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Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo

## RESEARCH: UNDERSTANDING THE THEORY OF JOURNALISM (COLOMBIAN CONTRIBUTIONS)<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT** - The history of journalism is a field of contacts and loans. For this reason, research in journalism has and brings a broad and complex agenda, including: the process of news production, its language construction through different forms, structures and tenses. The methodology, epistemology and qualitative research in journalism; the history of journalists and journalism; i.e., the multiple relationships between journalism and culture, memory, social theories and discourse; fields that have been studied and researched in Latin America. But the question on our professional Ethos is what remains the transverse axis of the research, not only in the American continent, but in the world. It is fundamental to our existence and to the depth analysis of this set of features and modes, behaviors, that make up the character and identity of our profession.

**Keywords:** History and theory of journalism. Epistemology. Report.

### PESQUISA: COMPREENDENDO A TEORIA DO JORNALISMO (CONTRIBUIÇÕES COLOMBIANAS)

**RESUMO** - A história do jornalismo é um campo de contatos e empréstimos. Por esse motivo, a pesquisa em jornalismo tem e traz uma agenda ampla e complexa, como: o processo de produção jornalística, sua construção da linguagem por meio de diferentes formas, estruturas e tempos; a metodologia, epistemologia e pesquisa qualitativa em jornalismo; a história dos jornalistas e do jornalismo. Ou seja, as relações múltiplas do jornalismo com a cultura, a memória, as teorias sociais e o discurso são campos que têm sido abordados e pesquisados na Ibero-América. Mas a pergunta sobre nosso ethos profissional é o que continua a ser o eixo transversal da pesquisa, não apenas no continente americano, mas no mundo. Ela é fundamental em nossa existência e na análise profunda sobre esse conjunto de características e modos, de comportamentos, que compõem o caráter e a identidade da nossa profissão.

**Palavras-chave:** História e teoria do jornalismo. Epistemologia. Reportagem.

### INVESTIGACIÓN: COMPRENSIÓN DE LA TEORÍA DEL PERIODISMO (CONTRIBUCIONES COLOMBIANAS)

**RESUMEN** - La historia del periodismo es un espacio de contactos y préstamos. Por ese motivo, la investigación en periodismo tiene una agenda amplia y compleja que abarca, entre otros, temas como: el proceso de producción periodística y su construcción del lenguaje a través de diferentes formas, estructuras y tiempos; metodología, epistemología y la investigación cualitativa en periodismo; historia de los periodistas y del periodismo. Es decir, las relaciones múltiples del periodismo con la cultura, la memoria, las teorías sociales y el

discurso, campos que han sido abordados e investigados em Iberoamérica. Sin embargo, la pregunta sobre nuestro etos profesional continúa siendo el eje transversal de la investigación, no solo en el continente americano, sino en el mundo. Es fundamental en nuestra existencia y en el análisis profundo de ese conjunto de características y modos de comportamiento que componen el carácter y la identidad de nuestra profesión.

**Palabras clave:** Historia y teoría del periodismo. Epistemología. Reportaje.

*"The one is two, always two. Unity and duality are, as space and time, inseparable and different. The same line of thought is valid for one and for the other, which are not variants of the original duality. As the one is in the two, the other is in the being"*<sup>2</sup> (Octavio Paz).

## INTRODUCTION

Researching in diverse dimensions and depths the *ethos* has been the starting point that, as a leading thread, allows us to study our historical personality, very much linked to the theory of journalistic life, of its ethics and aesthetics in its different phases, as social, cultural, technical, professional and scientific phenomenon.

Let us remember that *ethos* is also the root of ethics. Ethics, in turn, is intimately bound to aesthetics, which reflects about the ways and modes of narrating events. Theme, which has also occupied journalism scholars in Latin America. Let's think, for example, on the studies performed about José Martí's journalistic work, especially the journalism that he produced from the United States, as a correspondent, from 1880 to 1882, those called *Cenas Norte-Americanas* (North-American Scenes). These articles constitute a more penetrating analysis made by a writer and thinker of Spanish Language.

But Martí was quite clear about a very new proposal: the newspaper article must take on the public function of the literary; Susana Rotker, Venezuelan journalist and researcher, in her research *Fundação de uma Escritura* (Foundation of a Scripture), 1991 Casa

das Américas award winner, says: “The transformation in writing - and hence of the modes of perception of reality - was so important that journalism has thus become the vehicle of the first truly proper texts in Latin America.” (ROTKER, 1992, p. 9).

In the mentioned research, Susa Rotker shows that more than half of the work written by José Martí and two thirds of that produced by Rubén Darío is composed of journalistic texts. The Uruguayan critic Ángel Rama, in his work *Rubén Darío e o Modernismo* (Rubén Darío and Modernism), affirmed that “in search of the unusual, the permanent renovation and daring theatrics, the recording of nuances, the mixture of sensations” (RAMA, 1970, p. 15) were the essence of social transformations of the end of 19th century and of the journalistic experience interpreted as the writer’s inchoate professionalization. The birth of Hispano-American literary journalism, by taking place in the hands of exceptional intellectuals, showed the path of the journalistic activity promotion.

Journalism as construction and social practice is the place, the intellectual framework, where its theory is conformed. It was in 1638 that a journalistic work was first produced in Latin America, fact confirmed by the research about *Jornalismo narrativo na Colômbia (1638-2000)*, (Narrative Journalism in Colombia), performed by the researcher and journalist Juan José Hoyos. In this work, he says:

Amidst the smell of dust and dampness, in the large collection of Colombian papers and magazines of the 19th and 20th century of the Library of the University of Antioquia, and the books of its Heritage Collection, I learned almost everything I know about our past and, therefore, about our present. Also about the art of telling. These are my roots. My book was born there. Its purpose is to provide readers with a historical view of narrative journalism in Colombia, of the authors who created it and of the evolution of its styles (HOYOS, 2009, p. xxi).

Researcher Maryluz Mejía Vallejo, in her work *Ferido a Chumbo*, (Hurt by Lead), also studies journalism in Colombia from 1880 to 1980. In this research, she reconstructs the political and sociocultural history of the press in Colombia, and her analysis crosses over with several voices of the journalists themselves, witnesses of that time.

But it is not the companies, with their comings and goings, the leading characters of this story, but the journalists. From them we take the idea about journalism, product of their intellectual formation, we illustrate their ways of writing and interpreting the country and we follow their journey. With the voices of our colleagues and fellows, we also reconstruct their profiles to

display them in their grandeur and in their smallness, with their hits and contradictions, especially when they were part of the power game. From that some figures that have always been unquestionable and revered in historiography are demystified; some saints, blessed and canonized fall from heaven. These unadorned, unflattered and most of times irreverent portraits reveal the human condition, that which gives meaning to the journalistic work so close to literature. What even society displays is that journalism in Colombia, perhaps more than in any other country of Latin America, is inextricably bound to literature (VALLEJO, 2006, p. 12).

Andrés Vergara Aguirre, in his doctoral thesis entitled *História do subúrbio bogotano na imprensa (1924-1946) - History of the Bogotan suburb in the press (1924-1946): representations of the city and its infamies in the chronicles of Ximenez and Osório Lizarazo*<sup>3</sup>, concludes that the neofeuilleteonists are a category of reporters who use techniques from the feuilleton romance, and some trends of sensationalist journalist and new narrative journalistic genres, which allows them to produce attractive tellings to new popular readers in a Bogota in process of tradition to a large urban area, between 1925 and 1945. And this associated to the process of industrialization that the city went through, made it easier for an accelerated growth in the market of magazines and newspapers in which reporters wrote, amongst whom Ximenez and Lizarazo. “Because of all that, we can state that the neofeuilleteonists are at the vortex of the processes of modernization and industrialization of the Bogotan press”<sup>4</sup> (VERGARA, 2012, p. 12).

One of the greatest treasures of University of Antioquia’s newspaper room is the collection *Mundo al Día*, paper that was born in 1924 and published a large part of the journalistic work of the writer José Antonio Osório Lizarazo<sup>5</sup>, who was star-reporter of this publication in several phases. Osório Lizarazo has an extensive work, but many of his chronicles are lost in old newspapers, making it difficult for people to read them.

Andrés Puerta Molina, in his research for master thesis about Osório Lizarazo’s narrative journalism (PUERTA, 2009), recovers part of this writer’s journalistic work, not included in the two books that assemble his texts: *A cara da miséria* (1926) – The face of Misery – and *Romances e crônicas de J. A. Osório Lizarazo* (1978) – J. A. Osório Lizarazo’s novels and chronicles.

In his research, Puerta Molina reveals the work of narrative journalism of one of the best representatives Colombia has ever had: In order to reach this goal, he carried out a tracking process

in newspapers, transcribed and reproduced texts, so that readers and researchers in journalism have access to these writings that the dissertation analyses.

Francisco de Paula Muñoz (born in Medellín, 1840-1914) is one of the most important journalists and writers of Antioquia during the second half of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. At the same time, he is one of the most unknown authors, not only for the new generations of journalists, but also for the historians and researchers who study journalism. In 1874, Muñoz dedicated to more than a year to researching – as a journalist - a crime that had stirred the city of Medellín. And he wrote a 206-page narrative, “at the same as the events unfolded, and with all unscrupulous impartiality” (HOYOS, 2002, p. 11) he was capable of, at times where history's outcome was still ignored.

Once those guilty were captured and their trial conducted, Muñoz published the whole story of the facts in a book entitled *The crime of the avocado orchard*. The work started to be prepared in the print shop of the state of Antioquia, still in 1874, but was made public only in the following year, after the trial of Daniel Escobar and the other accused of partaking in the crime came to end.

Francisco de Paula Muñoz's book is a pioneering and singular sample of reporting in Colombian, during a time where not even this word was used in newspapers. Let us remember that the term reportage, according to Hosbbawn, is recorded for the first time in the French dictionaries, in 1929. And, by the English, in 1931: “it was attributed to the Czech journalist Erwin Kisch with putting on vogue the term in Central Europe, in the decade of 1920.” (HOBSBAM, 1995, p. 195).

Muñoz became one of the pioneers of reportage in Colombia. *A pioneer in reportage* (HOYOS, 2002) is a research that studies the book of this journalist, in which many of the techniques and methods are employed which, many years later, throughout the 20th century, were used in modern reportage.

In 1957, in Argentina, journalist Rodolfo Walsh publishes *Operation Massacre*, which consists of a reportage that had so expressive a development to the point of being considered the first modern book-reportage. About this author, better internationally known, there are several researches from the perspective of the theory of journalism to the contemporary Latin American narrative.

And if we take a little look at history, in a panoramic sense,

only as an example, we can find the following: since the 13th and 14th centuries until the present days, explicit references of all the information products produced by journalism are preserved. Furthermore, there is a logical continuity in the journalistic activity and a controllable and intelligible evolution. But the journalist is fundamentally the “Renaissance human being”, when the Italian gazettes came forth, between the 14th and the 16th centuries.

There are still records that show one of the first journals produced in Latin America was *Hoja de México*, published in 1541, in which the events that took place during Guatemala’s earthquake were narrated. In the 17th century, especially in Mexico and in Lima, papers were spawned in our continent published with the news of the period. A century later, continuous papers were established and with different sections. The *Gaceta de México* is from 1722. In 1729, in Guatemala, comes forth *Gaceta de Guatemala* and, in Costa Rica, the *Gaceta Mensual*. In Peru, *La Gaceta de Lima* emerged in 1743 and *Diario de Lima* in 1790.

The list goes on and many other countries arise and the number of journals grow, which are the register of journalism life. Comparing his study and analysis to other sources and other points of view allow us to see the dimension of journalists’ historical personality of the time and their various issues. Journalism, as object of study, as well as the importance of theoretical reflection about his historical process takes us to know the spaces and times of journalists from different periods, in order to properly value the present. This is therefore a matter of widening the reach of journalism studies, giving them “a sense of memory about the means and their historical managements, as well as about the evolution of the world of journalism (LOPEZ, 2005, p. 15)”.

But it is a world thinking of the other. In view of this fact Juan José Garcia (1997, p.182) - in his research about *Journalism’s Hermeneutic Dimension*, result of the previous results and observations and his permanent confrontation with the reality of Colombian Journalism - questions:

Can we affirm, without doubt, that journalism is as human as it is believed to be, if the relation it establishes is not fundamentally committed to human solidarity, in the respect for the person’s dignity and in the work resulting from the concretization of fundamental rights? How to overcome the old and erroneous criterion of considering the other as object, as an instrument, as statistical data and many times as no one?

And he himself answers that:

**We** is one of the key-words of our tormented historical situation. The other became an inevitable reality and we all acquired a living awareness of that. Here is a clear and conclusive answer to the initial question about **whom serves** journalism and why it is important to search for the sense in the development of hermeneutic approach. (GARCIA, 1997, p. 183, author's highlights).

These reflections about journalism, his practice and theory, allow us to see the diverse dimensions of research in the area, its representations, the context in which they were produce with a broad and interdisciplinary vision and from a historical, cultural and intellectual perspective of journalism.

Under this perspective, imagine if researches all over Latin America were made, like this one made by Juan José Hoyos about narrative journalism in Colombia. What would be found? I believe the theory of journalism that would emerge from this iceberg would be very valuable for history and for journalism epistemology. Maybe, part of this research is already being performed and we are unaware of that.

These are some examples of how journalism, in its construction of reality and its theoretical reflection has presented itself in Hispanic America. If we raise researches in journalism of each country of the continent, we will discover that in many nations there is a lot of pioneer spirit. Both serious and consistent research has been made and is still made, which contributes to the conformation of journalism epistemology. But unfortunately, we do not integrate, we do not know one another. If we ask in Latin America about Truman Capote or Otto Groth, surely even the youngest students know who they are. However, if we ask these same Hispano-American journalism students if they know who Adelmo Genro Filho is, few of them will know.

I do not agree with what some authors say, that each day fewer researches in journalism were made. Doubtlessly today, any more researches are made with greater depth, intellectual and scientific professionalism. What we need is a network of researchers in Latin America to help discover, organize and systematize what has been made so far.

As writer Carlos Fuentes said (2006, p. 1): "We are very lucky that the Iberoamerican personality is indigenous, African, mulato, mestizo and, through the Iberian Peninsula, Mediterranean, Greek, Latin, Arabian, Jewish, Christian and secular. We also are, can be,

the microcosmos of coexistence". Consequently, we must have the ability to incorporate this richness of social-political action, in the education world and in the daily life of all Iberoamerican countries; fundamentally in the practice of journalist in the theoretical reflection of that which Fuentes (1990) called Indo-Afro-Ibero-America's socio-cultural reality.

It is also important to take a step forward and study the theory of journalism as cultural criticism, once journalism is an environment of diversity and complexity, which moves and lives in the social fabric of our realities. Journalism as a term, concept, notion, history, profession and investigation has been commanding respect in the contemporary society, as it is a not closed concept. On the contrary, it is an open, complex and multidisciplinary notion that is interested in events and their connections. It is the path of plurality, with its methods and researches about human senses.

### **JOURNALISM AND ITS SENSES ABOUT REALITIES**

Does what interests journalists have anything to do with the continent's needs? In my opinion, *Continent's Agendas* should be created, which draw together the themes of study and researches of journalist for live problems in Latin America. This is linked to important themes, with the role of journalists concerning violence, challenges in digital cultures and how journalists are, or are not, appropriating new narratives.

The segment that seems to be most impacted with this surrounding change is the education segment, and here journalism and education form an essential pair to educate people for them to think and become citizens. Journalism fulfills an essential role by constructing its narrative of events and the exercise of citizenship, being bound to new social movements that are transforming from the bottom the life of people and the way to make politics. This also means a new want of making and researching journalism. So it is a great challenge.

In our field, we have to start to acknowledge each other because there is not only one way of being a journalist. Without an agenda, how to page the research on journalism? The examples I have are minimum in comparison to the amount of researches made in our area. From this Babel of researches, we must compose

an initial list that is developed by all the participants of this network, which includes the possibility of creating a website on the internet to socialize and integrate this knowledge and give greater visibility to our area. This initial list would be like a guideline for having more elements regarding where we are and what we do, as well as for instructing where to go and with which horizons. This guideline will allow us to get together, carry out balances, diagnoses and propose actions, as journalist and the journalist continue to be fundamental for democracy in the contemporary world, in the Age of Liquids.

In this perspective, Zygmunt Bauman, in his book *Liquid Modernity* says:

In its heavy stage capital was as much fixed to the ground as were the laborers it engaged. Nowadays capital travels light - with cabin luggage only, which includes no more than a briefcase, a cellular phone and a portable computer. It can stop-over almost anywhere, and nowhere needs to stay longer than the satisfaction lasts. Labor, on the other hand, remains as immobilized as it was in the past -, but the place which it once anticipated being fixed to once and for all has lost its past solidity; searching in vain for boulders, anchors fall on friable sands. Some of the world's residents are on the move; for the rest it is the world itself that refuses to stand still (BAUMAN, 2001, 70-71).

Now everything changes with a greater speed in this process of doing journalism and educating journalists. What to know? What to learn? What to teach? What to do? How to commit? These would be the themes for an International Education and Journalism Teaching Congress.

As Edgar Morin says in his proposal *The Well-done Head*: “education can help us become better, even happier, and teach us to take on the prosaic part and live the poetic part of our lives” (MORIN, 2001, p. 11).

We should therefore stop thinking only on the borders and build the relations and interplacements that dignify journalism and its researching paths (methods) in the global labyrinths, in order to engineer changes in the hybrid culture, which Néstor García Canclini speaks of (1990).

## NOTES

- 1 This work is part of the research project: Journalism and transcultural reportage, developed at the University of Antioquia – Colombia, University Research System – CODE N. 584 and was presented at the 10th National Meeting of Researchers in Journalism, Curitiba, November 9, 2012.
- 2 PAZ, Octavio. **Nosotros**: los otros. Prólogo al tomo 10 de las Obras Completas: Ideas y costumbres, II, Usos y símbolos.
- 3 José Joaquín Jiménez (Bogotá, 1916-1946) was one of Bogotá's most popular reporters at the time; here he is called by the pseudonym he most used, Ximénez. José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo (Bogotá, 1900-1964), who would later become a prolific novelist, was another of the best known reporters in the 20s in Bogotá.
- 4 Memorias Primer Congreso de Historia Intelectual de América Latina, Medellín, September 12-14, 2012. Table: History of Journalism and the public opinion in Latin America.
- 5 Osorio Lizarazo's journalistic work was very extensive: editor at El Sol, Bogotá 1922; editor at Gil Blas, Bogotá 1923-1924; reporter at Mundo al Día, Bogotá 1924-1929; correspondent at Centro de América de Cromos, Bogotá 1929; travel editor at El Espectador, Bogotá 1929; editor (1929-1931) at La Prensa, Barranquilla; founder and Editor-in-chief (1933-1934) at El Heraldo, Barranquilla; director at El Diario Nacional, Bogotá 1935-1936; collaborator at the magazine Pan, Bogotá 1937-1939; travel correspondent (1939), editor (1934-1935, 1939-1940), collaborator (1941-1946) and correspondent in Argentina (1946-1950) of the newspaper El Tiempo de Bogotá; collaborator at Revista de la Indias, Bogotá 1942-1946, 1954; collaborator at Revista de América (El Tiempo), Bogotá 1945-1950; founder and director of the newspaper Jornada – por la restauración mora de la República, Bogotá 1944-1945; Editor-in-chief at Sábado – Semanario al servicio de la cultura y de democracia en América, Bogotá 1945; collaborator at the magazine Economía Colombiana, Bogotá 1955; collaborator at Dinámica Social, Buenos Aires 1950-1956 (Revista del Centro de Estudios Económico Sociales), director at El Caribe, Ciudad Trujillo–República Dominicana 1958-1960.

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ARTICLE ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON JUNE 2013.