

# REPRESENTATION OF DIFFERENCES IN BRAZILIAN JOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Considering the technological advance, which enhances the production of mediatic discourses, and the notion of a libidinal power installed in our globalized societies, reflecting upon representation of differences seems to be a major issue. This essay discusses the production of journalistic discourses from an epistemological perspective. The field of media is taken as constituted by a triple component – discourse/narrative/machines – and we suggest that this triad has proved to be incomplete: discourse and narrative, once they really are vertexes of the triangle, are absences. Two journalistic-documentary productions – which intend to represent life in the slums of Brazil – are compared in order to reflect upon representation of differences in Brazilian journalistic discourse. In view of the up-to-date polarization and pulverization of discourses, we suggest that in the perspective of the journalistic discourse, one can only speak about alterity if one tries to comprehend the ways news is staged.

**Key-words:** Journalism; discourse; documentary; culture; representation.

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, considering the relevance of the technological advance in the process of intensification of mediatic discourse production, the issue of the representation of differences constitutes a central subject. In the face of the diversity of ways in which one is able to narrate events, social communication, and particularly journalism, assumes a preponderant role. It is another place from which one plots the life of the other. The newspaper “*Folha de S. Paulo*” on May 26, 2006 presented various articles about the media products that have the dilemmas of Brazilian *favelas*<sup>3</sup> as their subject matter. There is a variety of mediatic products in which the contents focus on this problem and the presentation of the documentary film *Falcão – os meninos do tráfico*<sup>4</sup>, besides renewing the discussion of the theme dealt with, helps us to develop this reflection.

Presented and exhaustively announced by the TV program

“*Fantástico*” on May 19, 2006, the documentary was directed by rapper MV Bill<sup>6</sup> who during the interviews described himself as a legitimate person to speak about that place, since he was born and raised in the *favelas*. On presenting what he considered was the reality of the minors who worked as “watchmen” of the hills<sup>7</sup>, MV Bill believed he was capable of mobilizing the nation in a distinct manner with the images he produced. And *TV Globo*, which communicated a one-hour interruption in its Sunday program schedule, seemed to agree with MV Bill, since it affirmed that we would have access, on that Sunday, to images of drug dealing and *favelas* never seen before.

It is a fact that the images caused a tremendous impact. On the next day, the comments of those who watched the film basically presented two approaches: while some of them appeared to be shocked by what they had seen, others assumed a posture of indifference, because they claimed that they already knew about that situation; since they were bombarded with news and images about the same theme on a daily basis. The reaction of the first group seemed to point out how the panic that they felt attained its materialization in the images of children or youngsters that, with their faces covered by a black strip, revealed the toughness and cruelty involved in making a living from drug dealing. The other group, on the other hand, seemed to tell us that there was nothing new in those images, since they spoke of something that had already been seen and shown in many other places. The impact caused by the presentation of that documentary in the television scenario also revealed something that was not new: helpless in the face of a reality so far from what we are and desire to be, we always end up either condemned to panic or to becoming indifferent.

According to anthropologist Alba Zaluar, the repercussion of *Falcão – os meninos do tráfico* has “proven once again the greater communication power that television has in relation to the other media, not only due to its capability to penetrate into so many homes, but also due to the strength of the images associated with the voice and the text of what is said” (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 02/26/2006). The event as it appears to be brings to the surface the power of the technical images that besides leading us to search the facts for the truth they seem to reveal, make, for example, the film director, for reasons associated with his own life experience, appear to be the possessor of a legitimate discourse. Therefore, by making us focus on “the voice and the text of what is said”, we always rely on the object of the discourse – strictly speaking, on the theme – while we more and more lose our focus on the ways the news are staged, of the

discourse within the object.

With respect, for instance, to the discourse of another documentary film, *Notícias de uma guerra particular*<sup>8</sup> – also with a journalistic cachet and in which the proposition is to represent ways of life and characters related to the drug business in Brazilian *favelas* – we perceive that one of the narrative strategies that marks it is the panoramic view of the city of Rio de Janeiro, an urban space that includes, with its contradictions, the *favela* and the “asphalt”<sup>9</sup>. At various times throughout this narrative structure we are taken by the camera to see from above a maze of lights, houses, buildings, cars and streets which, from our perspective, brings out the diversity of lives and paths to be discovered. The image we see is the same one Michel de Certeau (2000) reflects on when discussing the issues concerning the city and its passers-by: seen from above, according to the author, we understand that the complex dimension that inhabits our city belongs to the traces made by its pedestrians; in other words, every city only takes shape when the pedestrians trace their ways on it.

In *Notícias...*, the landscape unfolded before us is soon intersected by others that reveal the *favela*'s labyrinth, letting the viewers see faces and places full of the contradictions and paradoxes that delineate the urban space they live in. This view of the micro is not disconnected from the macro that surrounds it, since what we see throughout the labyrinths – children at play, guns and drugs in the hands of the drug dealers, dirty streets and pedestrians – is constitutive of it. We realize that the news we are having access to is about not only a particular war, but a particular event that affects everyone.

Besides the possible effects caused by the presentation of these documentaries, this article, by comparing the narrative structures of *Falcão...* and *Notícias...*, argues that for present-day journalism, an analysis that seeks to know the ways the facts are narrated is fundamental. We believe therefore that it is in the process of narrative construction – in the ways the news is staged – that one can reveal and evaluate some of the mechanisms for producing the differences that, according to Castro-Gómez (2000), are one of the challenges of the critical theory in contemporary societies. From this perspective, we take as a reference some of the strategies that have legitimated the journalistic discourse in Brazil, aiming not only at discussing the problems of a discourse that rarely faces the challenge of a dialogue with the other, but also at reflecting upon the production of knowledge about this same discourse.

### **The “I” and the other in the dynamics of representation**

Journalism studies in Brazil, which in recent years have concentrated their questions on the content perspective, on what the news contains and means, for example, used to present as a basic issue the desire to understand and explain journalism. An approach absolutely necessary, considering the inaugural space of a field constituted mostly on the basis of a practice – a proceeding lacking in reflection – rather than a praxis. This practice – essential and urgent as the illuminist approach tried to find spaces to express its desire to clarify and explain the facts of the world – by accepting its establishment as a field of knowledge, helped journalism be invested with the need of self-explanation, a fact unfolded according to what one conceives as its raw material, the information, and to the function attributed to it: showing to society what is happening.

Therefore, we would have to understand journalism not from the perspective of what this specific field offers as a complex arrangement, but from the aseptic propositions that in the field of communication as a whole used to regard any noise as an undesirable matter, since such noise would only make its practice less effective in complying with its attributions, which in journalism would be, summarily, to show, clarify and explain the facts of the daily routine. In the bulk of these studies<sup>10</sup>, we look for answers to what journalism should be, discussing ethical issues – what the posture and the role of a journalist should be, for example – and the relevance of this entity that legitimized itself as the place in which the facts would be revealed, as if the act of bringing the facts to the surface itself would not contain the complexity one tried to avoid.

From this point of view, and also because in this field one deals with what is immediate, our studies and practices are devoted to creating ways to enable us to speak about the micro using objectivity as a strategic ritual (Tuchman, 1999) and separating related genres – informative and opinionative, for example – to avoid possible incoherences present in any discursive order. One should understand that nowadays since the machines themselves allow us to use countless ways to narrate the daily routine – our private little wars – this way of speaking, previously legitimated by the discourse regarding journalism, is far from facing a challenge which we believe is central: moving closer to the other. In this sense, the narrative structure that we find in *Falcão...* is elucidative.

In this documentary's opening we perceive at once that the theme will be dealt with from a reductionist point of view, either because we will see it from the perspective of the one who "trims" it – MV Bill, its author – or because the fact will be taken as if it were not part of a spatiality that adds to its complexity. In *Falcão...* we see the *favela* framed through the

window of a car in which MV Bill is riding, and he is the one who speaks about and explains that place. We do not enter there to discover what is hidden in the city's labyrinths, but to know how life in the *favela* is. The didactic explanatory manner of speaking in the author's discourse and in the various following testimonies, even though coherent with the director's propositions – since he says he knows what to show – is revealing, above all, of the problematic relation between the “I” and the other in the representation's perspective.

One of the ethical dilemmas which are encountered not only in the production of documentaries but in every object that engages in the function of speaking about the other, refers to ways of representing the other in the latter's difference<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, if we care about how to make it possible to let the other be seen apart from what our eyes recognize as “familiar”, it seems fundamental for us to understand that, according to a record, filmic or of any other discursive order, the view, reduced to a didactic and/or opinionative dimension – the same that places journalism in a illuminist and conductive epistemology (Resende, 2002) – is insufficient. Regarding Falcão..., for example, from what is provided to be seen, what stands out is the total lack of perspective and possibility of relation: in face of the incoherence of what I see, I end up being absolutely powerless. According to newspaper critic Amir Labaki, “the interviewees [in Falcão...] are depersonalized by black strips covering their eyes or a blurring effect on their faces, without identity except their association with crime and violence”. And the spectator, Labaki says, “saw a stretched-out sensationalistic report, devoid of any factual novelty”.<sup>12</sup>

### **Journalism: Enunciation and will to truth**

The field of the media undergoes a process of correlating forces with various social fields – political, economical, cultural and religious, among others – since it becomes a structural element for the constitution and composition of these spaces. Considering the fact that to journalism, more specifically, befalls the task of speaking about and to other social instances, we have to consider that one of the possible places where the correlation of forces is established, with all of its asymmetries and fragmentations, is the field of discourse. A fundamental instance for reflecting on the representation issue is at the present time when the altered notions of space and time reconfigure the roles and pertinences either in the fields or the social actors that constitute society and with which the mediatic products invariably dialogue (Resende, 2003).

From this point of view, the question of the representation of differences, in the perspective of journalistic products, establishes an intrinsic relation with the enunciation issue. For Benveniste (1995), the question about the speaking subject and the subject of the utterance<sup>13</sup> is in the center of the reflection, which means what the speaker is in relation to the receiver, what the *I* is in relation to the *You*; the author sets out from the distinction between *l'énoncé*, already uttered, and *l'énonciation*, the action that produces the utterance. Benveniste focuses on the way by which an individual marks himself by what he says, establishing in this manner what is conventionally called the “*theorie de l'énonciation*”. The author affirms: “Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a *subject* by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse. (...) This polarity of persons is the fundamental condition in language” (1995:287-7). In this same theoretical perspective, although in a distinct direction, Bakhtin (1979) demonstrates that the enunciation is a social phenomenon rather than an individual one, determined by a historical context that leads to the constitution of subjectivity itself; another aspect we believe to be relevant when dealing with the reflection concerning journalistic enunciation.

The reference to Foucault (1996) also seems fundamental, as we understand that the gesture of addressing a discourse implies what the author calls “the will to truth”. By working with the three procedures of exclusion in which the discourse’s production operates (interdiction, *Segregation* and the will to truth), Foucault makes explicit the means by which the place of the speaking subject is legitimized, establishing these means as based on social conditions in which the discourses operate and are uttered.

Taking the third procedure – the will to truth – as a centralizer, because at the same time it reformulates and legitimates the other two, the author helps us to think about the field of media and therefore about the places of discourse as what legitimate our will to truth. If for Foucault, societies of knowledge were previously the instances that legitimated a discourse intended to be truthful, we are likely to suppose that media, with their institutional support and through their objects that produce discourses, constitute a fundamental instance because they operate as regulators and upholders of a *status quo* that aims to order the facts which compose our social relations.

This means that the field of journalism is given the task of producing knowledge about world events, a task that is conferred upon it either because it holds the technology – an incommensurable machine power

– or because other knowledge-producing institutions – with pedagogical character – grant the right of speech to the media discourse. From these places, through will and power, covered by the will to truth, journalistic discourses become maximum expressions of what is truthful; and it is with them, it should be said, that we shape our ways of understanding and seeing the world, views that compose our perception of the other and our way of dealing with the different or the similar.

Foucault also alerts us to the fact that the procedure of *Segregation*, though rather weakened, does not necessarily undergo a rupture, since as the author says, “(...) it is always through maintaining censorship that the hearing is fulfilled” (1996:13). In other words, in the field of media, this condition is confirmed: the other, once in the condition of speaking, always speaks from a non-place, because he invariably speaks through whom concedes him this right, a condition of authority, rather than a practice of alterity. And it is this procedure, it should be mentioned, that reiterates the first one, interdiction, the indicator “that one does not have the right to say everything, that one cannot speak everything at every opportunity, that, finally, not just anyone can talk about just anything” (Foucault, 1996:09).

Therefore, a vicious circle is configured in the field of the media and the idea emerges that truth is to be found in what the discourse says, never in what it does or even in what it is. In this aspect, journalism, although not in an exclusive manner, is exemplary for the reiteration of this presupposition: the individual who speaks and from where he speaks are absolutely relevant criteria and definers of what happens to be the truth or not. We believe or pretend to believe in the idea that truth is there, either because the place of the event’s representation is institutionally legitimated or because the one who utters the discourse, in the empirical figure of the individual who speaks, has credibility; even though sometimes we could question him, it can be said, for reasons almost always ideological. In this sense, following Foucault’s reflection, questioning and doubting the will to truth is essential.

### **Polarization and pulverization of discourses**

As an example, we mention the following situation: at the time of Iraq’s invasion in 2003, several media – press, television and others – either reported the event from the perspective of the invaders or, as the media claimed, from the point of view of the invaded. The journalists who accompanied the military forces in order to relate the facts more accurately ended up revealing how fragile are the discourses sustained

by indicative information<sup>14</sup> – those based on the will to truth as the primary conditioning factor. A more attentive look at CNN's reports<sup>15</sup> leads us to perceive that the expressions were exclusively what the invader nation wanted people to believe. When Al Jazeera<sup>16</sup> entered the scene, doubtlessly a landmark in the contemporary media scenario, it polarized the discourses: since the war was against evil, evil was willing to speak.

This process of polarization of discourses, an example of ways of conflict manifestation in the media area, does not present as a novelty the fact that each one, on each side, has something to say, for this aspect is already known ever since man seeks means of expression. The freshness comes particularly from the fact that the polarized discourses cause an up-to-date specific situation to stand out, which has relation to its technological advance: the reports arrive faster, from everywhere, in various ways and in different forms. It is very probable that never before in the West – at least from the Brazilian perspective – a strongly expressive presence of a media born on that other side was noticed. In other words, Al Jazeera invaded, with all its local power and in the same real time as the other networks, the mediatic space previously dominated more easily by the United States.

Its arrival with such strength and speed makes us face the fact that each discourse, in its own way, concomitantly, wants to present itself as truer than the other. Both discourses anchor themselves vehemently to the supposed legitimacy either of the one who speaks or of the place from where he speaks. In this way, the simultaneousness of these discourses' exposure – discourses that reach us through the media discourses – is fundamental for us to understand that the clash reaches its climax, reducing the discourse to its will to truth, a procedure that is exacerbated in response to the strife for the occupation of mediatic space.

Besides this polarization, the reports arrive from many places and in various formats: weblogs with a personal stamp and slanted information, belonging to citizens of the invader and invaded countries, which report the facts from the perspective that is more convenient for them; feature films, documentaries and cable TV programs that try to narrate the facts differently from what we receive from the official media; other printed media, including books, that reveal stories not mentioned by the major newspapers; texts many times found in the so-called top-level press that in extreme situations makes space available for various forms of description of the daily routine. Therefore, this pulverized and polarized discourse, by making explicit the will to truth as a trademark of the

mediatic discourse, leads us to question truth itself, making us doubt the legitimacy of the places and the discoursing subject which obtrude in the media discourses. Besides, it is from this perspective that we made the question of differences in such narratives problematic.

While discussing “the challenge of reaching out towards the other” in the documentaries’ narratives, Guimarães & Lima (2007:154) suggest that one of the fundamental actions to be comprehended refers to the necessity of abandoning the I as a means for understanding the *Other*. It is necessary to “decentralize it radically, concede to the Other the priority so far conceded to the I”. From this viewpoint, MV Bill, by presenting himself as a legitimate speaker of the *favela* and letting us know it through a narrative structure that reflects his view, provides a revealing gesture: what is presented there is the will to truth of his discourse, which makes any encounter with the other unfeasible in the representation context.

In the specific case of this narrative, the discourse in the first person does not reveal a problem merely because it is based on a first-person perspective, but also because other discourses are linked to it, trying to explain, in a shallow encyclopedic tone, what the drug business is – analyzing entries and notes, for example, as to what is meant by a *fogueteiro*<sup>17</sup> and crack cocaine – giving indicative information that is in turn associated with images that tell us how to see the characters. In addition, through the camera of Falcão..., the children involved in the illegal drug business are shown either from above or from below. The camera is rarely placed on the same level as the children, unless it aims at showing their blindfolded eyes and blurred faces. In this manner, the perspective appears to be merely “content-based<sup>18</sup>”, as if the accounts we hear and the scenes we see do not belong to the film script; they were framed there and they describe but do not define the events.

In this sense, the film script of *Falcão...*, as a mirror, reflects the mediatic scenario that we want to understand: the various I’s, that in the explicitness of the discourse’s will to truth make the dialogue unfeasible, reverberate an ampler situation based on the micro-space of the narrative: they are various voices, or a cacophony if we wish; the reverse of the polyphonic dimension (Bakhtin) minimally necessary for us to evoke a hypothesis of a practice of alterity. From the point of view of the reflection concerning journalistic discourses, which are very much anchored in the presupposition that they are the possessors of truth, the social and technological situation nowadays renews our conditions for reflection: what the polarization and pulverization of the discourses reveal to us indeed – in the mediatic macro-space and the structure of

many of its narratives – is that if everything is the will to truth, truth or even non-truth, can be in various places and in various discourses.

### **Veiling and production of differences**

There is another troublesome element: the technological advances we experienced with extreme force and velocity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led us to be placed at the mercy of the machines. Surrounded by an imaginary based on progress and the ordering of the world, we live in search of facilitating formulas to help us apprehend the world in a simple manner; we want to have the world explained rather than made problematic. In this sense, technology – particularly with its image-producing apparatus – plays a central role. Vilém Flusser calls attention to the fact that technical images interpose themselves between man and the world, functioning in fact as folding screens. For the author, “man, instead of resorting to images based on the world, ends up living based on the images. He no longer deciphers the image scene as the world’s significations, but the world itself starts to be experienced as a group of images” (2002:09). This observation places in question the fact that images produced by machines fulfill in a certain way the function of explaining the world to us, serving as facilitating objects; as we see what is “said” by the images, we believe that the world is truly represented there<sup>19</sup>.

Once more the documentary *Falcão...* is exemplar: the ensemble of voices and images that intend to explain to us the drug business dilemmas, besides approaching our “illiteracy”, as Flusser would say, trims and divides life in a *favela*, hindering us from making the sharing gesture. What we see and hear are scenes that only in their desire for transparency offer answers to our dilemmas, as occurs many times in journalistic discourse, which in the light of a similar explanatory order is predominantly based on statistics and numbers. It is not a matter of thinking in this way about the entire journalistic production, but in general terms it is important to consider the dominating epistemological scheme in this field, its casualty numbers, its generalized definitions, its process of labeling people and things, which simplify complex problems and greatly contribute to the conception of a world that appears to be likely to be put in order and yet impossible to be shared.

The texts and images produced under the aegis of this episteme encounter their motivation and reason for existing in the idea that the purer and more exact the information in them is, the closer to communication they will be in their reports. It is truly a matter of a quantitative dimension; there is not any questioning regarding the quality of the information, but

regarding the volume of information (novelty) contained in the report and how fast it reaches the consumer. These media objects are produced with the intent of getting the closest they can to the reality of the object represented, in the certainty that in this way they will tell the truth, the primary presupposition of the will to truth which is established in them. This aspect also explains the fact that the perspective of having an “other” to whom one ought to speak is practically annihilated. Flusser, on thinking about photographic apparatus, says that this narrative “is programmed to be distributed to an empty space, like what is done by television and radio” (2002:46), in which category we could certainly include newspapers. An “empty space” occupied by a shapeless group to which and about which the media products speak, a space where all differences are veiled as if they were dead and, at the same time, as if they could be erased.

This process of veiling the differences, considering the historical, social and cultural idiosyncrasies of the present day, coexists with another, also generated by the polarization and pulverization of the places and discourses: the process of production of differences. When one narrates the day-to-day of the *favelas*, for example, from the perspective of such differentiated voices and places, we are induced to be attentive to the fact that the categories defined to explain the logic that governs the formatting of the texts and the technical images need to become more fluid, at the risk of preventing us from ever speaking to the other again. Particularly in this case, it is worth paying attention to what Guimarães & Lima (2007:149) say in relation to the difficulties of encountering the other in the ambit of representation: “[they] increase exceptionally when it is a matter of filming the other from a different class, the ones who belong to a social group beyond (...) the edge of the visible sphere”.

Hence, profiling voices and scenes that are propagated in default of the other is a mere stimulus for the production of differences, since it is important to remember that the search for truth (Foucault, 1996) is still in play. In other words, the one who speaks through the media continues to be the one that is believed to be the more legitimate speaker, and what occurs in these cases is the alternation of roles or powers in the mediatic space, because the one who speaks is always an *I* who discredits the *other*. Therefore, we believe that the difference produced in that discourse is purely an effect, as well as the truth that it relies on. In this context, it is worth noting that the process of production of differences, which does not result in a relation of alterity, is simply part of the logic of latter-day capitalism – a time when information-

and knowledge-producing machines achieve primacy. Thus, it is in this scenario that while it is important to know what the discourse says, it is fundamental to investigate what it does.

### **The staging of the news: the libidinal power**

It is from a challenging perspective and within a cultural approach that it seems to be possible to recognize the complex dimension in which mediatic discourses are inscribed as instances for producing meaning. Cultural Studies represent an effort to lead thinking in directions pointing more to the daily routine and to the culture. However, in order not to run the risk of becoming limited to a cultural approach which would neglect the relation between culture and political economics, it is necessary to redefine the role of the critical theory of culture in accordance with the logic of latter-day capitalism and the roles played by the media in contemporary society. For Santiago de Castro-Gómez (2000:05), “the starting point for Cultural Studies is (...) the devices with which the symbolic welfare (culture) is produced and offered to the public as a commodity”.

This aspect makes us redouble our attention, since with it we encompass the idea that the images and texts we produce, including the journalistic ones, are fully representations of ideology and culture<sup>20</sup>. And in this sense, according to Castro-Gómez, the media are ideological apparatuses that have an advantage over the others, for “their subjection devices are much less coercive”. According to the author, “within them there does not circulate a power that ‘disciplines and punishes’, but a power that seduces”. In this aspect, beyond the disciplinary power of modernity, criticized by Foucault, Castro-Gómez says that we would be now “facing the libidinal power of globalization” (2000:14). Considering that the reading we make today of the mediatic products depends to a great extent on the way the news is staged, Castro-Gómez says:

The war of images about a war will be won by the group that, aiming to imprint meaning, best utilizes the libidinal power, in other words, by that group that sets out all the seducing mechanisms of the image to obtain the non-coercive consent of the consumers (2000:16).

Therefore, given the devices which we make use of to stage the news, we perceive that in the war of images involving the drug business and/or the *favela*, the exclusive view of one who claims to be an expert in that reality may even be seductive, but in the ambit of the representation of differences it becomes configured in a reduced manner, less attentive to

the polysemy in which life itself is inscribed, in a *favela* or in any other place. We even dare to suggest that from the perspective of these images that reduce reality, the script in default of the other leads to the libidinal, the coercive aspect itself, for they are images that impose on us a unique order. In *Falcão...*, even though it is announced to us that we will be introduced to the drug business reality through the eyes of one who lives it, we discover that what prevails is the view of one who trims and produces the images we see.

A second aspect that Guimarães & Lima (2007:154) point out as fundamental when dealing with the ethical field of representation of the other in documentaries concerns the need to “promote the disjunction between the image and the text, and by assuming that speaking is not seeing, set the image free either from the visible or the invisible”. In *Notícias de uma guerra particular*, we have access to a juxtaposition of images and testimonies that do not complete each other, since they are contradictory, but that interpenetrate one another, because they weave a complex network of lives involved in the *favela* and the drug business. To the experiences reported to us by the minors, the police chief, the military policemen, the families involved in the drug business and also the very media, which in a meta-discursive dimension are also revealed as a character, images of the so-called war itself, or of the “*movimento*”<sup>21</sup>, and images of children at play in the streets and people walking home or going to work are added. With the practice of this narrative weaving, there is no contraposition between right and wrong, or good and evil, but it is a form of narration which constantly seems to put in doubt either the speech or the image; in such a narrative one does not say necessarily what will be offered to be seen, as well as one does not show exclusively what the speech says.

Alba Zaluar confirms our view revealing some of the incoherences in what is said in MV Bill’s documentary. “Without presenting new information”, according to her, “*Falcão...* casts a tender look on the little drug dealers, but submerges itself in the ghetto culture and ignores the rest of the social actors present in ‘*Notícias de uma guerra particular*’”. Therefore, by comparing the two products, we realize that the news staged from such an angle leaves adrift other angles that also could be significant in making the problem understood. In *Notícias...*, João Moreira Salles, who does not appear to be someone who has lived in a *favela*, by approaching the theme from the perspectives of the policemen and the criminals, shows us that “there are many voices, many actors in the drama”, says Zaluar.

The various products involving *favelas*, among them the various weblogs, documentaries, printed matter and films about daily particular wars – the small great wars that we are impelled to experience today – say first of all that there are various ways to narrate the events. Hence, we understand that once the news becomes a post-industrial product, knowing what happens in the *favelas* is not enough, since one should also know the ways there are to speak about them, instances in which various voices and various meanings could at times be revealed.

### **Journalism and mediatization of discourses**

Journalism, which we believe to be the place of confluence of voices and production of meanings, seems to be significant in the contemporary context since it helps us understand that informing or producing images and texts in the discourses, whose internal procedures are ruled by the classification of the information, means giving ideological and cultural forms to the preexisting facts - a relevant observation that needs to be questioned and contextualized in the space where journalism is inscribed. Flusser (2002:49), on considering the process of classifying the information, helps us to understand this problem: “every scientific indication” – in which category journalistic information fits perfectly – “has political and esthetic aspects; every political imperative has scientific and esthetic aspects; every optative gesture (work of art) has scientific and political aspects”.

With the problematics therefore expanded, it is important to emphasize that it is necessary to recognize that the political place of journalistic discourses is not dissociated from the esthetic, which is established in them and to which they are subjected. The aggravating element is the fact that nowadays coercive power is connected to a libidinal power – the seducing gesture can also be excluding. This fact, besides being a strong indicator that the space for the expansion of the discourse does not necessarily mean democratization of the discourses, maintains us as hostages of those who know how to better produce the images and the texts. Thus, working from the perspective of a possible differentiation of the narrations, at the same time that it makes us think about the journalism statute in times of extreme mediatization of events, it might lead us to produce or point out distinct strategies: are there narrations that, with the intention of explaining the facts, seek totalizing truths? Are there others that point to a more complex dimension?

According to Michel de Certeau (2000), alterity does not consist of speaking of the other in the text, but of being aware of the other

through what the script says without meaning to say it. MV Bill, besides being the film's director, is a rapper, which probably caused the film's background music to be a rap. Again, another comparison with *Notícias de uma guerra particular* can clarify our view: in this documentary, rap music is also played, though not as background music but as part of the script itself. In one of the scenes, the testimony of one of the drug dealers is absolutely connected to the music, either by the rhythm of his utterance or by the use the character makes of his words. Therefore, the reported event – life and the drug business in the *favela* – is imbricated with inter-texts that help us to comprehend the complexity and the structure of this event.

According to Correa (2007:14), the search for a balance or “quality”, as the author says, in the language practiced in the journalistic field, can signify a “return to the text in search of the enunciative marks”. Definitely, even if it is relevant to question whether the wars – of the drug business or of any other nature – will be the subject matter for today's newspaper, before the processes of veiling and producing differences, it is not less important to try to find the ways and the places in which these discourses will occur. The technological advances that exacerbate the production of narratives and make the plurality of ways to narrate the events of the daily routine stand out, should make us attentive to the perspective that there are narratives that supply the world with differences, while there are others that do not; there are some that reject the particularities and still others that emphasize them; there are others that speak of a place in motion and some that narrate the world as something static.

In the representation's dimension, everything seems to indicate that one can better confront the dilemma of encountering the other by recognizing the difference between these narrations. In various ways, since what is brought to the scene is the will to truth itself, rediscovering news in its esthetic dimension can contribute to making us become concerned, not necessarily because we want to keep on searching for truth, but probably because we want to know the various angles of the problem. In this situation we alter the focus, as what is in question is the truth of the event, not the truth of the one who speaks about it.

## | NOTES

- 1 This paper, with the sponsorship of the Swedish Institute, was presented

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- 2 [1] One of the major Brazilian newspapers, with an average circulation of 307,000 copies in November 2007 – as measured by the Circulation Verification Institute (IVC) – the biggest circulation in Brazil.
- 3 Brazilian word used in reference to an urban region inhabited by low-income people, composed of precarious housing, without basic water supply and sanitation. It is correlated to the word “slum”.
- 4 *Falcão – the drug dealing children.*
- 5 Sunday television program broadcasted by *Rede Globo*, the biggest television network company in Brazil.
- 6 Rapper who collaborates with social movements engaged in helping low-income youngsters to avoid crime.
- 7 The *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro are generally located on hills. It is common to refer to them as “hills”.
- 8 *News of a particular war.* Produced in 1999, it was selected as one of the best contemporary Brazilian films by *Revista de Cinema* (a magazine specialized in Cinema) and won the national competition for documentaries in the film festival *É Tudo Verdade* (It's All True). It is an ample and cogent portrait of violence in Rio de Janeiro. Snapshots of daily life in *favelas* dominated by the drug dealers, alternating with interviews with all the characters involved in the conflict between drug dealers and the police – including the local residents who live in the crossfire and specialists in public security. The reality of violence is presented without evasion and in a most comprehensive way, rendering evident the absurdity of an endless war without possible winners. Film synopsis:  
[http://www.2001video.com.br/detalhes\\_produto\\_Extra\\_dvd.asp?produto=11297](http://www.2001video.com.br/detalhes_produto_Extra_dvd.asp?produto=11297) (accessed 5/23/2008).
- 9 Word used in Rio de Janeiro with reference to urbanized areas, as opposed to *favelas*.
- 10 In this article, for space reasons, the studies with a positivist paradigm are being dealt with in a generalizing manner. The reflection on journalism studies, in its hegemonic perspective, is better formulated in RESENDE (2002B).

- 11 RAMOS (2005) identifies 3 distinct ethical fields referring to the representation of the other in documentary film production. Our reflection aims to explore the problematic raised by this author, discussing the same issue from the perspective of the production called “journalistic”.
- 12 In <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/ilustrada/ult90u59234.shtml> (accessed 5/23/2008).
- 13 “The French linguist Emile Benveniste made the first distinction between what he called the *sujet de l'énonciation* (the speaking subject) and the *sujet de l'énoncé* (the subject of the utterance). In the first case the position of the speaking subject gives a statement its importance (as in “I promise you”), while in the second it seems unimportant who is uttering the statement (as in “The king died in 1897.”) This distinction forms one aspect of Benveniste’s further distinction between two fundamental types of discourse - history and discourse”. In: [http://info.ccs.curtin.edu.au/AJCS\\_journal/J1V1/J1V1Discourse,%20History,%20Fiction%20-%20Language%20and%20Aboriginal%20History.htm](http://info.ccs.curtin.edu.au/AJCS_journal/J1V1/J1V1Discourse,%20History,%20Fiction%20-%20Language%20and%20Aboriginal%20History.htm)
- 14 Flusser (2002) classifies the information contained in discourses as indicative, imperative and optative. The first one, for the author, is the classification of the so called “journalistic information” and has truth as its classical ideal. It is also interesting to note that this information classification leads us directly to what is said by Foucault (1996) in relation to the procedures of exclusion, which are within the discourse; this is the case of the media products specifically dealt with in this article.
- 15 American media company which at that time used to sell and propagate to the world official news about what they called the “war against evil”.
- 16 Arabic television network that claimed to be more apt to contemplate and relate the events from the perspective of the invaded ones.
- 17 A position in the drug business chain: the person in charge of shooting off firecrackers to communicate the arrival of a police squad.
- 18 Purely mechanistic education (FREIRE, 1992).
- 19 Flusser (2002) bases his ideas on our historical and cultural conditions to make an interesting reflection regarding the presence of images in the contemporary world. For the author, “traditional images – the cave paintings – seek to imagine the world, and when these images fall into a crisis, written texts, the founders of modern chronological history, arrive to carry out the function of explaining the images that used to imagine the world”.

- 20 For Castro-Gómez (2000:14), “the expansion of the concept of ideology (...) can be of great value for the understanding of how images, figures and symbolic narratives (...) built representations that serve to reinforce the domination of some groups over others. These ideological representations are not (...) unitary, as Althusser used to think at first. Through the media not only the major political and economic ideologies are built, but also ideologies of gender, race, sexuality and social position that are not necessarily reducible to each other”. This reflection can be added to APPADURAI’s (2003), who sees images and texts as fundamental social representations for building meaning in the contemporary world.
- 21 *Movimento* is a term used in reference to drug dealing.

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