicative of being one of the modes for displacing journalistic objectivity. Similar to Eliane Brum's line of thinking, we can think that maybe these subjective elements that characterize its practices plant a less "arid" journalism, less rigid, less masculine.

What I keep feeling is that deep down, and here in Brazil this is so true, the approach is a sensory experience. It's as if journalism was a body, a reader's body, a type that was specifically sent to the reader. Journalists are the special senders for readers, So the bodies of journalists are bodies that must be pierced by a sensory and cognitive experience, with what they smell, see and hear. This sensory experience should be transmitted through the text (Coelho in Marocco, 2012, p. 163, emphasis added)

I think that my whole process was very intuitive. People always notice me. And nowadays I would say that I'm not noticed, I get out of my car, go into McDonald's and sit in the corner because I think that these five minutes in the corner looking around before getting involved is what makes the difference. I think it's totally possible to do this in journalism on a daily basis and I did it for 11 years (Brum in Marocco, 2012, p. 75, emphasis added).

This same attention given in order to do a good report should be in the head, heart and minds of journalists who produce daily news [...]. It is also necessary to realize that even the justification of being in a hurry and lack of time has its limits, they are toxic materials (yet not so obvious) that disseminate prejudice and naturalizations, that alienate instead of clarifying, as Moretzsohn puts it, there are many more productions from a journalist whose view of the world is unlimited for whomever is qualified to be a social mediator (Moraes, 2015, p. 219, emphasis added).

The resistance of discursive controls can be seen in the reports in which subjectivity is the primary material of practice. The myths related to time and to submission to deontological rules dictated to relationships with sources, for example, are taken apart by the exercise of a practice guided by other conditions of possibility for conducting methods.

Perhaps we are still stuck in a paradigm which is as heroic as an objectivity that wants to transmute into truth we cease to recognize and bring to the practice and to journalistic writing that which was fearlessly embraced by cinematographer Eduardo Coutinho in his documentaries. He summarized in an interview: "I don't just film people; I film a relationship between myself and the interviewee". This means that to account for a writing that captures people through its integrity, journalists need to also be open to what happens while they get closer to the character, the potential transformer of this meeting. If unable to recognize their own limits and content in writing what has already been written, instead of transforming it mystifies, it loses the chance to promote action from someone else - and from itself. After all, on the side of technical and

vital demands that give journalism its balance, we cannot lose perspective: emotion is also information. (Moraes, 2015, p. 27, emphasis added)

As reporters, we have two instruments of great importance: looking and listening. I consider myself to be a good listener of reality. Even today, I almost never ask questions. Of course, there are materials and then there are materials, but over the last few years I have started to notice that questions are already a form of control (Brum in Marocco, 2012, p. 76 emphasis added).

I've worked a little bit on this line lately, perfecting this issue of listening, doing away with questions. I'll ask questions after, like when I arrive in a community. I do reports and I'll live in a few places and such and I always ask people: “Show me your world”. Because what this person shows me and doesn't show me are very important towards understanding how said person understands the world. Because I don't know anything about that world. If I try to pretend that I know about that world, that'll only add to my ignorance. I try to find out how people see that world. Why did they show me this and not show me that? Why did they leave that thing out? These are important questions that I can only find out by asking. This is the way I learn and understand intuitively, by reporting, by doing journalistic work. It is how I work and I'm always finding out new things through experience. I'm much more of an experienced reporter than one from a manual or something like that, like academic experience. I built myself much more on experience, on intuition. (Brum in Marocco, 2012, p. 79, emphasis added)

Journalism can draw on literary resources and cinematography and musicals and whatever else to tell a story. What we call literary journalism or new journalism used literary techniques to tell a story. With “Tahir – a diary of the Egyptian revolution”, never, at any point, did I think: I have an obligation to go and listen to what the police have to say about this. So, in this sense, it was completely free. The goal was to convey the physical experience of being in Tahir Square. [...] It isn't always possible to contrast them [to sources]. If we're reporting in a square, how are we going to contrast sources? Are we going to think about listening to Hosni Mubarak? There are many examples in which this does not make any sense, it's ridiculous, because there are so many situations in which the authorities already have their space, their space in media.[...] But at one point I did leave the square and go to the pyramids. [...] The separatists at the pyramids are critical of Tahir Square. In my opinion this was important because it created an exterior situation in relation to the space where I was. However, I left that place with another view of the Square. And that is important. (Coelho in Marocco, 2012, p. 172, emphasis added)

In Brazilian journalism, sources have historically been based on three qualities: authority, productivity and credibility. These qualities are generally filled out by official sources that occupy positions in institutions, provide information more quickly and at a lower cost. Michel Foucault thought these three qualities borrowed a certain epistemologization from the practice. From a

Foucauldian perspective, sources do not correspond to authority; they do not have the burden of proof nor of truth and will never have a journalistic form stipulated for style guides. In actions inside and outside of newsrooms, each one of these journalists drew up plans to give sequence to the work that has resistance to the mode of journalistic objectivity of events as a convergence point. These are actions that are apparent when reading reports and reporter books from each of the authors, in which characters and sources located on the margins of society (and journalism itself) emerge as protagonists in stories that are more in-depth and allow for a critical reflection on broader issues in our society. In its relationships – as a horizontal rule – with sources these professionals provide samples of the ability of journalism to play its role of amplifying and diversifying voices that help democratize the public space. More than that, they indicate how much this diversification is a driving force towards improved meetings with alterity and are consequently less prejudiced:

When they ask me to define myself, I tell them that I'm a reporter of unevents. I say this to tease them. I work with people who are considered common. With people who are supposedly common: people that will never make news. Overall, this is my job, to provoke. Because what is given, what is reported on, is not taken naturally like most people think it is. It's a historic choice: it's a cultural choice, a political choice, an economic choice. If that is true, and if I am also a historic being, I can also change. And that is what I try to do in my job. It's about showing why one death is more important than another. Why one death is a statistic and the other is a headline. So when I tell stories about common people I provoke. That is why I say: I work with unevents. And I try to do this in my column, and this comes from reflecting on myself, on resisting myself, because sometimes I feel really bad about some things, but I try to get over it. (Brum in Marocco, 2012, p.86-87, emphasis added)

However, there is a powerful fact that needs to be highlighted in this scenario of turbulence and questioning on journalism (he is speaking about his own end): we are almost at the point of seeing the practice be reborn – and I say almost because, of course, hundreds of journalists throughout Brazil have always preferred listening to the Other and searching for the construction of news that had in its composition both accurate verification and respect. Journalists have always understood, despite the pressures and misunderstandings that routines and practices naturalized in the newsroom cannot subjugate our humanity. These professionals see that carelessness with what we mediate provokes something extremely harmful not only to professionals and their sources or their characters, but to the society as a whole. When acting in a hurry and instrumental with the other, reporters end up not bringing visibility to issues that need to be discussed in order to be overcome, issues like racism, classism, homophobia and sexism. (Moraes, 2015, p. 182, emphasis added)

The ethical dimension, for these journalists, is always tied to alterity by meetings with those considered as others on the margin of society. It is an ethic that clearly recognizes the dimension of interpretation of self/us on one-other. It is an ethic that recognizes the world views of subjects-professionals interlocked in the symbolic processes of journalism that demands a constant criticism and self-criticism in order to avoid that the differences within these processes are transformed into inequalities. It is an ethic which is not airtight; it is a dialectic movement and process. It is the constant reflection on the practice, which allows us to exercise empathy and alterity.

I'm not that kind of journalist who thinks that he is above reality. I am who I am, a historic being, engraved in culture, flawed, and that's how I go out there. I think that the way I see a reporter's movement is as a movement towards trying to become as empty as possible, but of course we can never be completely empty; but we can empty our prejudices, our world views, and our judgements. We have to always remember that journalists are not judges and absorb ourselves in the stories of the other. If you're already full then there's no room left to fill up. (Brum in Marocco, 2012, p.77, emphasis added) I think that in journalism, in reporting, the limits should be questioned on a daily basis, because it's not easy to know what the limits are, there's no formula for this, it is a constant reflection. Every day you have to think if you're infringing on people, if you're crossing the line with them. Today, my limit is much clearer. My limit is putting myself in the place of the other. (Brum in Marocco, 2012, p. 80, emphasis added)

[...] journalism cannot reflect on just its limits and practices, it has to reflect on what these limits and practices are and how they can be broken. [...] In order to address these issues and, more importantly, put them to use in daily practice of the profession, journalists (here we are talking about ethics, philosophy, subjectivity) should be aware of themselves, continually addressing their morals; in other words, their particular world views, with what is realized every day, the phenomena that cannot always be explained through specific moral principles. To say this does not mean to disclaim our own constitution or the history of our socialization; which differs our species from others. It is about understanding our limits in order to reach the conclusion that "neutrality" is permeated more and more by our history, it is never neutral itself. This reflection helps us reach conflicts present in our every-day lives and within journalism itself, thereby avoiding what Karan calls "intellectual tragedy", present in countless numbers of materials and reports on the sign of journalistic universality, but that actually is rooted in extremely individual notions

of professionals. It is the notion of a discursive ethic – or an ethic of discussion – that needs to emerge and be put in practice to start and then continue to expand the individual awareness of journalists while at the same time increasing an individual's degree of citizenship and political participation. One phenomenon is tightly interwoven with the other. (Moraes, 2015, p. 200, emphasis added)

Horizontality is a tool for meeting the other, one who intends *to listen* and who does not *intend to remove anything* (BRUM *in* MAROCCO, 2012, p.80), much less “break” or any other kind of dominating or authoritative action. The world, through the eyes of these professionals, is not seen as simple anymore; it is a complex world in which binary thought disappears. The “Truth” opens up space for a wide variety of truths responsible for producing a document of quality, which gives all the complexity of the story we tell, as many truths and nuances as possible (Brum *in* Marocco, 2012, p. 85, emphasis added). In their practices, these journalists break from the illuminist ideology of “enlightening”, “explaining” the world through a totalitarian “truth” revealed by a method supported in binary thought (the “two sides”) and based on an ideology of simplification and reductionism that is both authoritative (masculine) and predominant in hegemonic journalism. Conversely, they help elaborate on events and classify what is “good journalism”:

For me, journalism is a noun that does not need an adjective. There is good journalism and bad journalism. What is good journalism? Good journalism understands that reality is much more complex than what is said. Unfortunately, a large number of reporters end up reducing them to a set of habits. But life is not like that. When you do journalism that way, you are doing something kind of criminal; you are reducing life, reducing the complexity of the real. So, good journalism is about what is said and not said, it's about the silences, understands the gestures, smells, these are just as important as words. So good journalism works with everything that is reality and brings the reader closer to this complexity in order that he or she can go where they haven't been and where the reporter has, and from there, the reader makes his or her own choices. (Brum *in* Marocco, 2012, p. 89)

Among the many and different practices we identified as modes of displacing journalistic objectivity, which we believe these excerpts demonstrate, we would like to highlight the epistemological and paradigmatic breaks these practices appear to indicate, especially regarding limited conditions of thought established by the modern-positivist-masculine ideology of

hegemonic journalism. They suggest a type of objectivity capable of democratizing the voices through journalism. In this sense, subjectivity is intensified and, within this action, women are elevated in hierarchy of values as rationality – and a practice – subversive to hegemonic masculinity in journalism:

One needs to think of a journalism that is from constraints and uses subjectivity as a fundamental benefit in reporting and every-day news. Within this subjectivity there are elements that are considered, and not denied, that break from the “technical network” of this field of knowledge. One accepts that it is not possible to completely tame the outside world – and the Other (even though we are dealing with a “fact” or “event”), but we should first incorporate it within our limitations, within the journalistic practices. In this way, we encompass the breaks and subjectivities inherent to life – the result is a production in which human beings are perceived in their entirety and complexity, with less reduction. It is certainly a path towards less clichés and common places that so often limit our world views. To recognize that we are not capable of controlling behavior, speech, feelings and situations, in fact, it does not harm the journalistic narrative; on the contrary, it enriches it. It appears obvious but the fact is that a large part of production in this media field operates on an immense and terrible act of manipulating and authoritarianism, in which people and groups are practically obligated to behave, to respond and even to feel what journalists – who are almost always in a rush or anxious to say what is on their mind – want them to. To include that which escapes our control does not mean one stops respecting a practice/theory for which various rules of objectivity are vital, but it causes its necessary maturation and the understanding of theoretical, professional and individual limits. It means thinking about production in this area of knowledge dialectically (I am not referring to Marxist dialectics but to its philosophical aspect), like a dynamic thought that searches to explain reality and recognizing its complexity and constant instability. It is important to remember that objectivity and subjectivity cannot be extracted from news production since they are interwoven [...]. News is made through articulating between these two dimensions. Thus, a practice that recognizes subjectivity does not push aside vital elements of journalism such as pertinence to information, careful observation of data and facts, clarity in writing – and it is important to not deliberately distort an event (or phenomenon). After all, it is within the field of socially shared reality where journalism establishes its content and, even though adopting many elements of literature in its writing, it is a cornerstone of journalistic practice and what separates it in the end from fiction. Dealing with this logic while producing does not mean that journalism is pushing the “Truth” aside; a capital letter is widely used to convey the idea of excellence and that, for centuries, has protected journalists themselves (I’m just telling the truth). In fact, one of the motives for not merging this subjective practice to labor might be the actual demystification of the role of the press professional, a phenomenon that has been happening a lot whether we want it to or not (Moraes, 2015, p. 159-160, emphasis added).



### Further considerations

At a time when journalism is becoming less important, we prefer to discuss a life that flows, that renews itself and reinvents itself in a mixture of the past and the future, but might be blurred in the present through the eyes we have historically learned to see with. In this regard, we highlight the actions of three journalists in the reporter books. Apart from criticizing practices, the actions of its advocate authors are transformational: they provide a place for individual authorship. We are equally interested in placing the criticism of journalistic practices and, from different points of view, understand actions of criticizing the practice. By analyzing the criticism of journalistic practices, other epistemological biases emerge and we understand how important it is to share them as knowledge and give a body to this life in journalism.

Looking at the criticism of journalistic practices in the works from Eliane, Fabiana and Alexandra reveals not only a set of successful practices in journalism (confirmed by the wide professional recognition these authors receive from both the public and their peers) but it also reveals an opportunity to realize that these good practices, these resistances, this ability to be agents is already underway and in consonance with what one usually thinks about the obligation of journalism: help to increase and complexify the look, to diversify voices and democratize the public space, to provoke critical thinking and to give journalism a soul and a body. In their statements, the journalists bring a set of accumulated knowledge which constantly reflects on journalistic practices which allows for new knowledge to enter the field, new perspectives of thinking that demonstrate a bigger and better approximation to the real.

These journalists, through their practices (and their criticism of journalistic practices) represent an epistemological and paradigmatic break in the concepts of the real, of truth and of objectivity in journalism. They are responsible for what they see, and they know that what they are able to see is never the totality or the “Truth”; they are only fragments of reality that may be read within the limited and situated conditions of their knowledge sets. By being responsible for what they see, they move closer to the feminist objectivity defended by Haraway (1995), for whom “feminist objectivity simply means localized knowledge” (p. 12), representing a

partial and limited perspective of knowledge that they produce. They make a “subjected knowledge” emerge in the field, along the lines of what Foucault teaches us:

[...] blocks of historical knowledge that were present and disguised in the interior of functional and systematic sets, and that criticism could make them reappear, clearly, by means of erudition. [...] By ‘subjected knowledge’, I equally understand a whole set of knowledge that was disqualified as non-conceptual knowledge, as insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledge, hierarchically inferior knowledge, knowledge below the level of required understanding or science (Foucault, 2000, p. 11-12)

Through the perspective of gender, the journalistic practices performed by the authors make females who are inhibited and subordinated in hierarchical values of journalism emerge, which reveals other possibilities of the practice. Likewise, they provide more complex views through which reality and subjects can be observed, demonstrating the inability of views formed in the nineteenth century to read the twenty-first century world. Through this point of view, it is no coincidence that this regime of thinking and logic is described and operated by women who have historically occupied the bases of power and status structures in the field. “It is no coincidence” means that for women it might be less difficult to make the attributes appear that were historically prescribed as feminine (cooperation, caring, subjectivity, emotion, listening, etc.) according to the process of socialization and modes of subjectivity in dominant culture. However, it is of note that, in the perspective of gender adopted here, we are interested in discussing the fact that the attributes prescribed as masculine (strength, reason, objectivity, verticality, domination, etc.) are more valued, have more power and prestige, both in society overall and journalism in particular, regardless of whether they are performed by men or women. In this sense, one can understand that, despite Brazilian journalism being composed mainly by women (64%), the inequalities of gender remain in the distribution of power and status. This data can be observed both in the relationships of income between men and women and in which gender attributes (regardless of sex/gender of the journalists) are more valued in order to obtain power and prestige.

The study “Quem é o jornalista brasileiro?”<sup>10</sup> (2012), which indicates 64% of professionals are women, shows an inequality in income when compared to men: there were more women than men

earning up to five minimum wages and less women than men earning more than five minimum wages. The data shows that while 50% of men earn less than 5 minimum wages, this percentage increases to 65.5% for women. This percentage is also reflected in the fact that 46% of those who earn more than 5 minimum wages are men while only 31.9% for women.

In the study from Veiga da Silva (2014) one can see that gender attributes specified as masculine made up part of the characteristics recognized as being capable of providing more and better conditions for occupying positions of power and status in the hierarchies of journalism, which is mostly privileged to men, but were also attributed to women who were able to reach the top. In this same research one can see that not only subjects were recognized by masculine attributes in the occupation of power and prestige, but the news itself is constituted by gender and obeys the same current hierarchy in conventions of gender and power in society, in which males occupy the top positions: in the hierarchy of news, the reports that are more valued are *hard news* (news related to historically masculine fields like economy, politics, police) were shown to be performed by men, but not just any men, only those who were recognized by their peers for their attributes of courage, strength, competitiveness, those which we socially associate to being masculine. The few women who were shown to be equals were identified as having these “masculine” attributes.

Understanding gender as an epistemological category of power helps us to think of relationships of power in terms of and beyond the bodies and identities of subjects, and therefore realize how all things in the world have relative and gender value. Conceptually, it means taking the focus away “from the origins of universal feminine oppression”, widely privileged by gender studies and, according to Rosaldo, “ended up just contrasting and repeatedly insisting in presumable differences between men and women, asking how these differences are actually created by relationships of gender” (Rosaldo, 1995, p. 23). In this regard, the concept here is used “as a reference, not to biological limitations, but to local and specific forms of social relationships and particularly to social inequality (Rosaldo, 1995, p. 22).

Still, we understand that the journalistic practices analyzed in this paper show a resistance to the current regimes of masculine

knowledge-power predominant in society, in culture, in science and also in journalism. They give more value to attributes which are historically specified as feminine and diminished in hierarchies of journalism and, through subversion, the masculine-positivist-logic of modes of journalistic objectivity give clues to journalistic practices that are capable of providing better meetings with alterity and better conditions for not transforming differences into inequalities. And its practices appear to us to be a good “prescription” to use new and necessary eyes (Bourdieu, 1997) in – and for reading – journalism.

\*This paper was translated by Lee Sharp

## NOTES

- 1 Revised and unabridged version of the text presented to the Journalism Studies Work Group at the XXVI Annual Compós Meeting, Cásper Líbero College, São Paulo - SP, June 06 to 09, 2017.
- 2 The study “Discursive control that takes from and circulates in journalistic practices” was conducted in the Post-Graduation Program of Communication Sciences, supported by CNPq (Edital Universal/2009), coordinated by Beatriz Marocco.
- 3 Post-doctorate study called “Us and the Other in journalistic practices of excellence: the life history of well-known journalists in Brazil as part of understanding the exercise of alterity in journalism”, developed by Marcia Veiga da Silva, supervised by Beatriz Marocco and the PPGCOM Unisinos and funded by PNPDCAPES (2015-2020).
- 4 Author of the books “Coluna Prestes: o avesso da lenda” (Arts and Crafts, 1994), “A Vida Que Ninguém Vê” (Arquipélago Publishing, 2006), “O Olho da Rua – uma repórter em busca da literatura da vida real”(Globo, 2008 / Arquipélago, 2017), “Uma duas (LeYa Brazil, 2011), “A Menina Quebrada” (Arquipélago, 2013), “Meus desacontecimentos: a história da minha vida com palavras” (LeYa, 2014). She has won more than 40 national and international reporting awards like Esso, Vladimir Herzog, Ayrton Senna,

Líbero Badaró, Sociedade Interamericana de Imprensa e Rei de Espanha. In 2008, she was awarded the UN Press Special Trophy. She was considered one of the *Top 10* most Admired Brazilian Journalists in 2014 and 2015 according to J&Cia, in partnership with Maxpress. She is also one of the most *Decorated Journalists in the Country*, ranked number one by the Portal dos Jornalistas in 2016.

- 5 Author of the books “Os Sertões” (Cepe Publishing, 2009), “Nabuco em Pretos e Brancos” (Massangana Publishing, 2011), “No País do Racismo Institucional” (Public Ministry of Pernambuco, 2013), “O Nascimento de Joicy” (Arquipelago Publishing, 2015). She won the Esso Award for Journalism (for Os Sertões, 2009), Esso Award for Reporting (for O Nascimento de Joicy, 2011); Esso Regional Award (A Vida Mambembe, 2007), Petrobras Award for Journalism (2014), Embratel Culture Award (for Quase Brancos, Quase Negros, 2011). She also won two Cristina Tavares awards for Os Sertões (2009) and Quase Brancos, Quase Negros (2010)
- 6 Author of the books “Caderno Afegão” (Tinta da China, 2009), “Viva México” (Tinta da China, 2010), “Tahrir!” (Tinta da China, 2011), “E a noite Roda” (Tinta da China, 2012; Companhia das Letras, 2017), “Vai, Brasil” (Tinta da China, 2013), “O meu amante de domingo” (Tinta da China, 2014), “Deus dará” (Tinta da China, 2016). She won reporting awards from the Portuguese Press Club, Press House, Gazeta Award 2005, the Romance and Soap Opera Award from the Portuguese Writers’ Association (2012) (in Portugal)
- 7 Eliane Brum and Alexandra Lucas Coelho were interlocutors in the study “O controle discursivo que toma forma e circula nas práticas jornalísticas”, coordinated by Beatriz Marocco. Their statements were gathered together with statements from the other journalists interviewed in the publication “O jornalista e a prática” (Marocco, 2012). The statements from Fabiana Moraes were selected from the book “O nascimento de Joicy: transexualidade, jornalismo e os limites éticos entre repórter e personagem” (Moraes, 2015)
- 8 Comments are understood here as deciphering fundamental texts in journalism (Foucault, 1996; Marocco, 2015).
- 9 Expression crystallized by French thinkers to describe a generation of reporters from the last century who worked in journalism.

- 10 The study “Quem é o jornalista brasileiro? Perfil da profissão no Brasil” (“Who is a Brazilian journalist? A profile of the profession in Brazil”) was conducted in 2012 by the Post-Graduation Program in Political Sociology at UFSC, in partnership with the National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ). Available at: <http://perfildojornalista.ufsc.br/files/2013/04/Perfil-do-jornalista-brasileiro-Sintese.pdf>

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RECEIVED ON: 14/10/2017 | APPROVED ON: 11/02/2018